

The Liberal

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Opinion

Letters

Double standard of Bertons, Godfreys

Dear Mr. Editor:
Bravo to Mr. Milani!

He has skillfully articulated the essence of a double standard held by the Bertons and Godfreys in the general area which can be called York.

I don't think I'm for more airports, or highways, or BAIFF type housing developments sprawling into our area. But I must admit I am confused as to exactly where my sentiments lie.

However I can't sympathize with the vociferous attacks by some who want to maintain the "fabric of a closely knit community". "Closely knit to what"? These are the people who have made bedroom communities out of Toronto's peripheral towns.

They don't want to give up the high levels of remuneration or sophisticated culture associated with a dense urban area.

They don't want to live in the crowded "hassle" of a big city.

They do want to live on their "four" or "10" acre lots, but they don't want to see a new housing development in their view from the patio window of their backsplit.

In other words they don't want to share with others what they consider the best of both worlds.

So I believe the violence Mr. Milani describes can also be called selfishness.

Additionally I get "mal d'estomac" when I hear the oft repeated argument as put forth by Mrs. Mansfield

about the waste of agricultural land.

I am an agriculturist and I deplore the waste of any square foot capable of crop production. But let's look at the other side of the coin.

A great many farms in York were divided into 10 acre lots and sold. Expensive houses built on them, a swimming pool, two or three car garage to store the air conditioned 'Caddy', etc.

And the remaining 9.9½ acres of this prime land so strongly defended as "Class 1" is growing a "Class 1" crop of goldenrod, thistle and couch.

Today the minimum size in some areas for dividing farms is 25 acres. But that doesn't matter. Stalwart Torontonians still up the ante and lay more land to waste.

At least many of the skillful, young farmers displaced by Pickering Airport have been able to move (through the profitable sales of their farms) to land, equally as good or better, and have not been hamstrung in the expansion plans, necessary today to amortize the high capital costs involved in farming, by land prices bid up by non-farmers.

The old parable that there are three sides to every story "your side, my side and the truth" says a lot in this on-going discussion.

I believe Mr. Milani has struck closer to the truth than many of the arguments I've heard to date.

MARTIN PICK,
Box 126,
Richmond Hill, Ont.

Region housing action (Part 1)

Markham and Vaughan Towns are immediately concerned with the findings of last week's York Region report on the tax deficit caused by new residential development.

Both municipalities are under pressure generally for residential expansion. In addition each is being pushed for projects of 20,000 population as the province tries to fulfill its housing action promises.

The two big projects are Markham's Milliken Mills just east of Thornhill and Vaughan's Pine Valley Village in the Woodbridge area.

It is unpleasant and disheartening, to say the least, to see there is such a tax deficit barrier to normal growth in the supply of housing.

If our society needs anything, it's more housing. The housing shortage and housing cost crisis right now is our most serious single social and economic problem.

The findings of the region's housing consultants no doubt will reinforce the opposition to housing expansion here and elsewhere. That will only make the crisis worse, adding to the social cost and human suffering.

But for one thing we should be thankful for this report. It has laid bare for all to see, a major

problem and root cause of the housing crisis. Now it's out in the open and can be eliminated.

For a long time municipal self-interest and municipal taxpayer greed has worked against housing development. All municipal politicians have to do now to be popular is fight against housing and keep the taxes down.

That has long been a regular refrain from self-seeking politicians at election time and a threat to wiser councillors.

