



## French program step forward

A worthy step forward came last week with the decision to make French teaching available in this region's public schools from Grade 1.

The York County Board of Education agonized a long time over this issue, but finally came down on the right side.

Within their area of responsibility, the school trustees may well have quietly done more to reduce the fires of separatism than their much more visible political counterparts at Queen's Park and on Parliament Hill.

For a century, more or less, the teaching of French in the schools of English Canada has generally been more a gesture than a reality.

This has been an aching waste, to say the least.

And it has been a most regrettable barrier to national harmony.

The failure of bilingualism in this country has been due to a kind of inertia growing out of a variety of opposing human factors.

But bilingualism is neither impossible, nor all that difficult, for the general population so long as the atmosphere and the approach is happy.

And that is the direction in which the school board, to its credit, is moving.

Homely advice on the matter comes to mind from one of our greatest and most perfectly bilingual Canadians, Sir Wilfred Laurier.

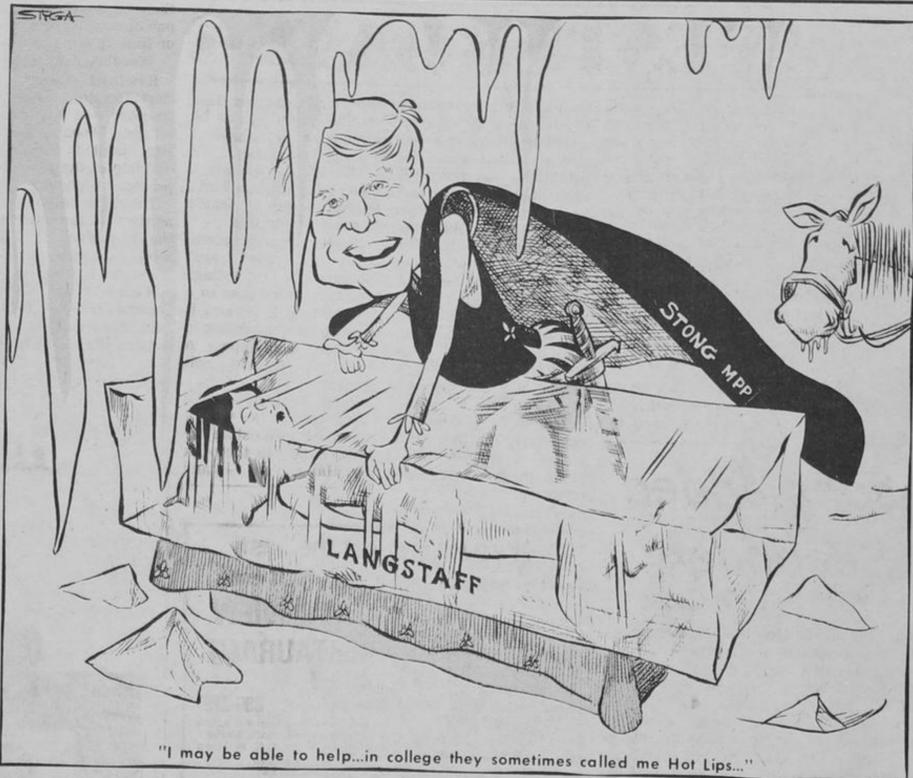
In one of his last great speeches while still at the height of power as he advised McMaster University students in 1913, his words were as follows:

"If I were your age, I would not leave school until I could speak and write French."

Another writer in 1926 put it more colorfully, thus:

"The soul of Canada is a dual personality, and must remain only half revealed to those who know only one language."

The public school trustees have done what they can to make sure the soul of our land no longer is kept half hidden from our children.



## Trustee has correction

Dear editor:  
I would like to correct a statement made twice by Jim Irving in the Dec. 12 issue of The Liberal.

In the Dec. 2 issue of The Toronto Star, Chris McMonagle, a trustee from Markham, was quoted as believing a report had been withheld from the program committee by the director of education for the York County Board of Education.

Mr. Irving stated "the study contained adverse reports on two teachers, and was therefore confidential under provincial by-laws".

