

Citizen comment

It's just a small point, but.....

The budget handed down by Finance Committee chairman Mary Rogers Monday night looks like a healthy one, with plenty of work being done over the coming year at a fairly low cost to the Penetanguishene taxpayer.

Rogers made a point of mentioning that although the gross spending under the budget shows a 22.1 per cent increase over last year, the amount of that increase passed along to the town's taxpayers comes to only 6.75 per cent. The amount of money to be collected in taxes by the town had increased by 13.5 per cent, but taking into account the increased assessment this year, the amount to be paid by any individual taxpayer should only be up 6.75 per cent.

Rogers pointed out that that increase was well within the Anti-Inflation Board guidelines.

That's true, but the cost of the Town of Penetanguishene paid for by the taxpayers of Ontario and Canada as a whole has gone up a whopping 32.1 per cent, not quite within the AIB eight per cent guidelines.

It's all too easy to forget that although we aren't paying very much directly to the town, we are paying a portion of the whole cost through our provincial and federal taxes as well.

The idea, of course, is that more money will flow from provincial and federal taxpayers in places like Toronto, to places like

Penetanguishene, than the other way around. With a man like town clerk Yvon Gagne pulling the strings, we can be sure that the system is working as much to our advantage as possible.

It's fairly obvious that this town benefits from the system, and we guess it might as well take advantage of all the handouts it can get.

But the town should hesitate a moment before declaring the budget to fall within the AIB guidelines, merely because the increase in municipal taxes to individual taxpayers comes out to less than eight per cent. Let's face it, no matter how you slice it, the cost of running the town has gone up 22.1 per cent. Somebody somewhere has to pay it. After one takes off the amount of revenue derived by the town from renting facilities and the amount of revenue derived from reserve funds, the amount which is left for the senior levels of government to pick up is still over eight per cent.

It's just a small point, and we're not really complaining. After all, it's only costing us 6.75 per cent more than last year. But it's a point which the town should bear in mind. The federal and provincial governments do not get money out of thin air, they tax people. And those people they tax are paying more than eight per cent more to keep Penetanguishene running this year than last year.

Ontario voters showed they knew what they wanted

Last Thursday Ontario voters proved they have the final, controlling say in who runs this province. They proved that they will make up their own minds and will not be swayed by promises, will not be manipulated into a voting trend deemed necessary by those in power.

The electorate's decision to hand Premier Bill Davis and his Conservatives its second minority government in less than two years has to be a rebuff to the premier's call for a clear, unequivocal mandate for the next four years. The final results prove again that Ontarians did not want an election, they did not want to spend \$20 million of their tax dollars when government was functioning efficiently and responsibly. There can be little doubt that the last thing the voters now want is another election in the near future. Such a decision could be fatal to the Ontario P.C.'s.

The P.C.'s gain of six seats however is an indication of the voters' confidence in Conservative government. They liked what they had, they're willing to have the P.C.'s try their hand at leading the province out of economic and unemployment difficulties. The voters are sure that Davis is the best man to lead this province at this time, they've endorsed his leadership and his record as Ontario's premier. But at the same time they've told him to keep on his toes, to heed the policies and solutions offered by two equally strong opposition parties. The fact that they've opted for another minority government is good indication that Ontario's voters want a responsible, down-to-earth government in which there is room for a variety of opinions.

The elections results which show the Liberals leading the NDP by only one seat in Queen's Park has strengthened the

movement to a three party system in the province. In the early days of the campaign, there were predictions that the Liberals could be practically wiped off the electoral map, that there would be two clear-cut alternatives in the future: a socialist party and a government overseen free-enterprise oriented party. But the electorate has said there is room for a third alternative - a free enterprise oriented party which believes in minimal government interference, a party dedicated to restraint (as its \$600,000 election budget would indicate). There'll be an interesting variety of opinions at Queen's Park in the next (hopefully) three or four years to keep all party leaders on their toes.

