

Open closed doors

If you think it, say it. Get it out. Then people can argue about it, and, if you are wrong, you will at least know.

James Ralph Mutchmore

Penetanguishene town council has made its stand on closed meetings, secret sessions and freedom of the press.

It stands solidly against the right of the people to know not only the facts but all the facts.

At last week's council meeting the press, during its question period at the end of the meeting, asked to be allowed to stay for the caucus meeting which was to follow.

That request was denied.

There are several points to be made. The most obvious is that the council does not go into 'caucus' but into a closed, private or secret meeting.

'Caucus', by definition, using The New Merriam-Webster Dictionary, means "a meeting of leaders of a party or faction usually to decide upon policies and candidates".

That does not mean that politicians of diverse opinions should gather together in the same room to discuss future issues which will appear at some later council meeting.

The issue raised by representatives of CKMP Radio, The Free Press and The Citizen was that too many major issues are being "talked out" at so-called caucus meetings then passed with shocking simplicity at council meetings which just happen to be the only meetings the public has access to.

Judging from the council meetings it may well be true that all council members are of a like mind and should be members of the same caucus just as the Liberals in Ottawa attend Liberal caucus meetings, the Conservatives their caucus meetings and the NDP theirs.

If that is true then it is time for a housecleaning and this year with an election in December is just the year to do it.

The council is forcing the press to work in ignorance of the pros and cons of every issue

which comes before it. While the council is well aware of the arguments on both sides the press must try to fathom the depths of a major issue through a universal show of hands and a one-page report.

Yet, the next day, it is possible to hear from certain council members that they, in fact, did not agree with the policy they voted for or even voted against but said nothing in opposition during the debate. "This is off-the-record," they say always.

Residents of Penetanguishene should be thankful for election day when they will have a chance, we hope, to choose a council which is not afraid of public scrutiny and the harsh glare of the public eye.

Another fact came to light in that same question period.

The press is not allowed to attend any committee meetings.

Those meetings which are so important in making the final decision; those meetings which raise the shrill cries of opposition; those meetings which are the basic foundation of municipal government: they are all closed to the press.

Why? Mayor Vince Moreau said simply, "You wouldn't be interested in those meetings."

That may well be true but those meetings could provide the important background the press is not getting now.

When asked about the press attending the caucus meetings (with no notes taken) the mayor said he could not "trust" the press.

That may be true as well but the fact remains that people may soon stop "trusting" a council which conducts its business behind closed doors with no one the wiser.

There is an issue which is as potentially as volatile as it is sensitive coming before council in the near future which has been discussed several times in caucus recently but never at a public session of council.

That issue, we predict, will be cleared through council by a quick show of hands as fast as you can blink your eyes.

There is no need for secrecy and it is time for it to stop.

Dog end of winter. March usually has a tail in it like a tiger, and then we're into the mud and chill winds and rain of April. Probably the worst time of the year for Canadians.

Curling season is over and golf season hasn't begun. It's too early for gardening and too late for skiing. There's nothing much for the sport fan to watch but the weeks of blah that constitute the professional hockey playoffs.

I think it's a particularly bad time for the elderly. The days are longer but the weather

is too deadly to enjoy the outdoors yet. They've come through another long dark winter of survival, arthritis, the flu, being indoors most of the time.

In a few weeks they'll be grinning triumphantly as the sun begins to warm, and they know they've licked life (or death) for one more winter, but right now they're a little low in spirits.

One of the most obnoxious features of this time of year is the return from the south of those lazy, rich, rotten, selfish people who have enough money to spend the winter there. Is there anything more boring than

their excessive chatter about playing golf every day, and swimming in January?

Don't think I'm envious. I wouldn't go down south in the winter if you offered me a thousand dollars. But don't make it \$1,200.

Nor am I the slightest bit jealous of those young, swinging teachers, back from their March break in Spain or the Caribbean, as smug as they are tanned. Talk to them and you'll find all they did was sit around at a beach, drinking rum, or taking in some historical sites.

Any idiot can do better than that, being herded like so many Canadian cattle on to a

jet plane, into a posh hotel. My wife and I almost invariably go south in the March break. But we don't sit around on any silly beach, getting a painful burn. We go to the city, and get a slow burn from the prices in the hotel. Neither of us drinks rum. But if we want to take in some historical sights, we just take a look at each other.

About the only people who aren't a bit down in the mouth as winter drags to its weary end are little kids. There is mud to play in; deep puddles to test your boots in; dirty remnants of snow to push each other down into. What more could a kid want?

Their mothers are not quite so joyous. But now, the occasional sun reveals dirty windows, shabby wallpaper, faded drapes.

When they go out, their winter clothes are too heavy for shopping in the hot stores, but the weather is too foul to try on the new spring outfit. Result? Winter-end snarl.

