School board in never land

If York County Board of Education members were really aware of the budget situation necessities as they finalized the year's spending and tax levy last week, their debate didn't seem to show such an awareness.

been debated, and which the tax paying electorate should be concerned about, was whether or not the reserve fund should be reduced at all, let alone by one-half to \$1.3 million.

What the trustees should have been worrying about was the overall cash position of the corporation.

The real concern is whether or not the board during the coming year will be relying unduly upon borrowed money to operate.

If they are, they will have just set a perpetual process in motion where interest charges will continually feed the fires of increased taxes.

And that appears to have been exactly what has been done.

So they failed the real test of fiscal responsibility.

Redistribution

If another lesson in the need for

Complications at the provin-

This means residents of south

The existence of an intolerable

It's all even more insulting

speedy, early action on electoral

redistribution was required, then

cial level have made it almost

certain ward redistribution in

Markham won't come about in

time for the December local

Thornhill will remain more than

one-half disenfranchised for at

situation for a 10-year period is

assured. Perhaps it will go on even

when it's realized all York region

voters, including those same south

Thornhill citizens, are in just about

the same position when it comes to

the weight of their votes in federal

The situation is but little better at

smart arguments raised by various

vested interests to the contrary,

Despite all the many and

this region got it last week.

government elections.

least another two years.

longer.

elections.

the provincial level.

Southern Thornhill

gets robbed again

The trustees spent themselves into an impossible corner. A hefty 16 per cent tax increase couldn't save them.

That tax increase surely was a desperate measure for an election year. What would it have been if an The real point which should have election hadn't loomed in December?

> The trustees have entered a never, never land.

If the school board was operating with fair prudence in recent years, and hopefully it was, then certainly it has now moved a considerable distance in the direction of imprudence.

In a year of unusual inflationary budget expansion when it would be financially prudent to increase cash reserves, the board has thrown into the operating pot all its 1975 surplus and half its reserves.

Remember too, that the board spends as big a share of the property tax dollar as all other local government bodies put together.

the foundation of fair and good

government is equality of voting

cause the whole community to

suffer destructive imbalances of

just those whose voting power is

weak as in south Thornhill, to have

it assured there is equality of

representation in government

elected bodies to wait until elec-

toral representation has become

unbalanced before taking action.

the health of community and

population changes and to carry

out electoral redistribution a little

ahead of the fact, not dismally late

remember when the candidates

come out soliciting support in

future elections, be they local,

It isn't enough, any more, for

To achieve equality and assure

Anything else must necessarily

It is to the advantage of all, not

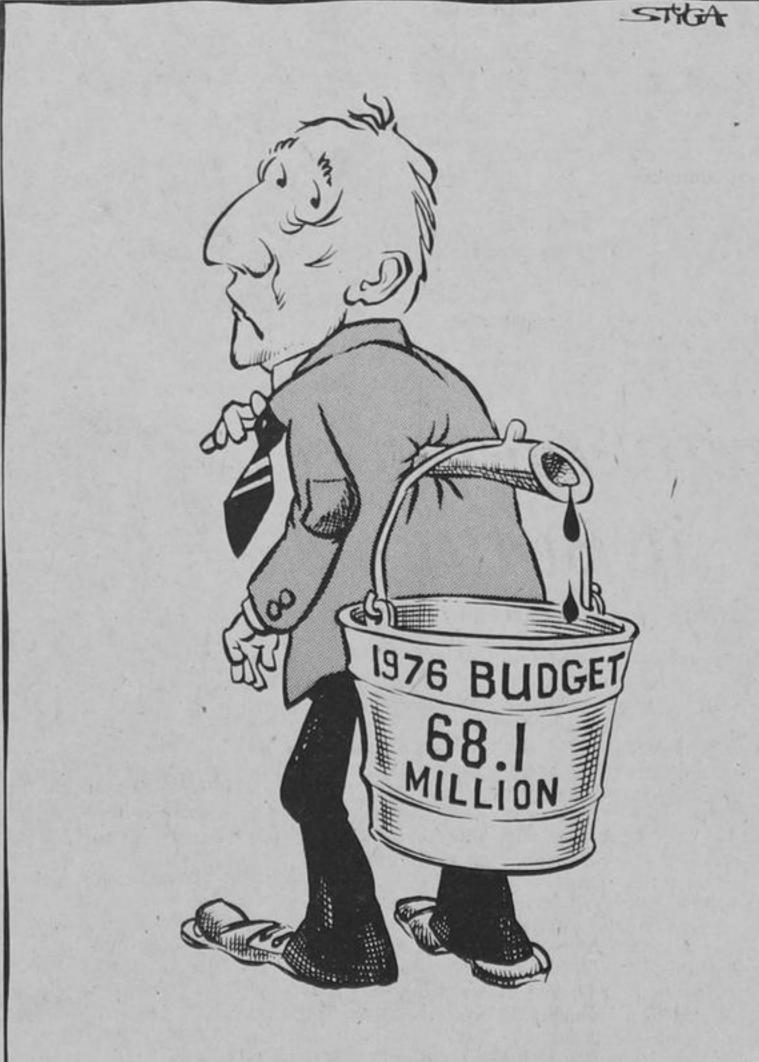
power for all citizens.

