Letters

Chapman is tops but board bores

Dear editor:

With delight do I offer my congratulations to you for The Liberal of Oct. 6.

The edition is historic in publishing two letters, one from Mrs. Ronne Dale and one from Graham Lamont (thank God for their fair, level-headedness) supportive of the York County board of education's administrative staff.

In a similar vein, the edition incorporates in Jim Irving's piece, Terry Goodwin's justifiable defense of Education Director Sam Chapman.

The change of outlook from vituperative castigation to fair play comes none too soon.

For the present board by its bickering, blocking, spite and spleen has become a boring, irrelevant, and embarrassing thing.

There is little that has been done for the benefit of youngsters, other than a demonstration of the misuse and abuse of democratic process.

It is unforgiveable for people of good faith that Mr. Chapman had to be the target.

Permit me, sir, to say how I perceive him . . . on hard data, even though he will pooh-pooh what I am about to say.

You see, the man — despite monumental achievements for the benefit of youngsters — is shy, self effacing, and far happier to let others get glory.

As an administrator he is meticulous, accurate, and very human.

His is no cold, efficient machine, but a very human labor of love so that any anxiety or stress is taken from personnel so they can go on with their work — for the benefit of youngsters.

As for hard work, I invite this letter's readers to telephone his office (889-0660) on a Sunday afternoon, and not unusually, on a Saturday as well. You will find him there unless there is an out-of-town meeting.

Despite the packed in-trays, he will have time for you and you can rest assured the work will be done as well.

But the nuts and bolts operations, and the crippling amount of work, of Mr. Chapman's managerial genius are a means to an end . . . savings to the public purse without any reduction in quality education — for the benefit of youngsters and their futures.

As a colleague of mine despairingly commented a few years ago "I wish this country had the likes of him". The remark was by Dr. Stanley Harries, professor of education, Cambridge University, England.

Sorry Sam to embarrass you so, but I am going to carry on.

There are things that must be said, and that is that.

Mr. Chapman's innovations are known, even taken for granted. The six-day time-tabling cycle (more lesson time per year), open door policy, a balance between traditional and progressive methods of teaching (and do the Canadian Tests of Basic Skills ever show the effects — respectably above Canadian averages, and well above in distribution of scores!) . . . and so on.

Any idea for the good of youngsters, if backed by data, reasonable argument and individual commitment to hard work and to responsible implementation will get his support.

Furthermore, the man is so human that initial shortcomings of ideas in action (assuming unimpaired welfare of youngsters) beget encouragement to pick oneself up and to try again.

Of course, this is the mark of a person our society with its awesome future challenges is in dire need . . . because he has faith in human ingenuity and inventiveness.

In short Mr. Chapman is a good Canadian, sincere, honest and generous. I could regale you with case studies of his generosity to people in unfortunate circumstances whom I suspect were never aware of their benefactor.

Sensitive to people's pride, and avoiding "grandstanding" like the plague, he just would let it pass . . .

Now. In blocking this man the present board — not every trustee by any means, and the ones I am referring to know in their own hearts who they are — has propogated two wasted years.

Instead of growth there has been stagnation. Instead of goodwill, there has been hatred without cause.

Instead of responsible development guided by a man blessed by wisdom and vision to the next century with its peculiar problems, there has been regression to the worst excesses of old Byzantium.

Let those whose words and actions have become hindrances return to growing grass, to growing trees, to cultivating a garden (like Voltaire), to whatever they do best . . . whatever that is.

Maybe just gossiping for which little data if any is required.

"It is no longer fit that you should sit here any longer — you shall now give place to better".

Mr. Chapman, administrators, teachers, and students deserve a chance.

And I have faith that the good, the honest, the just people of York County will give that opportunity whilst banishing devilry to the darkness where it belongs.

RUSSELL REES,
Associate professor,
Education faculty,
University of Toronto,
18 Thornybrae Dr.,
Thornhill, Ont.

Covers education well

Dear editor:

Many thanks for your broad and detailed coverage of matters educational in The Liberal's Sept. 22 issue.

Particularly interesting were Jim Irving's Regional Viewpoint column remarks.

Jim has done a splendid job this year in giving us the 'lowdown' on many hitherto dark corners.

Certainly the York County board of education offers little to the public other than self-congratulation and assertions we are getting the best for little.

This in the face of the fact we're getting the worst for the most.

Education Director Sam Chapman's arrogant and insulting response to Trustee Norm Weller's request for information on the board's 'research projects' is inexcusable.

It is high time Chapman realized he is a paid (very highly paid) servant of the people in York Region, not some little tinpot dictator running his own exclusive tea party.

He is playing and experimenting with the lives of the children of this area. Nobody but the Almight has that power and wisdom.

Unless, of course . . . Well, could he possibly think that he . . .? Oh no!

As to the menopausal path which York Region education has stumbled along in recent years, I would quote the words of American educator Allen Tate to an entering class at Minnesota University in 1958:

"Education is . . . the discipline of the mind for its own sake through the mastery of fundamental subjects which cluster around language and number, the two chief instruments by which man knows himself and understands his relation to the world."

In considering that quotation, I am keenly aware that through the property tax, my arm has been twisted to pay large sums into the education madhouse.

At the same time, at their request, I have given aid and advice on English to my two grandchildren.

Somehow they seem to have been uninstructed in the subject, thus experiencing serious difficulties in all other subjects.

It's tough when you have to do for nothing what you've paid the 'experts' a fancy price to do.

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

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TOWN OF VAUGHAN
FALL BULK GARBAGE COLLECTION
October 18th to 22nd, 1976

The Council of the Town of Vaughan has authorized a bi-annual service for articles not normally collected by the weekly garbage pick-up. The week of October 18th to 22nd, 1976, has been designated for the collection of large, bulky refuse, such as chesterfields, chairs, mattresses, stoves, etc., by the Town's Works Department.

The Spring of 1977 Bulk Garbage Collection dates are May 9th to 13th, 1977.

Residents of Vaughan requiring this special service must telephone the Municipal Office, Works Department 832-2281 by October 15th, 1976 for this collection.

R.H. Kraft P. Eng.
Town Engineer
Town of Vaughan
Maple, Ontario.

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