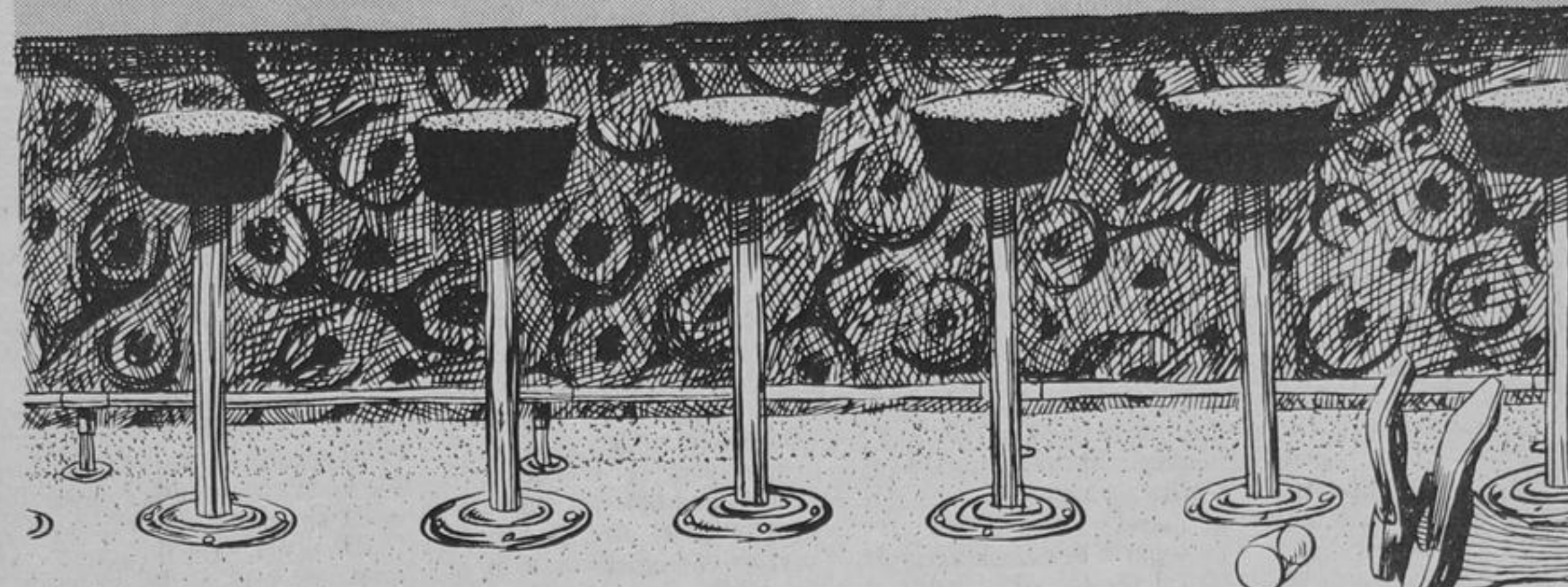
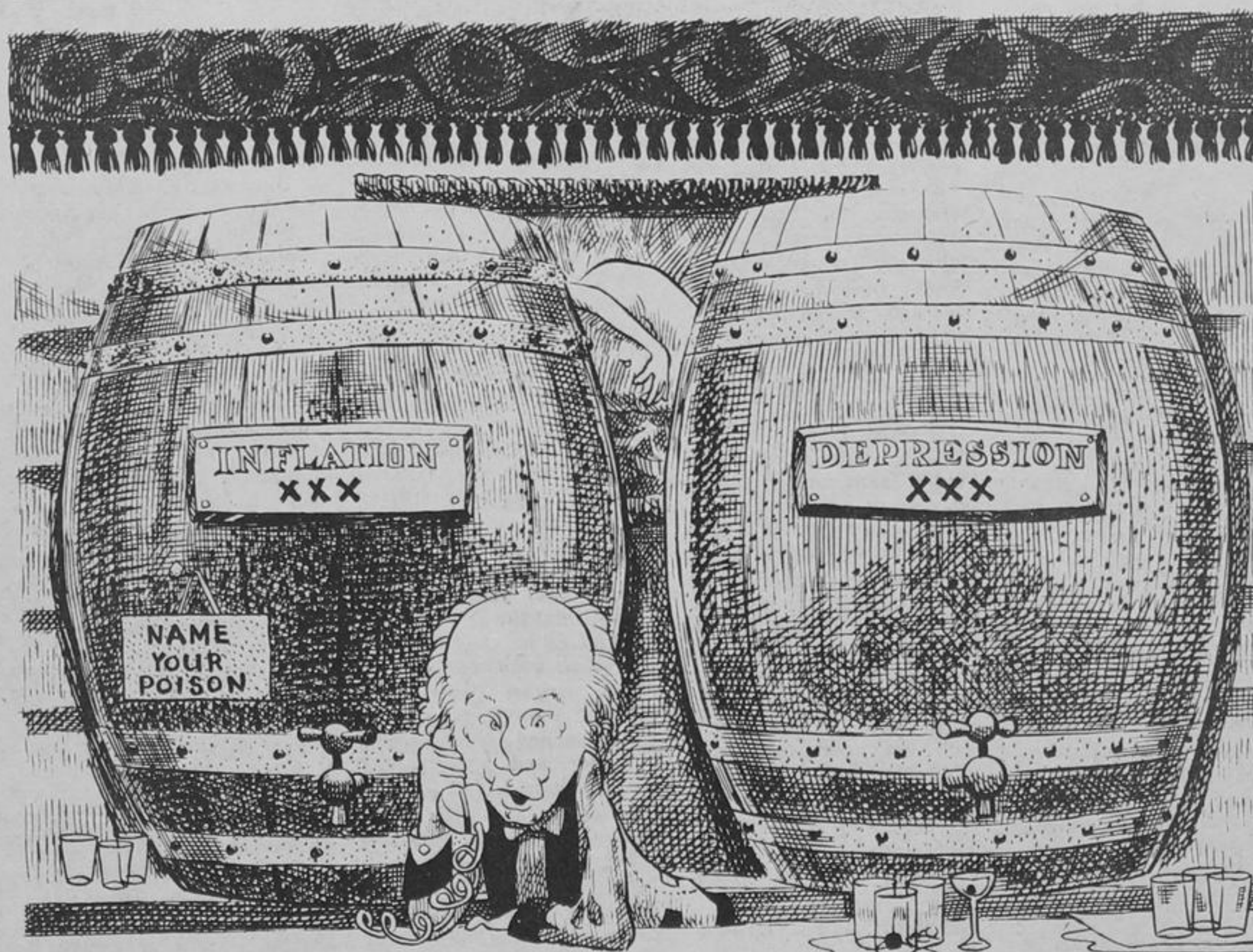
No municipality can stand alone now. If it opens the doors wide to housing it most certainly will suffer.