Man of the house isn't exactly bubbling over, either. He's just added up the fuel bill, which is roughly twice what it was six years ago. He has received this year's tax notice, which is just about twice what it was 10 years ago. And he's heading right into income tax time, which is just about twice as complicated as it was any years ago. No joy there at all.

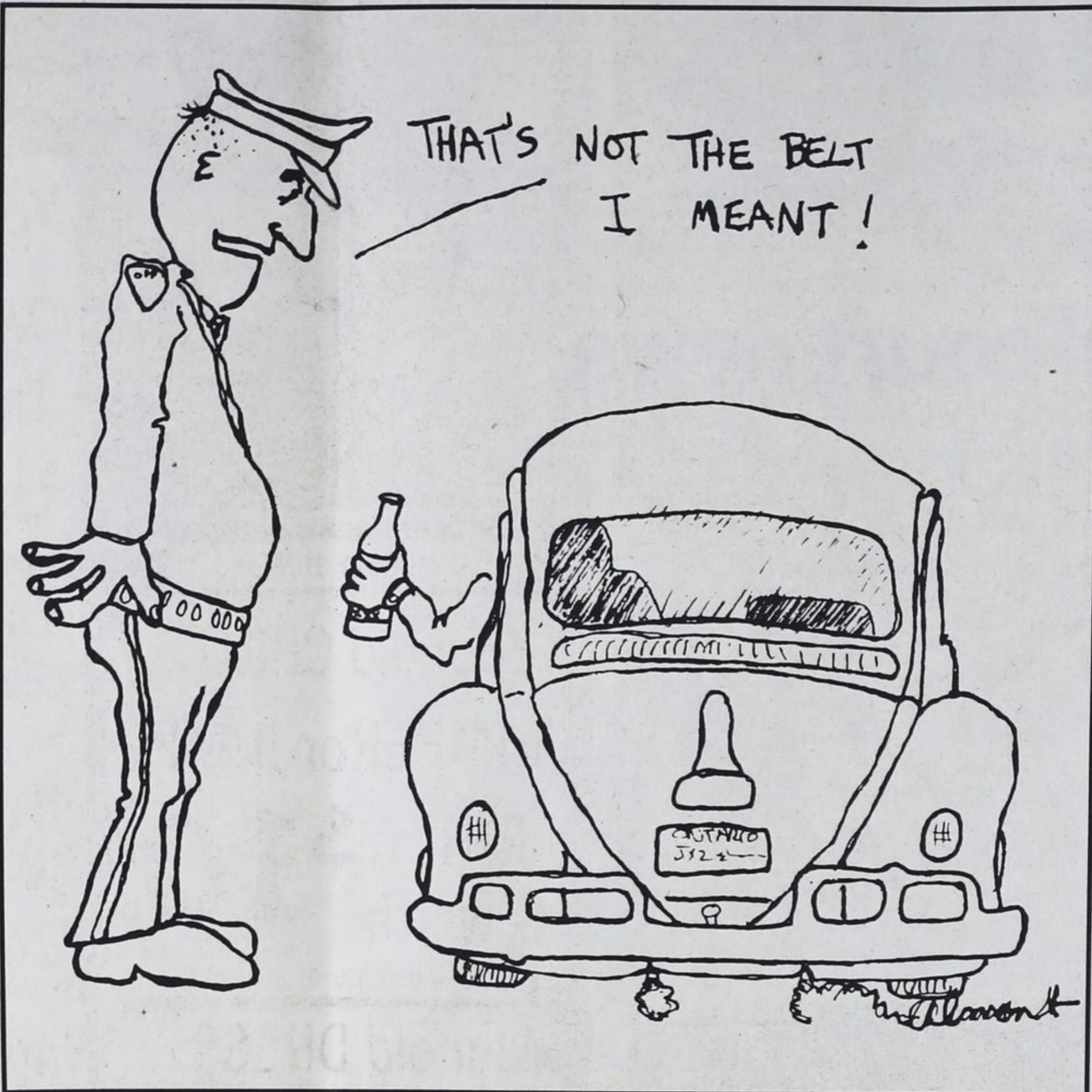
University students are scarcely rapturous at this time of year. The year that looked so long last September suddenly has a week or two to go. There are essays due. There are final exams ahead. There is anguish in the highlight of days and weeks of near-idleness during the past two terms. There is a panic at the realization of the minuscule amount of learning actually acquired. The mind skitters like a frightened mouse, but there is no hole in the wainscoting to dodge into. It's time for the hot coffee, the benzedrine, and prayer, none of which will help much.

For students graduating this spring, it's not exactly Christmas either. After three or four years in cocoon, they must come out and discover whether they are caterpillars or butterflies. There are no lines of employers eager to sign them up. There'll be no more cheques from Dad. There's nothing there but a vast, indifferent system into which they must kick and squirm and claw to make a niche for themselves.