one kind or another.

assemblies.

Taxpayers should beware.

Opinion



School board must lower commitments

Dear editor:

It is with great disappointment that I must report the board, by one vote agreed to a \$68 million budget rather than \$67 million or less. All numbers in this letter are of course still rough.

This represents an increase in the a homeowner assessed at \$30,000 means an increase of about 27 per cent or \$123. The papers reported 16.6 per cent and \$73 for this year. How can \$73 be \$123?

You're right, it can't. buying your schooling on time. Briefly,

the difference of 11 per cent or \$50 goes onto next year's tax increase. Today we set the programs and start -decreased. hiring staff not only for September-

October this year but for the whole school year to August 1977.

the program stays, the cost stays. Use of the surplus and reserve permits us to spread the cost to you over two or three years but the increase doesn't go away, the surplus does.

Personally I believe government debt will be the death of us. What would happen to a family if they continued to suggestions for many savings. budget beyond their means?

reserve of your funds on hand.

But I still believe that when the handwriting is on the wall for all extra layers of government such as the regional type, we simply have to cut the layers to live within our means. Back to your tax bill. If inflation next

year is 10 per cent then add another \$45 to next year and the whole picture is:

This year - 16 per cent or \$73. Next year - 21 per cent or \$95 for a total increase set this week of \$168 for

the house assessed at \$30,000. Regional systems are complex and local requisition of \$8,360,000, which to expensive and I believe a return to more basic classroom education will not only be less expensive, but, in fact, may well produce a higher level of

academic achievement. More responsibility returned to the It's a tricky point that involves schools might alleviate the nearly 200 central people who have appeared since 1969, while the number of people in the schools doing the same job has not

In the six years since regional government came to York, the teacher's salaries have increased about We didn't cut the programs and while the same amount as the cost of living about 57 per cent.

> Other costs have increased from \$30 million to nearly \$70 million — a much higher rate — 127 per cent. This means costs other than teacher's salaries have risen far more than the inflation rate.

> Trustees have already submitted We must start to lower our long range

Fortunately, we have collected more commitments now and to build, for the than we needed for years so have a short term, a surplus for 1976 by introducing program cuts. I will work to this end.

RR 4, Stouffville, Ont.

(MRS. (JOY HORTON, East Gwillimbury trustee, York County Board of Education.

Why erase school board tapes?

Dear editor:

A few sulphurous bubbles keep surfacing from the murky depths of York region's trackless educational swamp, sink, or Watergate:

One with the odor of very ancient eggs is the recent decision that tape recordings of all York County Board of Education meetings are to be destroyed after only six months.

Why this indecent haste, this sudden yen for a rapidly cleaned slate?

Well, it is almost six months since the fateful evening of Oct. 14. And, it was announced on March 22, that by some mysterious slip, sleight of hand - or worse — the tape recorder just wasn't in operation at that crucial time.

Consider: on that obviously most important occasion they forgot to put the tape recorder on. And now, after six months, any tape may be destroyed anyway, making everything 'legal'

According to a statement in a letter of Nov. 17 last, sent by Director Chapman to the AIB (made public for the first time on March 22), executive salary agreements were ratified. The pernation, it is necessary to anticipate tinent part of the letter reads thus: "A special salary review committee

of our board had agreed to a wage settlement with the employees who in turn had accepted the settlement; however, the full Board did not ratify This is a little something to the agreements until Oct. 14".

