



regional viewpoint

By Jim Irving

A couple of years ago, York County board of education, probably feeling those first few heady moments of power of a new board, hired a Toronto firm of management consultants to tell them, now they were elected, just what they were doing there in the first place.

The result was the P.S. Ross Report, \$38,000 worth of the public's daily bread, recommending such vital changes in nomenclature as "human resources" instead of personnel.

It also mentioned the trustees, but too involved in operational matters, but that was never taken seriously by the board, which liked the one about changing the name of personnel much more.

The report dealt in a few other generalities, but over-all its erudition was too much for the board members — humble people, all — who immediately discussed spending another \$15,000 to have someone explain the report to them.

Motion mystery

Somehow or other the motion was lost. I think it got mixed up with their mileage slips and was immediately stamped for payment and cashed at the nearest milk store. Whatever happened, they soon found some other way to spread happiness with the 15 "grand".

Anyhow, two years later, although not hiring anyone to tell them how many times three goes into four, the board is back consulting with management. Only this time, they aren't forking out quite so much money; the analysis they're attempting is of their proposed \$74,000,000 budget, up a few dollars from last year's one of \$68,000,000, also up slightly from the \$59,000,000 grab bag of 1975.

And to get to that point where they now meet around the table on a more or less regular basis and discuss the various

What's a \$6 million school budget hike?

items, they had to first accept a motion by Trustee Doreen Quirk or Markham.

Staggering wisdom

The motion — and make sure you're strapped in your chair, because its wisdom is staggering — was that the board "review the budget for understanding." Now that's good sound thinking, isn't it? Imagine them all feeling they should understand this little \$74,000,000 expenditure before passing it.

And they will pass it, too, with very few changes, you can rest (uneasily, mind you) assured.

They've all but approved that \$6 million increase — another motion Mrs. Quirk is presenting is that they "decide on an acceptable level of increase over 1976" — mainly because the teachers have their size 14s in the door, and most members are not too sure how they can cut in other areas, let alone keep the teachers within the eight per cent Anti-Inflation Board confines.

But they could be more at home at those meetings and maybe knock off a few dollars here and there if they spent more time preparing for the occasion, rather than by picking up the odd point through the item-by-item perusal by the board.

Get the meat

A check with staff beforehand on items they don't understand, would help them get to the meat faster and leave them in a better position to attack the vulnerable parts when they all hit the board table together later on.

But there seems to be a great reluctance on the part of many of the board members to call on staff other than during regular meetings. Anything else they feel is a terrible imposition, forgetting that staff is there to accommodate them and not the other way around.

That would mean questioning some of their prepared figures and that wouldn't be polite.

They forget it would also save staff from

preparing some of those monstrous reports they subject them to at other times.

Afraid of staff

Their biggest concern is not that the public's dollar is properly spent, but that the staff think kindly of them at all times. They are much the same as those mothers, who worry more about what the neighbors might think than they do their own progeny.

Former Trustee, Joy Horton of East Gwillimbury, once told me she spent 40 hours going over the budget between the time the first draft came out and the first board meeting to discuss it.

And it showed, too. No one was more knowledgeable than she was on budget matters. If the rest of the board spent one twentieth of the time that she did, the budget wouldn't always automatically soar beyond the taxpayers' gasp.

But maybe it's not all the trustees' fault. Perhaps, just as they seem reluctant to ask questions of staff, the public is reluctant to ask questions of their elected members.

For information, call

Or maybe they just don't know their telephone numbers.

In that case, here they are in this area: Richmond Hill — Bill Monroe, 884-5400; Eric Baker, 887-5803; Robert Houghton, 773-5561.

Markham — Donald Cousens, 294-5536; Doreen Quirk, 889-6553; Bob McMonagle, 889-6750; John Stephens, 881-1998; Steven Taylor, 297-3035; David Crombie, 294-5789.

Vaughan — Donald Cameron, 851-2001; Jim Corcoran, 851-1719.

King — Margaret Coburn, 939-7005; Dorothy Zajac, 727-5332.

One question should be enough. What are you going to do about that \$6 million increase?

Then you'll see who's doing his homework.



sharon's sunshine

By Sharon Brain

We don't own a dog. My family knows why. They remember Rocket.

I don't think my father ever forgave the hired man for rescuing the puppy from the creek in the first place. But when Rocket turned out to be no brighter than his rescuer, father was even more annoyed.

Rocket arrived in the spring. To city folk, spring means the end of galoshes and the start of young love. To us, it meant Asparagus.

Though my brother spent most of his teen-aged years trying to perfect a more humane way to harvest the stuff, he didn't succeed. To the best of my knowledge, one still needs a knife, a basket, a strong back, and an innate sense of what equal six inches of green.

Rocket loved asparagus. He loved to roll in it, eat it, and help us cut it.

Asparagus dog

He turned summersaults when he saw us heading for the field. The sound of knives being sharpened was music in his ears. He would lead the way down the rows, yelping excitedly at the discovery of each new stalk.