This statement is not the correct reason why the report was not circulated to members of the program committee, and I am not aware of any trustee or board official who stated it was.

The reason the report was "withheld" was because it was requested by staff, not by the board, at the suggestion of one trustee, and the ministry of education complied with the staff request on the explicit understanding that the ministry official would report to the director, and not to the board.

These facts were known to members of the committee, and confirmed by the ministry official, Mrs. Dorothy Greatorex, on Monday evening when she met with the board.

I think the quotation by Mr. Irving was speculative and very unfortunate.

(MRS.) MARGARET COBURN,  
Program chairman,  
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## LETTERS

## Postal strike effect is drastic

Dear Editor:

Along with the inconvenience to the individual, the 42-day postal strike affected the business community drastically.

The delay in payments to small business firms put their cash balance in a precarious position at their banks.

Tight money conditions have existed for some time and the additional strain brought on by this disruption could force many firms into bankruptcy.

Firms large and small were forced to lay off personnel in billing departments, order departments and shipping.

Many firms were obliged to rent additional space to store completed orders that normally moved by parcel post on a daily basis.

The space problem resulted in the cancellation of orders to suppliers, thus causing a chain reaction to the business community.

Campaigns which use the mail to raise funds face grave financial losses. The Christmas seal organization in our area, known to us as York-Toronto Tuberculosis and Respiratory Disease Association, are a case in point.

Should a group that has contributed to the health and well being of Canadians who suffered with T. B. have

been treated so badly.

Our federal government has allowed three postal strikes during the past few years.

What ever happened to the motto "The mail must go through"?

The British North America Act guaranteed the right of every Canadian to mail service.

Our troubled economy faced with increasing effects of inflation could not afford this costly disruption.

Government must legislate laws to protect the individual and the business community, who in this case are the employers, who pay the bills for this government department.

No group of workers should be denied the right to bargain for better working conditions and wages.

However, the 42-day disruption recently experienced by the Canadian tax payer was an unnecessary and

costly strike that proved nothing.

The Post Office is presently engaged in a mechanization program which will make our system the most flexible and reliable in the world.

Our recently introduced postal code was adopted after consultation and advisement with leading countries in Europe, America and the Orient.

Millions of dollars have been spent on new facilities and equipment to speed up the distribution of letter and parcel mail in this country.

If this expenditure is justified, most certainly legislation to prevent a breakdown in the future must be provided.

DOUGLAS ANDREWS,  
President  
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Box 31,  
Richmond Hill, Ont.

## Markham budget

## York region council moving too slowly

Markham town council's finance committee chairman Stan Daurio put forward some very good arguments last week when he took York region council to task for the region's blockade of Markham's capital budget.

The region quite obviously has much to answer for.

It is absurd, to say the least, for York region council to have left final consideration of the past year's local municipal capital projects to the end of November.

Even more ludicrous was it for region council at that point to hold up approval of debentures for necessary projects which of a certainty must be already completed or far advanced.

Thornhill Ward 1 Councillor Daurio put his finger on the nub of the matter when he asked what Markham was supposed to have been doing all during the first 10 months of 1975.

No region councillor in his or her right mind could expect the Markham people to sit around on

their hands for most of the year.

Much of the region's foot dragging is no doubt due to the slow process of assuming responsibility as capital budget watchdog from the province's Municipal Board.

And probably in the process of requiring necessary accountability from Markham, some of the region's stalwarts couldn't resist the temptation to bait Markham's representatives a little and then to watch their faces get red.

That, however, wasn't very constructive conduct.

And Councillor Daurio went a little too far when he ventured to deny the region's right and responsibility as overseer of capital spending in the local municipalities.

Right or wrong, the provincial legislature in its wisdom decided that matter long since.

Still, on the whole, finance chairman Daurio is to be highly commended for meeting the occasion and for putting forward so well Markham's side of the case.

## I expect you won't print this

Dear editor:

I have never written to a newspaper in the past but this time I cannot keep still over an article as contemptible as that which you saw fit to publish on the front page of the sports section (four columns and a picture no less) on Dec. 10.

