

Listen to student protest

Congratulations to the group of students from Penetanguishene Secondary School, who have had the courage to protest something they feel is wrong.

This group feels that the French language question is being handled improperly by the Simcoe County Board of Education, and the Ministry of Education. Whether the students are right remains to be seen. Hopefully, the Minister of Education, Thomas Wells, will see fit to reply to the letter of protest.

It seems that all too often we forget how important the opinions of young people are. The question of a French High School, or an addition to the present high school is important to parents, and politicians, but it is most important to the students. They will be the ones directly affected by what ever decision is made.

If indeed the students have not been given enough input into the co-operative evaluation project, then the investigation of the Internal Evaluation Team and the External Evaluation Team is wasted. No decision can

be considered fair when such an important group hasn't had enough input.

One of the things upsetting these students is that the results of the Internal Evaluation Team's report are being kept under wraps. They are concerned that a decision may be made without consulting the students first, and that certainly would be an error.

The French language education question stems from the needs of students in this community, and we should make every effort to hear whatever the students have to say—no matter how long it takes.

It is interesting to note that this group of protesting students definitely mean business. A carbon copy of their letter of protest will be sent to both the Toronto Star and the Toronto Sun, as well as both local newspapers.

If the illustrious Mr. Wells chooses to ignore the protest, he may find himself regretting his inactivity when the Toronto Star—well known for following up stories such as this—comes knocking at his door.

Concerned students speak

Dear Mr. Wells:

We, as students of Penetanguishene Secondary School, find it very difficult to control our emotions as we write this letter.

We are students at Penetanguishene Secondary School and we are very upset. We can no longer sit idly by and watch a handful of student agitators try to manipulate our lives—especially our school system.

As of today, we were informed that our principal, whom we admire very much, is leaving us, and we have been informed by reliable sources that his replacement is to be a Francophone. This does not upset us as much as the implications behind it.

We, the vast majority of bi-cultural students, feel that our Canadian customs will now be lost in the realm of this French "milieu". We all realize the need for an improvement in our educational system, especially in the field of French education. However we don't feel that it is right, or tolerable, for all our students to suffer a loss of their own particular cultural identity because of the desires of a few.

The idea of building a French High School in this area, or of adding a French addition to the present structure of Penetang Secondary School, has been the subject of great controversy at our school for some time now.

Most students, both English and French, are aware that either of the above actions would cause more dissent amongst us.

We thought that the Evaluation Committees were here to help our problem, but so far everytime we ask for answers we are met with more questions.

When we voice our opinions, we are told that we are getting away from the issue. This whole language question will affect the students—yet, it appears our feelings and opinions do not count for much in the long run.

We only hope that the School Board and the committees designated to study this situation will take these problems to heart when deciding upon the future of secondary education in Penetanguishene.

We are so fed up with the situation that we are prepared to stage a walkout and not go back to school until things are settled. Maybe then the educational authorities will be ready to take what we, the students, have to say more seriously.

On behalf of the concerned students, we are,

Sincerely yours,

Janet Pause, Kym Pruesse, Melanie Light, Claudette Marcille, Brenda LeCamp, Susan Cascagnette



Breaking up

The faceless identity of citizen Birdwhistle

Thornton J. Birdwhistle had his identity crisis on April Fool's Day. He was puzzling his way through the instruction booklet that came with his income tax form, when he happened upon this phrase: "...will keep your records straight from those of 12,500,000 other taxpayers."

The number transfixed him. "12,500,000 other taxpayers," he said to himself. "No wonder I feel like a nobody."

Then he remembered that his wife hadn't spoken to him in a warm personal way for months. All she ever said was "Take this to the dry cleaners on your way to work," and "It's time you had a talk with your son."

The boy rarely spoke to him either, unless he needed the car, or some money to meet the payments on his motorcycle.

Birdwhistle's boss communicated with him through Xeroxed memos which pointed out that he was an expendable cog in a faltering operation that was seriously threatened by overseas competitors.

All Birdwhistle's mail was addressed to "Dear Householder" or "Dear Subscriber", and even his dog ignored him when he whistled.

Accordingly, Birdwhistle made an appointment with the Federal Ministry of Lost Identities.

"All I want," he said, "is proof that I exist. That I am in some way, significant."

"Of course you exist, Mr. Birdgravel," said the counsellor. "Here you are right here.

by Shirley Whittington



You're number 536703856."

"But I don't want to be a number!" cried Thornton. "I want to be a person that people care about and listen to. And my name is Birdwhistle. B-I-R..."

"There's no need to spell it, Mr. Birdsong," said the Counsellor crisply. "We aren't idiots here. Now, what we have to do is find something about you that makes you unique. Significant. Where were you born?"

"In Canada," replied Birdwhistle. "My parents were born here too. And my grandparents..."