Does all this sound depressing? Heck, no. It's just the way of life in this country of ours, this time of year.

There are lots of happy people, living a day at a time. And there are lots of joyous people looking forward. Girls who are going to be married in June. Young pregnant looking forward to their first baby. Ancient gardeners already out kicking aside the lumps of mud and ice, looking for crocuses, scarcely able to wait to get their hands into the soil. Golfers who have mentally ironed out their swings during the winter. Sailors who watch eagerly for the breaking up of the ice.

And there are lots of ordinary guys like me, full of arthritis, not many teeth left in the head, but happy as simpletons, fundamentally incapable of being depressed, just glad to be alive. Join us.



Old-fashioned hockey

It was encouraging to see the Penetanguishene Oldtimers take to the ice Monday night against their counterparts from Barrie.

For the first time this hockey season the players took part in that old-fashioned game of hockey.

Stick-handling, passing, accurate shooting, and an almost friendly style of play gave the spectators a great show.

There was none of the brutality of usual games which has become all too common in arenas around the province.

There is a lot to be said for the strict 'no-body-contact' 'no-slapshot' rules enforced by the oldtimers league.

It makes skill the predominant force in the game rather than something which is used once a player gets through the high sticks, the elbows, the bone-crushing body checks, the boarding and the butt-ending.

Another point comes to mind which is

perhaps the most important.

While children of all ages have been enjoying the benefits of organized hockey for many years there has been a notable lack of sports activity for anyone over the age of twenty.

Admittedly there are hockey leagues such as the recreational and Intermediate 'C' which cater to 'older' hockey players but both those leagues have heavy body checking and slapshots which can injure a working man and force his retirement from active play.

And for many the excitement gained through curling or tennis is just not enough.

Pete Wilson who has single-handedly gotten the Penetanguishene Oldtimers off the ground deserves credit for his work and we hope that people will remember next year when hopefully the team will be travelling to the international tournament overseas bringing the eyes of the world to bear on Penetanguishene.

Mrs. W, the sloven, sings the repairman blues



by Shirley Whittington

but generally speaking, it dirt goes where it doesn't show, it stays - sometimes for years.

I hardly ever get caught, but every once in a while, something breaks down, and the professional who comes in to fix it discovers the real me, and I am plunged into an abyss of guilt and embarrassment.

The day the stove had to be moved out of its greasy niche in the kitchen cupboards was a black one for us all.

There are repairmen who would rather clean a sewer than come to fix my washer or dryer. They know that these mother's helpers are sandwiched between the cat's litter box, and cartons of rotting garbage that people keep forgetting to take out. Word soon gets around, and they won't come into our basement without danger pay.

I always offer a cup of coffee to anybody who comes to fix anything, at my house. The offer is always politely declined, and I wonder if I should have a Board of Health certificate hanging over the kitchen sink, or a sign proclaiming that we eat here ourselves.

Last week, the refrigerator ceased to refrigerate. It exhaled a fetid odor, shuddered, and excreted all over the kitchen floor.

I called the serviceman, and as soon as I heard the "oh-it's-you-again" sigh on the other end of the phone, I knew I was in for a bad day.

Before the repairman arrived, I emptied the refrigerator of its most obvious overload -

the mouldering cabbages, the forgotten bottles pickles and the carefully hoarded jars of fat and drippings. (I wish somebody would tell me why I save fat and drippings. I have done it all my life. Should I be making my own soap, or something?)

I pulled all the old mitts and socks out from behind the beast, and I cleared the books and geraniums and combs off the top, pausing to reflect on the advantages of the old fashioned slope shouldered refrigerators on top of which it was impossible to stash very much.

The repairman arrived, sighed, and reminded me that the refrigerator's alimentary canals get all bunged up if the machine is not kept clean, inside and out. He said, patiently, that he had told me this before, and wondered if I remembered the last time the beast had gotten the bloats. An errant frozen pea had been the cause. He said ruefully that he wouldn't be surprised if another pea, or worse, had fallen into a hose somewhere, and then he got to work.

While the surgery was being performed, my mother's words came back to haunt me. "Always make sure the children have clean underwear and socks," in case one of them is suddenly struck down and needs to be rushed to hospital."

If I pass that sound Presbyterian advice on to my daughter, I will add the following: "Always make sure the interior of your refrigerator is clean in case it breaks down suddenly and you get a repairman who longs

to be the most sought-after raconteur at the annual Repairman's Ball."

The nice young man finally finished, and repeated his counsel that if I'd kept the thing clean inside, it wouldn't choke on bits of garbage. And he showed me what he'd fished out of its gullet - the inevitable frozen pea, a plastic price tag and two shards of broken brown glass.