Life around the arena lately has been quiet for the most part since the beginning of this season and after reading your newspaper, I now know why.

It's unfortunate your reporter did not bother to verify the validity of the facts before printing the story.

Everyone is entitled to their opinion. I realize, but in all fairness I would have thought a little investigation on your part was warranted.

Then again a war via your newspaper would boost sales wouldn't it.

I just bet you expect a loud reaction to the man's accusations, never thinking

perhaps John Q Public just might read between the lines and attack you instead.

I fully expect you will not print this as criticism is a little hard to swallow, but in any case you know how one person feels on the subject.

In answer to the man's charges I will not comment but in answer to the shots taken at the RHHA I say this.

"After you have walked a mile in the RHHA's shoes I might be prepared to listen to criticism."

But until that time it's just a lot of hot air.

BERNI CAMPBELL,  
18 Cartier Crescent,  
Richmond Hill, Ont.

(Ed. note. — The Richmond Hill Hockey Association was informed of the imminent charges by the person in question, Al Harrietha, but reserved comment at the time.)

## Viewpoint from the regional desk



BY JIM IRVING

Have just finished reading a magnificent book about the First World War — if any book about war can claim to be magnificent — told from the Canadian side for a change.

It's called "Generals Die in Bed," and was first published in England in 1928.

Now a Hamilton publishing company has resurrected it and put it out in paperback.

In reading it one wonders why it never reached the heights of "All Quiet on the Western Front," or "A Farewell to Arms," those other great war classics with which it is now being more than favorably compared.

But I digress.

This was not meant to be a book review.

Instead it was mentioned in order to draw an analogy from it for the little homily I'm about to deliver.

In one portion of this more-than-engrossing tale, the troops are preparing for a major offensive, when rations suddenly become greater, precious cigarettes appear in abundance and the rum quota is raised.

"We are being fattened for the slaughter," is the wry comment of one, and general feeling of all.

I was reminded of that bit the other night when three members of Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation descended — now why did I say descended? — on a meeting of York County Board of Education to present a brief — ostensibly — on pupil-teacher ratio.

For they started off at pace designed to spread peace on earth and goodwill toward Board members, with president Eric McLean strewing the flowers in their path after he and his two followers had taken their places at the table.

Two short years ago, they never

could have got together with such a great feeling of mutual accord, McLean began, because trust and respect were non-existent.

Now they had been restored and the board could "take pride in its accomplishments."

With that established, McLean then handed the torch — in this case, the microphone — to John Herbert, treasurer of the District 11 group, who gave the board 30 seconds or so to absorb the four-page brief, before explaining it to them.

Too harsh an analogy? Then read on.

In short — or in brief — it was to the effect that the PTR as of Sept. 30 of this year was 17.44 and "not the expected ratio of 17.15 to 1."

This, according to the brief, represented a shortage of about 15 teachers, all told, or one teacher per school.

"This shortage represents an increased work load for all teachers in the country."

It also said that, as a result of higher PTR, "anticipated improvements in the quality of education at the secondary level in York County, to be achieved by providing more classroom teachers for the students, have not come about."

Mystery improvements

Now neither Mr. Herbert nor Mr. McLean nor Don Nixon, past chairman of the District 11 negotiating committee and the third member of the trio, gave any indication or dropped any hints as to what these "anticipated improvements" might be.

But I'm sure it doesn't take any great stretch of imagination to visualize what great improvements could be brought about if the pupil-teacher ratio were dropped from that breathtaking high of 17.44 to the more serene and bargain

basement level of 17.15.

Surely, we can all see what a difference .29 of a teacher would make.

Why it's tantamount to having a teacher with five fingers on his hand, compared to one having just four fingers and a stub.

It would take a great student to be able to work under those deprived conditions.

However, the brief was determined to be fair.

In a thoughtful little paragraph on page 3, it reasoned that, if they were going to be refused those extra 15 teachers whose combined salaries would amount to something like one-quarter of a million dollars and have that increased teacher workload in the process, then it was a bit foolish to have all that extra money just sitting there taking on mold.

