

Up 65 per cent in 1983

Shoplifting isn't trivial and it is growing in Milton

By LINDA KIRBY
Staff writer

Stealing may not be considered the crime of the year, but this common offence better known as shoplifting is proving a real liability for store owners in this community.

Frequently perceived as "victimless crime" by its offenders, shoplifting has jumped a startling 65 per cent in 1983 in Milton over the previous year, according to Halton Regional Police Crime Prevention Officer Dave Crawford.

Last year police were called to investigate 91 reported incidents of shoplifting representing but a tip of a very large iceberg, as many more incidents go unreported or undetected, said the local officer.

"Most people think it is a minor, little problem... they don't realize there is a serious amount of shoplifting going on."

"Part of the problem is that shoplifting is considered a crime against a business or corporation which is true, but in the long run it is the consumer who must pay. For every dollar lost in theft, the store must make \$10," he said.

Statistics show that between \$1 billion and \$1.5 billion worth of merchandise is now stolen every year from all Canadian retail stores.

Between \$200 and \$300 million worth of merchandise is stolen from major Canadian department stores alone each year.

Cost Of Thieves

According to the Retail Council of Canada it is estimated that five per cent of the cost of any item a Canadian buys is to cover the cost of theft.

Constable Crawford would like to see tougher shopkeepers and tougher parents.

As part of his crime prevention duties, he has visited almost 20 stores in Milton, including grocery, department, variety and drug stores in an effort to deal with the problem.

Far too many store owners and managers are lax in their methods of dealing with offenders, both juvenile and adult shoplifter he said, adding that most are let off if they agree to pay for the stolen article.

That attitude only serves to perpetuate the problem as the store soon gains wide recognition for the fact shoplifters are not prosecuted.

"If the store owner lets him off, the kid interprets him as (the owner) a softie and spreads the word... he may go elsewhere to steal but it is unlikely he will stop stealing... for all you know, he may have been stealing from a number of other stores before he got caught in your place," said Constable Crawford.

Same Philosophy

Gord Finney, manager of Zeller's in Milton Mall is one of those who shares the same philosophy as that of the police officer.

He has yet to let one shoplifter off the hook. Once caught, they are automatically charged, no exceptions.

"It's theft no matter how you cut it... in my estimation they have broken the law and it is up to the courts to decide how to deal with them... we are not the judge nor the jury."

He admits it is difficult to estimate the exact loss due to shoplifting by customers.

"But we do know we have empty packages in excess of \$20,000 every year," he said.

The local department store recorded 11 cases last week where individuals were apprehended for shoplifting. That figure is high compared to the norm of five or six per week, said Mr. Finney.

The Retail Council of Canada points out the average cost of shoplifting merchandise has increased from an average of \$28 in 1978 to \$45 in 1977.

"It can add up quickly... the money lost in Canada each year could buy and staff a major hospital in every province and territory," according to Constable Crawford.

Look Other Way

"Everybody has to be re-educated about shoplifting," he said adding that too many consumers look the other way when someone is in the process of stealing from a store.

"Even if they were to let the person know that they were being watched, would help. The thief then gets uneasy and usually puts the item back... they don't want to be seen."

"They are just like any other criminal—they don't want to be caught," he said.

He does not recommend making a citizen's arrest but instead suggests customers witnessing a theft, contact the store clerk.

He emphasizes that parents should become more aware of what their sons/daughters are bringing home.

"It is not a question so much of keeping a tough finger on them, but rather knowing what the kids are doing in their spare time and knowing what their pocket money is buying."

Of the 100 people apprehended last year for shoplifting in Milton, 66 were juveniles (under the age of 16 years) with 35 of them males and 31 females.

The remaining 34 adults included 19 males and 15 females.

Some shoplifters work in pairs or even threesomes, while most work alone.

"No Sense"

"There is no sense in half the stuff they take... it ranges from ballpoint pens to leather jackets. Some items are taken for need and sometimes just for the thrill of it," he said.