"Pity," said the Counsellor. "You're not a landed immigrant? You're sure you're not Jewish? Black? Ojibway? Polish? A Quebecois? Or maybe..." and her eyes brightened with hope, "one of your grandparents was born in Newfoundland? Newfoundlanders are very significant—not to

say chic—these days."

"All my ancestors," said Birdwhistle, "were white, anglo-Saxon Protestants. I'm really sorry."

The counsellor sighed.

"Well, Mr. Birdcage, are you lefthanded? Homosexual? Divorced? A vegetarian perhaps, or a single parent on welfare?"

"Negative on all counts," replied Birdwhistle.

The counsellor reached for a government handbook called Significant Canadians.

"Let's see—are you a postal worker, a child molester, a unilingual civil servant, or an angry student? No? Have you ever been mugged, kidnapped, raped, held in court without just cause or subjected to electronic surveillance? Have you ever been prevented from joining a girls' basketball team?"

Birdwhistle blushed exceedingly. "Oh,

gosh—never."

"Are you a pusher, an alcoholic, a redundant teacher, a..."

"Can't you see?" cried Birdwhistle. "I'm none of those. I just am, or at least I think I am."

"Mr. Birdwit," said the counsellor as she slammed her book closed, "you are a nothing. A colourless Canadian. No wonder nobody ever pays any attention to you."

Birdwhistle groaned.

"I can't go on like this. I need an identity. I need to know that somebody cares what I think."

"Of course you do," cooed the counsellor, who could see that she had a nut case on her hands. "I'll put your case before the Royal Commission on Faceless People. That's all I can do."

Birdwhistle went home and found his tax return envelope. He wrote POOP ON YOU on a piece of paper, stuffed it in the envelope, and mailed it.

Two weeks later Thornton J. Birdwhistle was arrested for tax evasion, insulting a Federal official, misuse of the mails and impersonating a person. His lawyer successfully entered a plea of temporary insanity and Birdwhistle is now a guest of the Ministry of Health and Welfare at the Psychiatric Acres Mental Health Centre.

And when he speaks, people listen. They have to. They're being paid to listen.

Constitutional changes

Dans l'état actuel des choses aucun parti politique en particulier ne peut fournir une solution immédiate et permanente. Le mal réside dans la structure du système lui-même. Avec l'absence d'une ligne de conduite le pays semble avoir grandi bien trop vite tel un enfant gâté qui n'a jamais connu la tutelle de ses parents. C'est pourquoi on y trouve tous les extrêmes d'une débauche incontrôlée si chère au concept de la Libre Entreprise.

Si l'on ajoute à cela la politique contradictoire menée par les dix autres gouvernements provinciaux parallèlement à celle du fédéral, on finit par comprendre la raison pour laquelle un simple citoyen ne sait plus à quelle "mamelite" il appartient.

Onze gouvernements à effectifs au complet pour une population de 22 millions d'habitants, constitue une saturation administrative jamais encore égale dans l'histoire d'un pays qui recherche l'unité. Nous avons des services gouvernementaux qui se juxtaposent, se chevauchent et qui se contredisent mais s'accordent toujours quand il s'agit de taxer pour financer cette puissante administration.

Le contribuable dans ce pays, connu sous le nom plus approprié de consommateur, paie déjà pour un montant égal à 50 per cent de son revenu en taxes de toutes sortes, autant que les suédois qui eux par contre bénéficient d'avantages sociaux bien supérieurs aux nôtres.

Malheureusement le rôle du contribuable canadien ne se limite pas seulement à financer deux gouvernements, il faut encore y ajouter les services municipaux qui eux aussi ont des effectifs au complet et se distinguent quelquefois en "pondant" des règlements au delà de leur juridiction et de leurs capacités.

Comme il n'existe semble-t-il aucune autorité pour freiner ces "petits gouvernements" à se bâtir des fiefs comme au temps de la féodalité, il est par conséquent d'une extrême urgence pour les canadiens d'inclure dans la nouvelle constitution le rôle des municipalités et la limite de leurs pouvoirs.

On ne pourra jamais trop insister sur la nécessité pour le Canada de préserver pour ses habitants une vie et un système démocratique dont il s'est tant vanté à l'étranger pour attirer les immigrants.

Pourtant tout laisse supposer que ce système se détériore petit à petit par le seul fait que trois niveaux de gouvernements fabriquent des lois, des décrets et des règlements sans se soucier si ces règlements sont conformes à l'esprit même de notre système démocratique. Le résultat est que nos libertés civiles déjà très restreintes, se rétrécissent au fur et à mesure en se faisant grignoter par l'application de niaiseries" comme par exemple l'imposition obligatoire de ceintures de sécurité dans les voitures automobiles pour une certaine catégorie d'automobilistes seulement. Inutile de préciser que dans bien des pays une telle mesure serait considérée comme un attentat à la liberté civile puisqu'elle autorise la police à mettre son nez là où commence la propriété privée c'est à dire l'intérieur d'un véhicule. Comme c'est le cas pour tous les règlements au Canada, celui-ci bien entendu ne s'applique pas à tout le monde et son caractère discriminatoire ne fait que révéler l'opinion de ceux qui ont déjà connu une société basée sur un peu plus de justice et moins de privilèges.