**Bonus for teachers**

Instead, why not an equal payment to all teachers "which would be calculated by dividing this surplus among all secondary teachers in York County."

At the same time, "increasing the board's contributions to the fringe benefits of teachers, until the surplus is used up."

The brief then made haste, however, to point out money wasn't really the answer to quality education.

What was necessary was a method that would insure schools would be staffed with the number of teachers agreed on.

To bring this about, what better procedure than to form a committee of teachers and trustees who were members of last year's two negotiating teams?

This committee could suggest appropriate steps to be taken if the PTR didn't always end up the way it was supposed to.

While there was a grievance procedure in the agreement to cover such matters, "we feel that a continuing improvement in communications could be better achieved by such a committee," the brief stated.

It seems strange the group would insist on such a committee, even though agreeing the PTR would eventually reach the 17.15 point as the year progressed. This admission came after Trustee Keith Hargrave of Georgina, himself a teacher, pointed out fall dropouts had probably already put the ratio down to that amount.

**What's the difference?**

But just how much difference does it all make?

The teachers and their spokesmen would no doubt find something else lacking in the system that was most necessary to honing the skills of the many child prodigies entrusted to their care.

That's what happens when you're sitting around the union hall, or the beer parlor, or in any fairly compatible group.

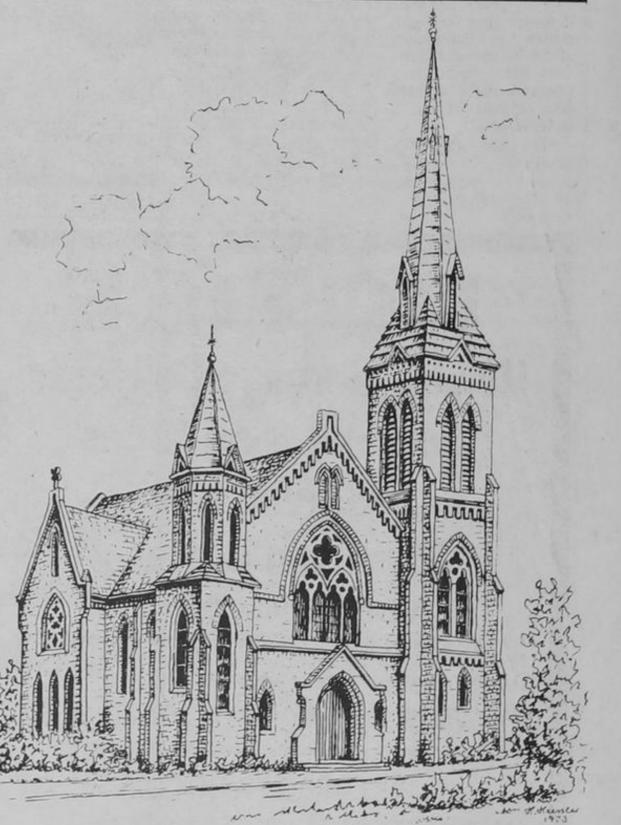
You find sympathetic ears for just about anything you have to say, until casual observations become minor irritations and eventually major differences to be listed on the official grievance list at the earliest opportunity.

"May we reassure you the reason for this delegation is to further the mutual trust and confidence that exists between the board and the secondary teachers by open discussion and just resolution of possible difficulties," the brief concluded.

Fattening for the slaughter?

Maybe I shouldn't read books such as "Generals Die in Bed," during the same week I have meetings to attend.

## Teachers die in bed



Richmond Hill United Church

## Built after 1879 fire

Dedicated March 20, 1881, the present Richmond Hill United Church, was built as a Methodist Church.

Replaced the frame structure built in 1846 which was destroyed by fire Dec. 21, 1879.

Cost of the beautiful new spired place of worship was \$17,000.

The Christian education wing

was added in 1958.

The first Methodist services were held in this area in the early part of the 19th century, but local Methodists worshipped in the Presbyterian Church in the afternoon from 1821 for some years.

After some disagreement, they then met in the public school until 1846.