Markham has recently been relatively generous to new housing, at its peril. On the other hand, Vaughan has been closed-fisted, taking in very little housing and concentrating on tax profitable industrial development.

Vaughan should open its doors much wider to housing.

If it is serious about housing action, the province should use its grants system or other means to eliminate the tax greed barrier to housing development. The responsibility and power to do so lies with the province alone.

(Next week we will deal with the housing report and "the little guy".)



"Same old thing, Margaret... I have to listen to all their troubles of strikes, scandals, energy, OHAP tax deficits,....etc..."

STRA

Big trouble in housing

(Guest editorial from The Etobicoke Advertiser)

Elobians are in for big trouble in the housing field this year unless quick action is forthcoming from the borough or the province.

Many families in the borough long ago gave up any hope of owning their own homes. Now, the crunch is upon them in trying to find rental accommodation.

Last year was disastrous for rental units in the borough, with building permits for apartments dropping by an unprecedented 85 per cent.

According to recently released figures, the borough's apartment building permits last year declined to \$24.7 million from the 1973 total of \$163.8 million.

So far, the province and the borough have been unwilling, or unable, to take action to ease the pressure on apartment accommodation.

High mortgage rates and

carrying costs, uncertain economic conditions and increased labor and maintenance costs have severely affected the start of new apartment units.

Real estate experts are consequently predicting rental increases of 30 to 35 per cent this year.

Council has time and again refused to approach the province to set up a rent review board with the power to roll back prices.

And council has yet to decide on a housing committee recommendation that would block the selling off of apartments as condominium units.

Unless council can take a more charitable view of future high-rise apartment proposals instead of turning them down en masse, Etobicoke's population must be frozen.

Council's only option will be the manning of the barricades to keep a greater population influx out.



SINCLAIR STEVENS
REPORTS
SINCLAIR STEVENS MP
YORK SIMCOE

Needed or not — wanted or not — Pickering is destined to be a huge airport — one of the largest in the world.

Ever since 1968 the federal government has been persuaded, largely by the bureaucracy and their professional consultants, anxious for business, that Toronto must have a super airport.

The difficulty has been political. How do you persuade a region that has the ninth busiest airport on the continent (handling only one-seventh of the air traffic of O'Hare in Chicago) that they need air facilities three times the size of Chicago?

How do you persuade those who reside near the new airport the noise heard at Malton will not be heard by them when the noisiest planes using Malton are shifted to the new site.