A final word about Stephen Lewis who on Monday announced his resignation as leader of the Ontario New Democrats. The NDP's loss of its opposition seat can be largely traced to the \$4 minimum wage issue which caught fire in the final two weeks of campaigning. The electorate did not abandon the man but the party's dogma which they still find unacceptable. They reacted, no doubt to the scare tactic (and distasteful) advertising launched by the P.C.'s using the British Columbia NDP experience as an example. The voters fled from the negative connotations of the word 'socialism' without ever stopping to listen and understand.

Lewis was a victim of circumstances into which his own party and its convention resolutions had catapulted him.

The NDP have not yet learned to gauge the mood of the province, they wanted to go too far, too fast. Future policy conventions will have to be more responsive to the needs and expectations of Ontario voters if the NDP is to become a viable alternative in this province.

Our letters policy

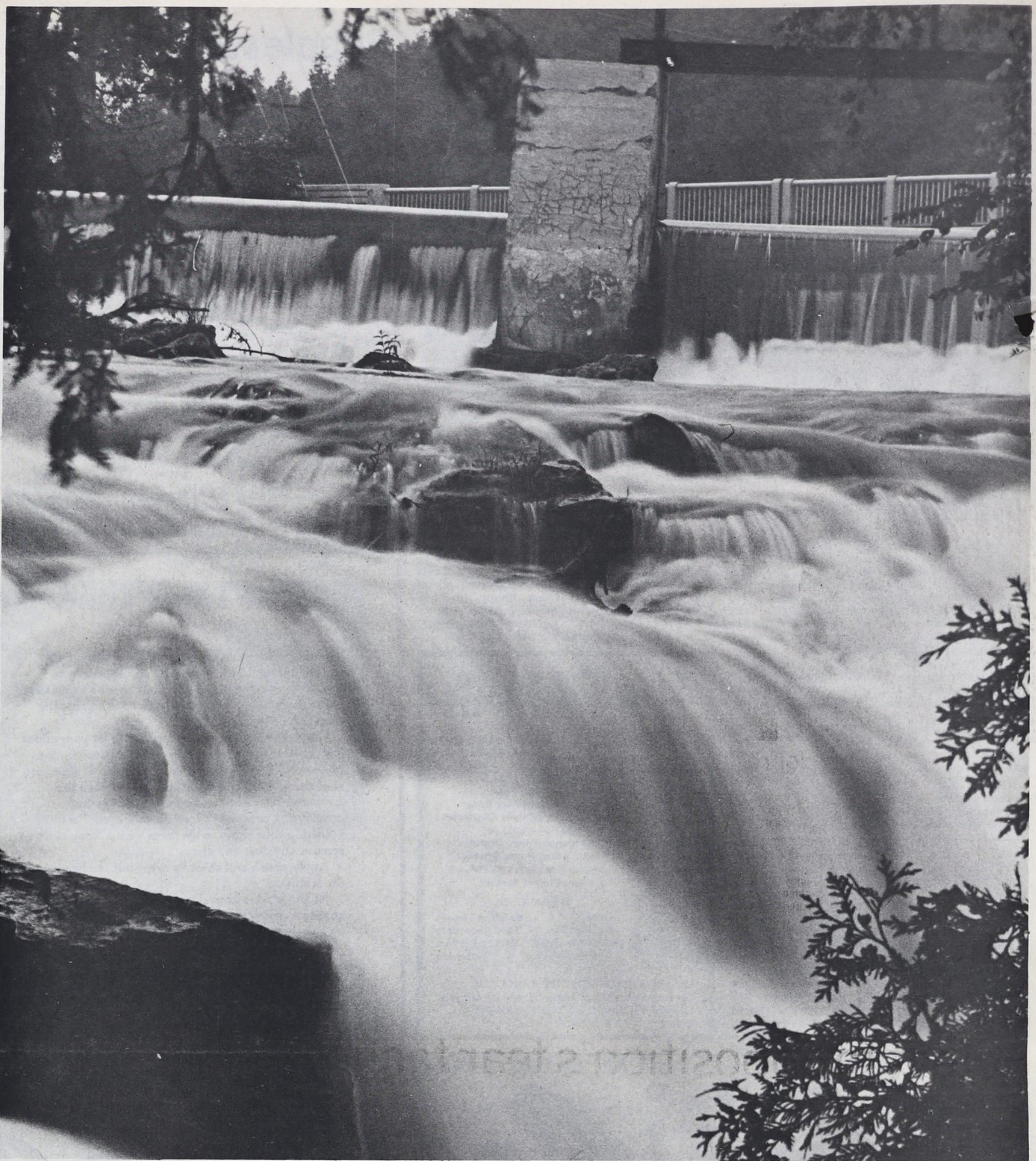
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Our only limitation is space. If necessary, letters or articles may be edited at the discretion of the Editor, for good taste or legal reasons. Material may be of any length, and if possible typed or hand-written clearly