Si la police, les autobus scolaires, les ambulances, les taxis, les vendeurs de porte à porte, les camionneurs, les femmes enceintes etc. peuvent être exemptés, alors pourquoi pas le restant du "cheptel". Tous les êtres humains sont doués après tout d'une intelligence identique et n'ont pas besoin d'une compagnie d'assurance pour vieillir sur leur vie. Un produit commercial tel qu'une ceinture de sécurité ne devrait pas être commandité par un service du gouvernement provincial sans le consentement de la ligue des droits de l'homme. La police a certainement autre chose à faire que de pousser la vente de ce produit.

Espérons que la prochaine mise sur le marché de la nouvelle pâte dentifrice ne fera pas l'objet d'un décret du gouvernement provincial.

Il est à craindre d'autre part que la complexité de ce gouvernement pour l'adoption forcée de cette ceinture ne donne aux compagnies d'assurance la liberté d'échapper à leurs obligations en cas d'accidents graves. Il est pourtant reconnu que la baisse dans les accidents corporels est due avant tout à la diminution de la vitesse sur toutes les routes et non pas à l'introduction de la ceinture.

Last fall, when it rained for 40 days and 40 nights and then began to snow for about a similar spell, I received a couple of pretty stern letters from readers.

One was from an elderly gentleman, the other from a clergyman. Both excoriated me, in their different ways, for being blasphemous. Cause of their concern was a pair of columns in which I suggested to the Almighty that we'd had enough precipitation, and He could stop dumping it on us any time.

The E.G. wrote a cross letter to his editor and sent me a copy. The preacher wrote me a long, personal letter, telling me I shouldn't be so "chummy" with God. He offered to pray for me, and sent along a modern version of the Bible, containing such words as "booby-traps," which rather alarmed me, accustomed as I am to the austere and dignified King James Version.

Well, I wrote some pretty bitter columns about the Canadian winter. But after six straight weeks of glorious, clear, sunny weather, I'm beginning to wonder who is right, me or my critics.

Maybe the Lord does read my column, probably on one of His frequent lunch breaks. I didn't pray to Him for some decent weather. I told him rather snappily, that we were fed up with what He was dishing up. He didn't strike me down with a thunderbolt, although I noticed my arthritis became pretty keen there for a few weeks.

Maybe the Lord mused, something like this: "By Jove, maybe Bill Smiley is right. Maybe I did forget to turn off the taps there for a few months. It wouldn't be the first time. I remember a few years back that

by Bill Smiley

business of Noah and his family. I clean forgot about them until it was nearly too late.

"I get so darn sick of people praying for better health, better crops, more money, happiness, and their own worthless hides when they're in a jam that I sometimes turn off my hearing aid. I'm supposed to see the little sparrow fall, so maybe I should pay attention when a smalltown columnist goes out of his way to remind me that there is a lot more than sparrows falling, and a lot too much of it.

"I'll let him sweat it out for another couple of weeks, just show him that you don't challenge My will with impunity. Then I'll turn on the sun for a solid six weeks, making the scoffers realize that the day of miracles is not past. Six weeks of sunshine in a Canadian winter! That beats walking on water any day.

"Just for the Heaven of it, I'll dump some snow and wind and ice and rain on those fat cats who go south every winter, and let those Canadians who stayed home, not exactly my

chosen people, but at least my frozen people, write nasty letters south, telling their relatives of the blue skies, radiant sun, and crystal air back home.

"Smiley's going to have to pay for it, of course. He might as well find out, once and for all, that you don't get chummy or cocky with Me. That's a special sphere reserved for preachers and politicians.

"Let's see. No use increasing his arthritic pain or his backache. That only drives him to blasphemy, and We don't want to encourage that. I could wreck his golf shot. But that wouldn't work either. It's already so lousy he'd never even notice it.

"No, it has to be something more subtle. Maybe I could put a bug in his wife's ear, and have her drag him out of bed at seven every morning and share the agonies of that half-hour of exercise she does with that dame on the TV. That would ruffle him more than somewhat.

"But it's not enough. It wouldn't be clear to him that I am an almighty, omnipotent,

Farmer's son changed view of country life

Since I moved away from the thriving metropolis of Toronto and Ottawa, I have become increasingly less tolerant of city people.

This new character trait I have just discovered.