Several Types

Shoplifters fall into a number of categories. There is the adult amateur or impulse thief who comes from all walks of life and simply doesn't feel like paying for an item so steals it instead.

The juvenile usually takes small items for his or her own sake, often committing the crime on a dare proving to peers that they fit in with the "right" group.

Some juveniles work in teams or gangs, rivaling each other to see how much or how big an item one team can get over the other group.

The kleptomaniac represents the compulsive shoplifter who steals as a result of a sickness rather than out of criminal motivation.

Vagrant or alcoholic shoplifters (few in Milton) usually steal to sustain a habit.

Finally, there is the professional thief who may dress up or dress down and makes it his or her career to steal expensive, valuable items.

"They are the ones who take pride in what they are doing because they are making a living from it," explained Constable Crawford.

Surprised

Mr. Finney, who has served as manager of Zellers in Georgetown as well as Milton, admits he has been surprised by the type of persons encountered in shoplifting apprehensions.

"They come from all walks of life a lot of them professionals including doctors, lawyers, teachers... there is no average, typical shoplifter."

In addition to special security staff personal, his clerks all receive training on detecting and apprehending shoplifters.

He does not like the fact there are many local merchants who refuse to lay charges against thieves.

"You owe it to the industry and to the public to charge them," he said, adding it is rare to catch a shoplifter who has done it for the "first time".

The vast majority have done it a number of times and keep doing it until something happens.

Of those apprehended and charged in the Milton store, 100 per cent have received convictions.

Under the criminal code shoplifting is defined as theft under \$200 (unless the particular item is worth over \$200 which carries a maximum penalty of imprisonment for two years, plus a fine).

Most individuals now convicted face \$50 or \$150 fines and/or a term of probation.

True Price

Few off those convicted, especially young offenders, realize the true price tag of a criminal conviction, that being the life long criminal record.

A simple theft of a chocolate bar, lipstick or pantyhose can spell the end to a list of career dreams.

Jobs you would not get because of a record would include the following: the legal profession; police department; government (municipal, provincial or federal positions); and security positions to name a few.

A record would also deny the following licenses; insurance, medical and real estate.

A criminal record can keep candidates out of the college or professional school of their choice and it can also mean no admission to a foreign country.

CHURCH SERVICES

ST. PAUL'S OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

Main St. at James St. Rev. E.T. Jack Birch

Sunday, February 19/84

9:15 a.m. - Lay School of Theology, "Homosexuality" Speaker Mr. R.C. Osborne
11:00 a.m. - Baptism Sunday Sermon "Are you Gods Temple?"
11:00 a.m. - Church School for 2 years & up. Nursery Available.

HIGHWAY GOSPEL CHURCH

Affiliated With The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada
106 Wakefield Road
Pastor: Rev. Guido Alfieri 878-3358

Sunday, February 19/84

9:45 a.m. - Sunday School For All Ages
11:00 a.m. - Warm welcome to the Women's Ministry Department for their annual service. Guest speaker: Mrs. Diane Leach of Owen Sound. Singing and speaking.
6:00 p.m. - Outreach Service Nursery Available

Tuesday

9:30 a.m. - Ladies Bible Study & Prayer at the Church

7:00 p.m. - Bible Study, Pentecostal Crusaders

Friday

7:00 p.m. - Youth Service

TRINITY BAPTIST CHURCH

P.O. Box 596, Burlington
4272 Appleby Line
Rev. W.E. Payne 634-4879

Sunday, February 19/84

9:45 a.m. - Bible School with classes for all ages
11:00 a.m. - "What is God Like" No. 4 "The Almighty Power of God"
7:00 p.m. - Evening Preaching Service
Tues. 7 p.m. - Boys and Girls Clubs
Wed. 8 p.m. - Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

MILTON GOSPEL HALL

306 Ontario St. S. 878-2022
Christians Gathered in The Name Of The Lord Jesus Christ

Sunday, February 19/84

10:00 a.m. - Breaking Bread
11:45 a.m. - Sunday School
7:00 p.m. - Gospel Service