so no mistakes will be made.

We will not print any letter sent anonymously to the paper. We ask that writers include his name, address, and phone number in the letter or contribution so that we may verify the authorship.

We can no longer publish a letter whose author has requested that his name be withheld. We feel that a person willing to voice his or her opinion on our editorial page should also be willing to sign his name to it.



Smooth as silk

The black cloud called Unemployment

by Bill Smiley

There's a big black cloud hanging over this country, and despite the veritable hurricanes of hot air emitted by politicians, it refuses to blow away. It's name is Unemployment.

If you have noticed that not so many people seem to belong to the curling club or the golf club as there were, don't imagine for a minute that for some reason, there is a drop of interest in the sport and the conviviality of these social oases in the desert of our lives.

It's simply and purely that a heck of a lot of guys and gals can't afford the fees any more, because they are simply and purely out of work.

As a child of the Depression, I grew up under that big black cloud, and I know full well what a brooding shadow it can cast over an individual or a family. It hung over mine for more than a decade, and it left its marks on the soul, if not the body.

Let's take an average family of today confronted by this spectre, without any preparation for it. Jack has worked for 15 years in a plant. Working conditions were good. Pay was good, and got better every time the union growled. Jack belonged to the union, but didn't attend meetings. He had worked up to \$14,000 a year as a foreman. Pretty good for a guy with Grade 12.

His wife Jean has been working, too, for the past seven years, since she got the kids off to school. She was pulling in \$7,000. Between them, they had a good income. Like everybody else, they wanted the good life. Bought a house, with a 30-year mortgage. Traded the car every three years, on a bank loan. Plunged for a boat. Enjoyed a week's holiday in the south each winter, and two weeks at a rented cottage in the summer. Even went to Europe last year.

No real financial problem, although spare money seemed rather scanty, with inflation. But all payments met on time.

Suddenly the roof fell in. Jean's job was declared redundant as the small firm she worked for tightened its belt against rising costs. She tried for another, but there were 10 younger women, with more skills, for every job she applied for. With a rather forced laugh, she told friends she'd decided to stay home and be a housewife. And, after all, she was collecting unemployment insurance.

Still no real financial problem. Then the pogy ran out. Canada Manpower, that hunk of bureaucracy as useful as teats on a bull, had nothing for her.

Then — earthquake! Jack's company announced, with the utmost regret, that it would be closing permanently within a month. In business double talk, the em-

ployees were informed that for some vague reason to do with the parent plant in the States, it was no longer feasible to maintain production at the local plant. Translation: the fat federal subsidies the company got to build the local plant had run out, along with the special local tax deal.

Jack discovered, with horror, that he was 41 years old, that he had fairly limited skills, despite his good reputation as a worker, and that there were hundreds of young guys, who knew more than he did, looking for jobs. He and the other foremen were told that there might be a job for them at the home plant in Waukegan, if they wanted to make the move. Not as foremen, of course. The home plant already had foremen.

Jack and Jean had an income of \$110 a week, unemployment insurance. Their mortgage payments were \$320 a month, car payments \$90 a month, fuel and hydro \$70 a month. It cost them \$50 a week to put bread on the table. They owed the bank \$1,200 for the boat.

That's why they don't show up at the curling club and the golf club. That's why they never throw a party any more. That's why they don't go on holidays. That's why their kids don't get new clothes on demand. That is unemployment.