I remember when I first moved to Orillia three summers ago and screamed at a cashier in a food store to stop chatting with the cashier in the next check-out and get at bagging and ringing in my order.

She looked at me as if I was nuts, told me to "stuff it" and kept right on yacking about the state of the world according to cashiers and bag boys.

That same summer, I swore that Orillia drivers were the worst and the slowest in the world, each time I pulled out and roared around them, leaving them eating my blue oil burning dust.

Perhaps I would never have adjusted to the slower small town life.

But then I met the farmer's son (as opposed to the farmer's daughter) and my outlook changed.

It wasn't long before I learned the joys of stepping out of my car into a fresh steaming pile of horse manure, hands worn raw from bringing in the hay and chasing an obnoxious lamb across the field and - arg - through the creek with my best sneakers on.

Last weekend the hub and I had some friends visiting from the city. From the moment they stepped out of their car, they begged us to take them to the hub's folks

spread for a taste of farming life.

They were both dressed in clothes from Toronto's more fashionable sports stores - leather coats, black driving gloves, shiny new blue jeans and black patent leather shoes.

"Just old rags", they told us. Ever seen a pair of black patent leathers with manure in the instep?

Even though both of them were from the smoozy Hamilton area, neither could stand the fresh smell in the sheep barn. They both recoiled, nose pinched with leather gloved fingers and shrieked when a few day old lamb came nuzzling toward them.

The farm dogs were anxious to greet the newcomers to the farm. Their breath was only mildly tainted with fresh ground hog and the hub and I saw nothing offensive about them but our city friends fled for the car, noses red from pinching them so long and hard.

Both of city slicks were horse crazy, as a lot of city dwellers are. They look at a horse in a picture book and figure anyone can ride one. They insisted we saddle up one of the critters.

We choose one of the smallest - a half horse, half pony called Cheddar. We realized their riding skills left a lot to be desired when one tried to mount from the wrong side and asked how to steer.

The hub lead his friend around the barn yard. At a trot he looked he was riding a pogo stick.

A full foot out of the saddle he bounced and the hub yelled "a record".

Getting the other visitor on the horse was an entirely different story. At four foot and 150 pounds it was no easy chore. Hub held the horse. I gave her a foot hold and her boyfriend got his back under her rotund year end. When she was up her little legs stuck straight out to the sides.



fierce and vengeful God. He'd probably think it was merely his wife being obnoxious. And he'd claim he couldn't do the exercises with his bad back and his bad neck and his bad shoulder and his bad knee.

"I could always rot the rest of his teeth, which are pretty well ready for the boneyard, anyway. At least he'd suffer the humiliation of going around drooling and gumming his food for a while. But with these blasted modern dentists, he'd soon be going around with a fistful of big, white, attractive molars, and thinking he could start smiling at women again.

"Nope, it's got to be something that would really get to him. I could easily have him fired from his job for vagrancy, bad shuffleboard, mopery, gawk and not preparing lesson plans. He's guilty of all and each of them. But it wouldn't do. He's so lazy I think he'd enjoy being fired. And he'd go straight on unemployment insurance.

"Got it! It will hit where it hurts. I'll turn his grandsons against him. I'll make them see that he's spoiling them rotten warping their characters, that he swears, drinks, smokes, gambles, and is altogether a most reprobate and unfit grandfather.

"But...would it take? They don't really care if he drinks, smokes, etc. They need him for running across the room and jumping on. They need him for kisses when they hurt themselves. They couldn't care less if he were Old Nick himself, as far as morals go.

"Ah, well, I guess I'll just have to let him go to hell in his own inimitable way. That's punishment enough for anyone."

by Terri Howell



But all of this was nothing compared to the questions they asked. What do horses eat?

"Cereal - Rice Krispies and Shreddies," answered the hub.

"Do you buy it?"

"No it grows in the fields", I answered.

"We pick it during the summer."

"Can the horse breathe when you tighten the girth up so tight?" (he didn't say girth).

"Sure," said Hub, "they breathe through their sides like fish, when they're saddled up."

"No" said the visitors in unison.

"You're right", said hub, "you've got me, you shouldn't do the girth up too tight".

I hope they never go for a ride where they saddle up themselves.

"How big is this farm."

"100 acres."

"100 acres - what do you do with all that land."

I was getting ready to yell at him like I yelled at the cashier when I realized how ludicrous that would be and how much I had changed since I first came to this neck of the woods. All of a sudden I was thankful that my training had come when the Hub wasn't in a smart alec mood and I wasn't the one standing there asking the silly questions.

We just received a thank you note from the city pair, who claim they are "safe and sound back in the city". They told us their leather jackets are still airing and do we know how to get manure out of insteps. They said the ride home wasn't bad, but why aren't the roads lit up with lights like in the city?

The Penetanguishene Citizen

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