

Brigade future uncertain

The survival of the local lifesaving St. John Ambulance Brigade is questionable, since the group of volunteers cannot find a meeting place, to encourage one another and to teach others first aid and cardio-pulmonary resuscitation. The life in this group appears to be being choked out by a lack of interest, concern and support from those the group has sought to serve.

Financially crippled, hardly being able to keep its mobile first aid post running, and desperately seeking shelter, Brigade leader Bev Steele has said neither the Town of Midland nor the Town of Penetanguishene has any place to offer the local chapter.

It appears now as if the group is being taken for granted, and taken to be something it is not: a service club. Service Clubs, such as the Rotary and Richelieu Clubs, raise the funds they need to survive and to give back to the community. Not being such a club, however, the St. John Ambulance Brigade is dependent entirely upon donations by the community.

In an area such as Midland-Penetanguishene, which is so rich in community spirit, it is hard to understand why a new home cannot be found for this group that is so committed to the lives of our citizens. The brigade has given to our community for a long time now, and without the generous support of some individual or group who has space available to house this team of community workers, the familiar site of the blue uniformed brigade members in the hockey arenas and on the baseball fields will be a thing of the past.

Storm brings out best

While many residents stayed securely at home while Saturday night's sudden onslaught of winter raged through Huronia, dumping almost three feet of snow, some defiant souls trekked out to prove they were stronger than Old Man Winter. Without the aid of snowplows, that were called off by many municipalities, due to blustery winds that nullified visibility, many of these adventurous souls found themselves stranded on the highways and byways.

Crews of unidentified snowmobilers, braving the fury, set out in the Midland-Penetanguishene area in search of stranded drivers. They undoubtedly saved the day for many caught, alone, with no option except to surrender to the storm.

These people were not called upon to help, but did it of their own free will. For that they deserve a big round of applause from everyone, especially those over-adventurous motorists who finally made it home Saturday night after being assisted by one of these unknown snowmobilers.



Moments like these

Angela Schmidt-Foster was asked last week to stand up and take a bow for her many accomplishments on the cross-country ski circuit. Thursday evening local residents were on hand at The Midland Boatworks Restaurant to meet and congratulate one of the area's home-grown celebrities. Although the managers of the local establishment planned the event, the Town of Midland was

also on hand to thank the woman for a job well done as Councillor Gail Barrie presented Schmidt-Foster with a plaque on behalf of town council. Schmidt-Foster has been an inspiration to many and will continue on to be in the future. Congratulations again, Angela! This is the least your community, you have given so much to, could do.

Viewpoint

No more badgering! The bottom is here

by Carey Nieuwhof

If it's true that the captain always goes down with his ship, then Brian Mulroney is somewhere at the bottom of the Atlantic right now. If his government is to sink much lower, it will have to dig itself deep into the ocean sand, leagues below the sharks and other creatures that used to bother it. Brian has sunk so low that criticism that used to sting is now routine. If this isn't the bottom, then Brian Mulroney doesn't know what is.

This last month has been awful for our prime minister. He has undergone a bout of severe criticism over the deal his government struck with the Americans on softwood lumber. There have been staff bunglings in ministries. He's had his sixth cabinet minister resign in a cloud of controversy. The Americans signed an acid rain deal with the Mexicans before they even indicated to Canada that they would discuss acid rain with us.

It's likely that every night Mulroney goes to bed hoping that he'll sleep for a month, wake up, and find that all of his troubles have disappeared. Well Brian, I have news for you.

If you play your cards right, that could happen.

You see, many of the problems that Mulroney is now facing are not really new. The NDP and the Liberals have been hammering the prime minister about free trade for eons. The softwood lumber issue is months old now. The latest cabinet resignation sounds very much like the conflict of interest ordeals we've heard many times before. It may sound strange, but because Brian is once again facing the same problems he's had to deal with for so long, they may not hurt him badly. When the public heard about the latest scandals, I don't think they greeted them with as much moral outrage as they did in the past. I think the public said, "Oh no, not again. We're tired of this." That attitude may be Mulroney's ticket back to success.

Mulroney handled the Andre Bissonnette resignation perfectly. If it's true that Mulroney heard of Bissonnette's controversial land deal only days before he fired him, then the issue should not haunt Mulroney like the Sinclair Steven's affair did. Mulroney acted swiftly, and fired Bissonnette before the

opposition could seize the issue and embarrass Mulroney with it.

The quick firing showed the public that Mulroney learned his lesson, and that he too was 'tired' of a scandal-ridden government. If Mulroney didn't lie about the affair, and if he acted as quickly as he claims he did, then the public can't hold the scandal against his government. In fact, the public may even begin to feel sorry for Mulroney.

The public may also start to feel sorry for Mulroney over free trade. It should become obvious to Canadians that the new American Congress hates us. Most Canadians will also realize another thing this year - Canada has two trade options with the U.S. It can pursue freer, fairer trade with the Americans, which the Mulroney government is trying so hard to do or it can sit back and have protectionist duties slapped on our exports.

Later this year, Mulroney will start to play hard ball with the Americans. He will tell them that the freer trade deal is very important, but if a deal can't be reached, then a fairer trade deal is a must. Canadians will agree with Mulroney when he says this, and

they'll finally begin to applaud his trade initiatives. Canadians will also realize that the Liberals and the NDP have no trade policy. So far, both parties have only spoken out against the Tory trade policy. They have offered no alternative. Canadians will not stand for that much longer.

Poor Brian's troubles are not entirely over, but they may be abating. So much has gone wrong for Mulroney, that he is almost shock-proof. What else can happen that hasn't happened already? Can you think of anything?

Six people have resigned from the cabinet in two years. The Americans are mad at us because they can't sell their products abroad. Mulroney's staff has done everything wrong, so there is little left to bungle. Mulroney is in last place in the polls. Canadians may start to feel sorry for the man who has endured all this and much more in 28 short months.

Tell us prime minister, the badgering can't possibly hurt anymore, can it? You've been hounded so many times. Roll up your sleeves Brian, and get ready for the struggle back to respectability. There is nowhere to go but up.

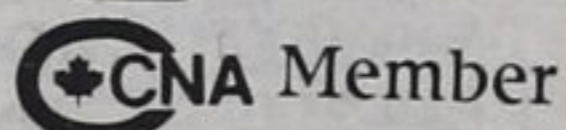
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