> The review committee did not agree, never have agreed, therefore could not have offered any agreed-on package; and did not, in any case, have the power

or authority to reach a settlement, so there was nothing to ratify. What, then, is one to make of Director



Sid Britton . . recorder slipped up

Chapman's statement to the AIB? Though Trustee Quirk — a member of the committee - favors fat executive salaries, I must salute her honesty; for again, as recently as March 22, she Letters

fact the committee consisted of only year, no fooling - to re-establish their four, and resulted in a stalemate, rightful place in the education strata, whereas at the time of its appointment the pecking order. she had moved for five - with no possible stalemate.

One does not have to be Sherlock Holmes to deduce, then, that at no time did she consider an operative and valid agreement had been reached otherwise, why her regrets? Which leaves only one member of the committee, Chairman Raniowski, of that opinion.

In the Aurora and Newmarket weekly of March 17, Trustee Margarate Coburn writes a column on education. It is all about money.

Your money. And how much of it, and to which members of Education's empire - its rightful owners - it

should be distributed. She thinks that if society is to mean finished with you. anything at all, salaries must keep going up. No limits. A Cadillac in every drive, a drink in each hand, cigars in

between your toes. Sort of. Superintendents, who money-wise are just now dragging along behind high school principals, must receive an

I completely agree with his con-

But I disagree with, and reject, his

premise that the staff was responsible

Overly generous

wasn't the budget of March 29, but the

overly generous salary settlements of

The trustees refused to permit the

which led to the settlement. The

responsibility for the increased costs.

What really 'zonked' the ratepayer

clusion. 'Misera contribuens plebs!!

loudly and persistently bewailed the extra shot of your money - and this

It is crucial, before they get the dread stomach bloat of starvation. And the director's salary? She says

he gets \$2,000 less than the Simcoe County Board guy (I doubt it; I think she is comparing his last year's salary with the Simcoe starveling's this year's pittance) So that is what education, and our

civilization, is all about: envy, greed, rat-racing around?

However, accepting these noble conceptions of life and its meaning, one might then ask: If Chapman is 'worth' \$47,765 per annum, how come Premier Bill Davis gets only \$52,000?

And what, gentle reader, are you worth? Why, nothing much, both during - and especially after - they have

Coburn refers to a study conducted for the Simcoe Board by a consulting firm, who found the director's salary each cheek, and ice-cream cones was 30 per cent below that of comparable positions in business and in-

The difference is that business is for real, not for education's tiddly-winks; and it has no mattress of public money

to fall back on when the going is tough. It might be noted Margaret Coburn is the wife of a school teacher. And that his boss is Director Chapman.

On this day I write, April 1, she is due to make a motion at a meeting of the board which includes the following

formidable battle-line of English: 'No member shall criticize any decision except for the purpose of

moving in accordance with reconsideration of the decision . . . How d'yer like that cord round the windpipe of democracy? Obviously

only a very educated person could write this modern edition of Magna Carta.

Trustee Coburn was elected to represent something quite different from that.

Certainly she would make an excellent spokeswoman for a trade union

of education brass.

SID BRITTON. 84 Hillview Rd., Aurora, Ont.

School bureaucrats blameless

By John Honsberger

Trustee John Stephens in his article in negotiate in such a casual manner. the March 31 issue of The Liberal, says the preliminary 1976 budget for the board is \$9,600,000 more than last year. The entire thrust of his article was an

attempt to shift the blame for this very bureaucrats' in general and the to cost it. director of education in particular.

isn't in accord with the facts.

When the salary agreement with the secondary school teachers was ratified last June, I wrote publicly on this matter.

outside professionals.

provincial or federal.

as at present.

No private employer with a fraction York County Board of Education of the amount of money at issue would Unseemly haste

I also criticized the board for their unseemly haste in ratifying the settlement when the administrative staff saw the proposed settlement for only a onerous tax burden onto 'the few hours beforehand and had no time

The director and secretary treasurer This is unfair criticism and clearly of the board saw it only half an hour before it was ratified.

The school board 'bought a pig in a poke' and has nobody but 'itself to blame.

It isn't entirely irrelevant that all of I criticized the irresponsibility of the this occurred in the few months salary committee for negotiating on following the December 1974 school their own and in refusing to seek the board election when an organized advice of administrative staff or of teacher pressure group managed to



elect several trustees who appeared to be more concerned with appeasing the teachers than with considering what the community could afford.