Boat is long gone. Transportation is now a

beat-up pick up truck that Jack uses for his business. Oh yes, he's working. He scraped up a thousand dollars and, with his knowledge of welding and such, started a small auto body repair shop. The thousand he owes has increased to \$1,500, but business is picking up. A second mortgage, at 18 per cent saved the house. But there'll be no more dreams of retiring on a pretty good pension, and buying that place in the country. There may not even be a marriage. Jack and Jean fight a lot these days. Their kids don't like them much these days. Jack gets awful drunk on Saturday night. Jean cries a lot.

A horror story? Nope, just a modern fairy tale, about two babes lost in the woods of our material society, where everybody wants to get quite a bit more, and give quite a bit less.

I feel sorry for Jack and Jean, and all the other people whose grasp exceeded their reach. They're not really to blame. In a society that puts money, things, possessions, status, at the top of the list, and people, thrift, humility, and integrity at the bottom, they're just a couple of the casual casualties.

That's unemployment, 1977 style. Show me some bread-lines, soup kitchens, men who would literally sell their soul to the devil for a decent job, and I'll show you some 1930s unemployment.

The lifestyle of a classified companion

by Shirley Whittington

Not long ago, they tell me, Canada's most famous single working parent was on his way across the Atlantic to attend a conference in London.

He was turning in for the night, when he glanced across his bedchamber and discovered that he had a roommate—none other than the right honourable John George Diefenbaker. Trudeau is reported to have said that both of them spent a comfortable night. Still, it must have been a nasty surprise for both of them.

They could have taken the suspense out of their trip if they'd advertised for a travelling companion, instead of trusting to the luck of the draw.

Oh yes—such advertisements do exist. I have one before me now, clipped from a recent Saturday night magazine. "Don't like to travel alone?" reads the ad. "Take a travelling companion—a well bred young man with theatrical background, and

modesty which precludes hyperbolic description of self, seeks engagement as travelling companion to member of opposite sex."

Now there's a young man who is determined to make his own summer job, and the depressing statistics be hanged.

The fellow who placed the ad, whom I know only as "Box 16," sounds cultivated and sensible, but I wonder if he's ever travelled with a member of the opposite sex?

I mean, it's one thing if you're both starchy-eyed, and capriciously fleeing the hurly-burly of life by mutual consent. Being hired as some lady's travel companion could be a very heavy trip indeed.

First of all there's the matter of luggage. While there are women who can manage two weeks in Europe and a side trip to Iceland on a double knit suit and two drip dry blouses, they are few and far between, and hardly the types to engage professional travel companions from the classified ads. No sir—the lady Box 16 gets to share inflight hysteria

with, will be laden with more luggage than Santa Claus on Christmas Eve.

She'll have a matched set of soft-sided stuff crammed with everything in her closet, including a hat in case the Queen invites her to a garden party. Add to this the inflight bag, the camera bag, the all weather coat and the bon voyage bouquet the girls in the bridge club sent her, and Box 16 will have his work cut out for him.

And this is going over. It's quite possible that he'll have to jettison some of his personal effects on the way back, in order to make way for the bargains madame couldn't resist on the continent.

Before they even get on the airplane there'll be a lot of false starts, for a woman of this sort barely gets settled in the back of the airport limousine before she remembers that she left the sunroom windows open and the iron plugged in.

Box 16 claims some theatrical background, and that's good because travel these days involves a lot of standing around in line ups

and it would be lovely to have one's own personal busker.

I hope Box 16 understands the difference between guilders and francs, pret a porter and haute couture, American and European plan, cologne and toilet water, and hommes and dames.

He should also be prepared, after a strenuous day touring art galleries and museums, to go out into the foreign highways and byways to seek nail polish remover, Arrid super dry and a post office that is open.

Generally speaking, I would be suspicious of anyone who has to find a travel companion through a classified ad. And while I applaud Box 16 for his unique solution to the summer unemployment crisis, I wonder if he wouldn't be happier in less stressful job like milking rattle snakes or clipping turkey's toenails.

Anyway—travelling alone isn't such a bad thing. You never know who you'll run into. I bet when Pierre Trudeau stepped onto that airplane, he never dreamed he'd end up with his very own bedtime Tory.

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