Be less than candid — that is the government's answer. Transport Minister Jean Marchand February 20 announced the government's decision to "develop a minimum international airport at the site near Pickering as soon as possible."

While the site has 18,000 acres of fine farm land, "only one runway and appropriate passenger terminal and related facilities are to be built" . . . at present.

First planes will fly by 1979, just after the next election.

Offer to buy
Mr. Marchand, referring to the Airport Inquiry Commission report, stated, "With regard to zoning and use of adjacent lands, the commission suggested the government

should offer to buy the properties of residents in Stouffville and area and Claremont.

"The commission felt this purchase should be made to save the residents from future unacceptable noise levels."

The government has agreed to purchase homes in Claremont but not in Stouffville and area. Their offer to Stouffville was simply "to meet to establish a program to collectively determine the facts as quickly as possible."

Naturally we are disappointed the government intends to proceed with an immediate development at Pickering. In October, 1972, Mr. Stanfield said the case for a second airport at Toronto had not been made. That is still our view.

With today's uncertainties in the travel field — with world airline traffic in 1974 showing the smallest increase in 15 years with other means of speedy transportation becoming possible — we urged the minister to defer his decision for two, three or possibly five years.

Costly mistake
Unfortunately he persisted in making a costly mistake that will disrupt a fine area of Ontario needlessly.

In responding to Mr. Marchand's statement in the house, I said, "We believe that the minister's suggestion today that he will have only some kind of mini-airport with a mini-runway is not being frank with the Canadian public."

The minister made it clear that he believes international air service should be routed through Pickering. He referred

to the Gibson report in certain respects, but not to the comment on page 212 of the report which states that all international travel should be routed through Pickering.

These are the words used: "The noisiest aircraft presently operating at Malton, the DC-8 and the 707, which are used in the international sector, will fly from the proposed Pickering airport."

30 miles apart

By 1979 there will be five runways in use in the Toronto area — four at Malton and one at Pickering. International flights are to use the one runway at Pickering which is some 30 miles from Malton.

As a result, if plans do not change, a traveller from say Thunder Bay going to Europe will have to fly into Malton, our domestic airport, transfer to Pickering and then continue his trip.

Such travel complications have never worked in other countries. International carriers have already stated they don't agree with Pickering.

Air Canada has asked that the development be delayed. De Havilland, another crown corporation, has stated Pickering is not needed.

Surely it is not too late for reason to prevail. If the government would bury some pride and free themselves from the dictates of their bureaucrats they could still avoid an unnecessary and very costly mistake.

Canadian theatre alive — but not at Stratford

By DON RUBIN

About two years ago, I visited Poland for the first time. I was there on official business for the CBC, which is to say I had managed to convince the CBC I should be sent to Poland to report back on the Stratford Festival's European tour, a tour which also took me to Scandinavia and the Soviet Union.

At any rate, in Poland — and space forces me to limit my comments to that one aspect of the Stratford tour — they take their theatre quite seriously. It's part of the fabric of the country and it's a country that takes great pride in its history and in its culture.

In Poland, as in virtually every other urbanized country in the world, there is a long and glorious tradition of national theatre — that is, theatre by their writers, played by their actors, designed by their designers, for their people.

What the Poles couldn't understand about the Stratford tour — and remember, when the Stratford company tours, it does so as the National Theatre of Canada — was its repertoire for the tour — Shakespeare's King Lear and Taming of the Shrew.

Now don't get me wrong. I like Shakespeare and so do the Poles.

However, the question I was continually asked by Polish critics and journalists was this: "If this is the National Theatre of Canada, why do they bring no Canadian plays? If we wanted Shakespeare, we could have brought in an English company. But we want to know something about Canada. Unfortunately, all we are given is old-fashioned costume productions which were dated 30 years ago when the Old Vic was in Warsaw."

Knock on the door

How could I answer that? Should I have told them that 1940's Old Vic-style Shakespeare was Canada? First, the thought of that was much too painful for me. Second, it's just not true.

There is a Canadian theatre in Canada and it is alive and well. But it is not living in



The guest spot

A topical column of opinion by our readers. Submissions should be no more than 800 words, typed preferably.

Stratford, despite the posturing to the contrary of Stratford's new artistic director; it is not at the St. Lawrence Centre, although it has been knocking on the door there; and it's not located in Niagara-on-the-Lake, nor most of the large subsidized theatres located across the country.