Overlooks fact In his criticism of the administrative staff, Trustee Stephens overlooks the fact that last June the trustees approved salary agreements they didn't take time to adequately cost. These salary agreements later were for the result.

found to have added almost \$9,600,000 to the 1976 costs. One-half of this amount is attributable to the secondary teacher salary agreement. It is something of a miracle the ad- June 1975.

ministrative staff was finally able to come up with a budget just \$9,600,000 staff to participate in the negotiations higher than last year. This is almost exactly the amount by trustees must now accept the which teacher salaries increased.

System squeezed It is certainly an indication of how the worthy of them, to suggest otherwise. rest of the school system must have

been squeezed. saying the 'local ratepayer gets zonked again'

Enough, school board, enough!

It is both against the facts and un-(John Honsberger of 60 Elgin St.,

Trustee Stephens ends his article by Thornhill, is a former member of the York County Board of Education. -Editor)

Viewpoint from the regional desk

board again this week, I'll scream,' a friend of mine said to me the other day in one of those confidential little asides that can be heard across six intersections at the height of rush hour.

So if you're wondering where that Guinness-book-of-records blast that levelled the last, lingering ridge of snow in your driveway, came from, wonder no longer.

Mind you, I hadn't planned to write about the board again, I had been hoping to come up with a serious subject.

But I knew something was going to have to be done the moment I walked into last week's meeting and found several members, who had never so much as nodded at me before, coming up and telling me they enjoyed my column last week.

Now what have I done, I thought to myself.

Then when the chief subject of the column, Joy Horton, later expressed puzzlement, concern and what appeared to be a certain amount of pain over what I had written, I was really taken aback.

Vengeance error

For I have nothing but the greatest respect and admiration for Mrs. Horton and, if I managed to portray her as the villain of the piece, as she seemed to feel I had, then I had erred with a vengeance.

In writing what I did, and if you didn't read it, I don't plan to go back and review it in detail, I merely was hoping to bring to an end — at least, so far as any more comment went at this point — to a subject which I felt the board had had every chance to battle to a finish sometime before.

That, of course, was the battle by

Mrs. Horton and others to try and thing: not enough money. undo what had more or less already been done.

And that was to approve a 16 to 19.8 per cent increase in wages to the administrative staff, in what they Oct. 13 deadline set by Pierre Trudeau and the rest of that all-star squad up in Ottawa.

they had had their chance to resolve just as aspirin is antidote for a the situation at the time.

If staff "morale was low," as argued by some, then they might have settled the matter right then and there by including a chit in their pay packets entitling them to stop by the corner ale house on the way cent, a way will be found. home for a couple of pints.

The fact the kids are raising both cain and pot in equal proportions throughout the house, or the spouse doesn't even bother to cover his or her mouth now while yawning now claimed was the day after the through your discourse on the many problems at work, has nothing to do

No, to a sympathetic school board It was my not-so-humble opinion with lots of money to throw around headache, more money is the cureall for low morale.

That the government provided some direction by setting a 10 per cent maximum, doesn't seem to matter; if staff wants 16 to 19 per

There was subsequent concern by But, of course, money is the Mrs. Horton and others that it universal tranquilizer, anymore, wasn't all done according to the and if a group is suffering "low rules, even though a couple of afmorale," it can only mean one fidavits were subsequently turned in, saying it was.

Now, if it wasn't legitimate, the signers of those affidavits could be charged with perjury.

That's even more serious than the reporter on the local paper turning in misspelled names for the bowling column.

So, in this case, I, anyway, felt it was time to drop the matter for the

- I don't claim to be a great investigative reporter; I hardly have time as it is to get to all the meetings I'm required to attend, what with running around trying to gather information for community service supplements, et al — so I offer my

feel some concern for. Sounded ruthless

opinion at the moment on a matter I

This time, I may have come out sounding as if I felt Mrs. Horton was

completely wrong in everything she did, attributing a ruthlessness to her motives that she far from deserved.

I just thought she was wrong in prolonging the issue — the time to act had come and gone — and threw in a little quote from the bard about the excesses of ambition, thinking that might help to give it some perspective.

That was probably overly Maybe it was laziness on my part dramatic on my part, but was stated solely as a feeling of the moment. It in no way was meant to detract from my high opinion of Mrs. Horton.

And that's all I plan to say about it, both because I feel I've made what little case I intended to, and also because the editor told me I'm being much too long winded and to cut future columns off at 21/2 takes.

And that's exactly the point I've

reached now.

BY JIM IRVING "If you write about the school