Wednesday

7:30 p.m. - Prayer and Bible Reading
All Are Welcome To These Services
The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleareth us from all sin. 1 John 1:7

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA

KNOX, MILTON
170 Main St., E. 878-6066
The Rev. T.J. Lewis

Sunday, February 19/84

9:45 a.m. - Senior Church School
- Young Adults Bible Class
11:00 a.m. - Morning Worship
- Junior & Intermediate Church Schools
- Adult Supervised Nursery - All Welcome

EMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH

(An independent Bible-preaching Church, associated with The Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches.)
245 Commercial Street, Milton



Pastor: KEN CAMPBELL
Pastor Emeritus: DR. JOHN R. ARMSTRONG
Director Son City Youth: JIM STURGEON
Board Chairman/S.S. Super: TOM PENNICE

LORD'S DAY SERVICES

9:45 A.M. - FAMILY BIBLE HOUR
11:00 A.M. - FAMILY WORSHIP HOUR
7:00 P.M. - LIBERATION

- a service of song and salvation -
For information regarding weekly schedule of the ministry and activities for all age groups at Emmanuel phone: 878-3542

"One is our Master, even Jesus, and we are all Brethren."

EPIPHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH

Robert Baldwin, Public School, 180 Wilson Dr.
Rev. Thomas Prachar, 878-2562

Sunday, February 19/84

9:30 a.m. - Sunday School
10:30 a.m. - Family Worship. Listen to "The Lutheran Hour" on Sundays.
8:00 a.m. - CKOC 1150; 12:30 p.m. - CHIN 1540
"Come and Grow With Us!"

MILTON ALLIANCE CHURCH

Sam Sherratt Public School
Pastor: Errol Rempel
878-9584

Sunday, February 19/84

9:45 a.m. - Sunday School "For The Whole Family"

11:00 a.m. - Morning Worship

Everyone Welcome

Nursery Facilities at all services
Christ Our Saviour, Sanctifier, Healer and Coming King

MILTON BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor: Kelvin F. Mutter
878-0035

Sunday, February 19/84

10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. - Morning Worship.

11:10 a.m. - 11:45 a.m. - Sunday School

Location: Auditorium of The Halton Centennial Manor.
Nursery Provided

Affiliated with the Baptist Convention of Ontario & Quebec.

GRACE ANGLICAN CHURCH

317 Main St. E.
878-2411 878-3371

Sunday, February 19/84

Worship: 8 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.
Church School: 10:30 a.m.
Thursday - 10 a.m. - Holy Eucharist
Handbell Music on selected Sundays
All Welcome

BOSTON AND OMAGH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES

Minister Rev. C. Cunningham

Sunday, February 19/84

BOSTON
3rd Line - Halton Hills

9:30 a.m. - Family Worship

OMAGH
Britannia Rd. W.

11:00 a.m. - Family Worship

The Parish of St. George's & St. John's Anglican Church

Rector: Rev. Charles Masters

Sunday, February 19/84

St. John's (Guelph Line & No. 10 Sideroad)

9:00 a.m. - Morning Prayer

St. George's (Guelph Line north of Derry Rd.)

11:00 a.m. - Family Eucharist & Sunday School Presentation

For any information concerning Bible Study Groups, Prayer Groups, Young Peoples and many special interest groups, phone 878-4384

Our Goal - "To know Christ and make Him Known."

CHURCH OF CHRIST

1412 Britannia Rd. West
Minister: Brian Cox 878-5696

Sunday, February 19/84

10:00 a.m. - Bible School Class for all ages

11:00 a.m. - Morning Worship and the Lord's Supper.