I was very impressed with the Polish theatre I saw, as were the other critics on that tour and members of the Stratford company. I also found it fascinating, after seeing theatre that is obviously speaking to its audiences and after speaking to theatre people who really believe theatre has an obligation to its society, that no less than 15 members of the Stratford troupe left the company when they returned to Canada.

I don't know where all of them went. I do know many of them looked longingly at many of the smaller companies in Canada doing work that is not only good and entertaining but which is obviously making some of those connections with audiences.

I'm speaking now of companies like the Tarragon and plays such as James Reaney's Sticks and Stones, a play hewn out of Ontario legend, and David French's Leaving Home, a play about growing up in Canada; of Theatre Passe Muraille and plays such as 1837, a delightful and genuinely-moving comedy drama about an ill-fated farmer's revolt in and around precisely this part of Ontario 138 years ago.

I'm thinking of the Factory Theatre Lab, where David Freeman's powerful Creeps first started its long and successful stage life.

The theatres I've mentioned thus far are all located in Toronto, but Canadian theatre (that is, theatre written by and about us) is happening all across this country.

Of course, if you haven't yet taken the theatrical plunge into our cultural life, it may well be that you've just not heard of it before. It may be, if you have heard of it, that you're not particularly interested in sitting on uncomfortable chairs or climbing up stairs to lofts or listening to pipes and radiators clink and clank during a show.

Depressing grants

On the one hand, I don't blame you. I find most of these things rather disconcerting myself.

But on the other hand, I wonder if you've ever thought about why plays by Canadian authors have to be put on in lofts or school rooms or basements by companies which can barely afford to pay actors a survival salary?

When was the last time you saw a Canadian script on the Stratford Festival's main stage or at Shaw?

If for one find it a bit disconcerting when a theatre such as Tarragon, which does six or eight new and usually important Canadian plays a year, manages to get only \$40,000 from the Canada Council. Stratford gets nearly half a million dollars annually to put into everything but Things Canadian.

I find it a bit depressing when I see the Shaw festival getting giant subsidies to mount productions of second-rate English plays when the artists at Toronto Free Theatre, Passe Muraille and the Factory — to name just a few — struggle to survive on \$65 a week.

I am not suggesting, of course, that through subsidy manipulation we're in the middle of some insidious government plot to deprive us of our history and our culture. It's much more subtle than that.

We're giving it up. And up until a few

years ago, we were giving it up without so much as fluttering a maple leaf or swinging a hockey stick at the offenders.

We were just letting it go and we were well on our way to becoming the 51st state (or perhaps something worse).

What I am suggesting is it was our artists before anyone else who saw all this happening and who began demanding in their work that we look at ourselves and, at least, become conscious of what it was we were doing.

It will may be that in the years ahead, we will become part of the United States and we may actually even choose that route politically (unless, of course, our government is "de-stabilized" by our friends in Washington sooner).

But the important thing I think is that we do decide for ourselves who we are and what we are about and what it is we want. That decision has to be made consciously with full awareness of the consequences.

A lot of people have interpreted the whole Canadian chauvinism thing in a rather paranoid way — or, at the very least, in a rather negative way. It is anti-American or anti-English or anti-whatever.

I am well aware that anti-a-lot-of-things have historically masqueraded in the guise of nationalism. But even knowing this, I am personally willing to take a chance on it.

Finding ourselves

I'm afraid if we don't commit ourselves to finding out who we are; if we don't commit our considerable financial backing to those who are leading the search; if we don't support the Canadian theatre today (especially the companies in the vanguard of this movement which are now in real danger of drying up); then we may not find any of the questions even worth asking tomorrow.

As each day passes, the chances of our even remembering that we once thought of such questions becomes more and more remote. One day, we just might wake up to find everything we ever thought of as our own, as unique, as Canadian, will have just vanished.

If that sounds serious to you, I assure you it is. If it all sounds a bit overly-dramatic, make no mistake. The people now struggling in this country to create a world-level theatre from their own experiences, have a lot to be overly-dramatic about.

(Don Rubin is an associate professor of dramatic literature and criticism at York University and editor of the Canadian Theatre Review. A resident of Banquo Road, Thornhill, for the past two years, he is married and has two children. — Editor)