The brown glass plainly puzzled him. He didn't know that a member of our immediate family is in the habit of, now and then, popping a few bottles of beer into the freezer for instant chilling. That same family member tends to be forgetful at times. The beer freezes, and the bottle explodes.

I promised to clean up my act in the kitchen, and waited with manic glee for the Squire to come home and begin his prepared lecture on avoiding repair bills by adopting basic standards of sanitation and preventive maintenance.

I waited until he was well-launched into the first paragraph before I sprang the little glass shards on him.

I'm vindicated, a surface cleaner, true, but the in-depth littering is not all my fault. And I hope that nice young man remembers that when he tells the boys at the Repairman's Convention about Mrs. W., the sloven.

Letter

Replace bad lines

Dear Editor:

I noticed recently in one of the latest editions of the Citizen, that the Penetang Public Utilities Co. has applied for an increase in the rates, well enough is enough.

During our latest snowfall, the power was cut off for well over 2 hours; which has happened far too often this winter for several hours at a time, especially in the Fox, Church, and Brock Street areas.

During these numerous times I was told that the wind blew down the lines or the heavy snow broke the weak lines; well I for one and I'm sure many others in these areas

are getting sick and tired of these inconveniences at our expense.

I suggest that while the weather is nice this summer, proper replacements are made to these bad lines, not temporary repairs, I'm sure the rates we're paying now in Penetang should cover the costs of these weak and worn lines.

So if we must pay new rates in the future, let's have some new lines and better service, thank you.

Wayne Legault
Brock Street
Penetanguishene.

Got an opinion or comment?
Send us a letter!

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Pages torn from the editor's notebook



by Kevin Scanlon

hack turned news hack.

It was appropriate then that Scandle, a former city hack turned small-town hack, should take Rose on a tour of the town which had a telephone book just slightly larger than Xaviera Hollander's address book but far less interesting.

"We'll go to see the council," Scandle said after trying to show his restraint by downing three straight Seven Ups in the lounge of the Climb-the-door Hotel.

And so they ventured forth into the night in search of the Ringling Brothers Council, the most popular entertainment event in town and the only sure cure for insomnia known to man.

When they arrived the show had already begun.

Mayor More-or-less, the ringmaster of the three-ring council, was leading his cohorts through all sorts of hoops, but only a few of them were flaming.

Rose leaned over to Scandle to ask about Merely Rogers, one of the few intelligent pipe-smoking members of the troupe.

"What's she smoking in that pipe? It smells like peat moss," the newcomer said.

Scandle chuckled. "The first time I smelled it I thought it was," he replied, "but the rumor is that she fills her pipe with old council agendas."

Humble Charleboogie, the clown prince and hair apparent, performed in the first ring whispering corny sayings into the ear of Frances Say-what-you-want.

There were lags in the performance and Rose tended to doze off only to be awakened by a skinny elbow jammed into his rib cage.

It was unfortunate that the Ringling Brother's Council's best performances were given at rehearsal when there was no one there to see and enjoy the entertainment.

In front of an audience they all tended to fall back on old standard lines and past routines while some fell back on silence which is the oldest standard of all.

Scandle explained to Rose, "I asked More-or-less why he wouldn't invite audiences to the rehearsals if they were so good and he told me, 'We would invite people to our rehearsals but we're not in full costume and I can't imagine anyone enjoying Charleboogie's act without that clown smile painted across his face'."

Rose was still puzzled. "Who are all those performers who just sit there and wait for the show to end?"

"Well," Scandle said, "they're actually very dynamic performers but they're shy of the audiences. Most of them don't get mentioned in reviews or in the posters which advertise the show but I think you'll be surprised at the change in them a few months from now."

"Oh? Why's that? They going to get psychiatric help for their shyness problems?" Rose asked curiously.

"No?"
"Don't tell me!" the newcomer said loudly. "They're going to get acupuncture treat-

ments. Nothing like a needle through the nose to help you get over being shy!"

"Nope."
"They're quitting the circus...I mean...uh, council?"

"Wrong again."
"They're going to join Sweet Sue's Travelling Medicine Show and move around the country selling over-proof geritol to the natives?"

"Wrong."
"Okay, I give up. What is it?"

Scandle smirked. "They all come up for auditions this year and those that don't pass the tests in December won't so much as carry a broom and shovel behind the elephant next year."

Rose was intrigued. "Do you think they'll all stay with the show?"

"Probably," Scandle replied, "because there's too few replacements in this field. Art Nouveau over there will again focus his campaign on his white socks. Bring back the 50s and all that. Clarence Luminous is a cinch to make it because he is seen but not heard even in the dark of night."

"Lying Down is the financial wizard so they can't let him go. Frances Say-what-you-want, Can't Tango and Ron Bellylaugh are all too pleasant to be sacked so you'll end up with the same show you have now."

"Amazing," Rose said.
"Yeah," Scandle replied. "Quite amazing."