7:30 p.m. - Preaching of the Gospel

GRACEWAY BAPTIST CHURCH

Independent - Fundamental
Pastor: Walter H. Isaak 876-2298

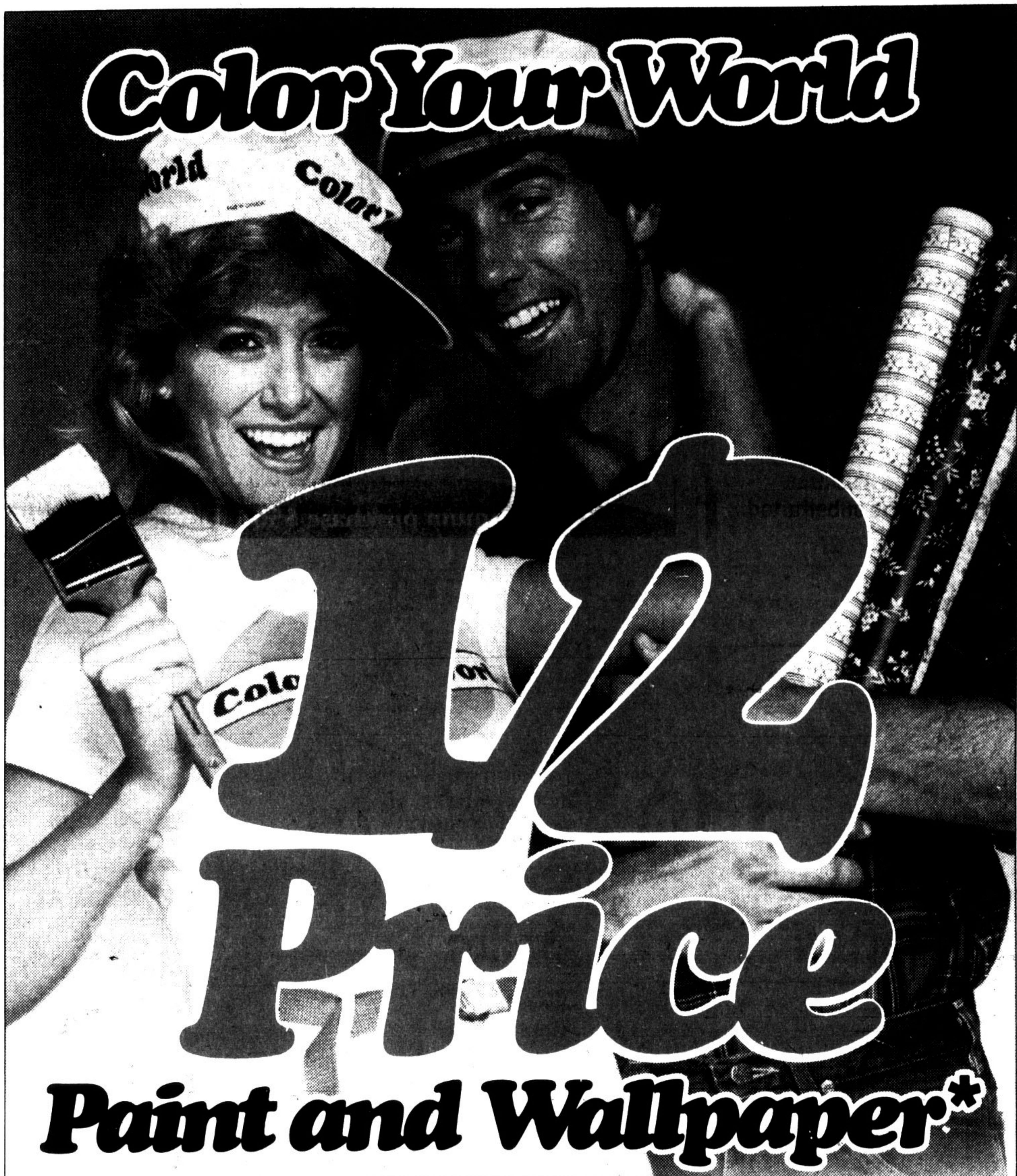
Sunday, February 19/84

We welcome you to meet with us at: United Steelworkers Centre, 407 Pine Street (next to Milton Library.)

10:00 a.m. - Sunday School

11:00 a.m. - Morning Worship

6:30 p.m. - Evening Service
Nursery Provided
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