As he rushed ahead to the next one, he would trample the first into the ground with his huge puppy paws. We thought this was delightful. Each broken stalk was one less to cut.

But my parents drove us out to the field

Modern day dogs getting different?

each day crying "Asparagus sent your father to college and it will do the same to you."

To them each broken spear was an affront to higher education.

Then Rocket would tire. "Leave him there," my father would order, as Rocket lay at our feet and whimpered.

But the next time down the field, he was whimpering louder. Then he would moan, and finally howl until someone took pity on him and carried him back to the house in an asparagus basket.

It was amusing when he was a puppy. But three years later he weighed 70 pounds and still could not walk back to the house after a round of asparagus cutting.

Chased everything

Rocket lived to chase things; cars, tractors, my mother.

He began with bicycles, but soon decided cars were more fun. When he heard the engine start, he would race to the first tree down the lane and hide his head behind it.

His long body would trail out from behind the pole. His tail, which was never really under his control, would take on a life of its own.

As you drove by, he would lunge at the front tire. His reflexes were such he usually hit the road two feet behind the car.

But one day someone slowed up to avoid his attack. Rocket's teeth caught the door handle and he was dragged for several feet

before the driver stopped and pried him off.

His last car

This was the first car Rocket had ever caught. But he did not enjoy the victory. He gave up ambushing cars shortly thereafter and took on the airplanes.

No one could say Rocket refused a challenge.

Rocket liked chasing airplanes. They were smaller than cars, and they never failed to flee over the line fence when he barked.

But it was not a quiet hobby. I don't judge all dogs on the basis of my experience with Rocket, although without him, I never would have known there was a subnormal in canine intelligence.

Our other dogs

We had other dogs. We were not a family who gave up easily.

There was Cocoa. She hated men and bit my father as he left the house and again as he came back in.

Or Fenn, an enormous red setter who specialized in the demolition of garbage cans for miles around.

Or Brutus. He ran away shortly after he arrived. No one went to look for him. We were becoming a family who believed in leaving well enough alone.

I'm still like that. I have neighbors who couldn't complain if we returned a little barking or a little dog dirt. Our yard is big enough. Dogs are different these days.

At least that's what they tell me at the pet store.



yesterdays

by mary dawson

Neighbors gathered for pioneer 'bees'

"Bees" played an important part in pioneer days. There were logging bees, barn raising bees, hog killing bees, quilting bees and many others.

The neighbors gathered to spend the day in work and the evening in dancing to the tunes played by energetic fiddlers.

The logging bees helped clear the land and prepare the material for the construction of the first "settlement house" and then for the somewhat larger 1½ storey structure which succeeded it.

The same group of neighbors would lend willing hands to hoist the logs into place and help prepare the shelter for the family against the vagaries of the climate.

Colder winters

From all reports those early 1800 winters were even more severe than the one we are experiencing in 1976-77.

The fireplace located at the end of the log cabin, did little to dispel the chill except for a few feet directly in front of it.

When the time came to erect stabling for the farm animals, with storage for enough hay above it to see the herd and teams through the winter, the neighbors again pitched into help.

They were also present to take over the seeding, harvesting and threshing if the

farmer should be laid up through illness or accident.

Hearty eaters

Such manual labor created hearty appetites.

The neighbor women would arrive laden down with substantial and delicious fare. It would be set out on planks laid on saw horses in the shade of the trees.

After a refreshing dousing of head and hands in the stock's water trough, the men would do full justice to the generous servings.

They helped themselves. Mouthfuls were washed down with large amounts of strong tea, sweetened with maple sugar shaved from a block.

Threshings still were a co-operative neighborhood effort well into this century — indeed until after World War II when the combine came into its own.

Barn raisings still call for the help of many men to raise the huge timbers into place.

Bonfire time

But to get back to the pioneers. The men labored hard throughout the hours of daylight.

At the going down of the sun a bonfire was lit. Young and old squared off, dos-a-doed, grand chained, waltzed, barn danced

and enjoyed the intricacies of Scottish country dancing to the music of one or more fiddles until the wee small hours of the morning.

Sometimes the whisky jug was passed too freely and tempers flared resulting in an attempt to settle real or imagined slights or differences with the fists.

Calmer heads usually succeeded in separating the combatants and keeping them apart so the others could continue to enjoy themselves.

The fighters suffered little more damage than a split lip, a bloody nose and a black eye.

Women's bees

Quilting bees were much more subdued as the women gathered to stitch together the quilts that had been prepared for the home or for a prospective bride.

Bridal showers were also a feature of the pioneer days, a feature which has come down to us in this present day.

Gifts to help the newly-weds establish a new home were quite practical — a bag of potatoes or of oatmeal, maple sugar, honey, a setting of eggs with a clucking hen, homespun blankets, a string of dried apples or a twist of onions.

All were gratefully received and put to use.



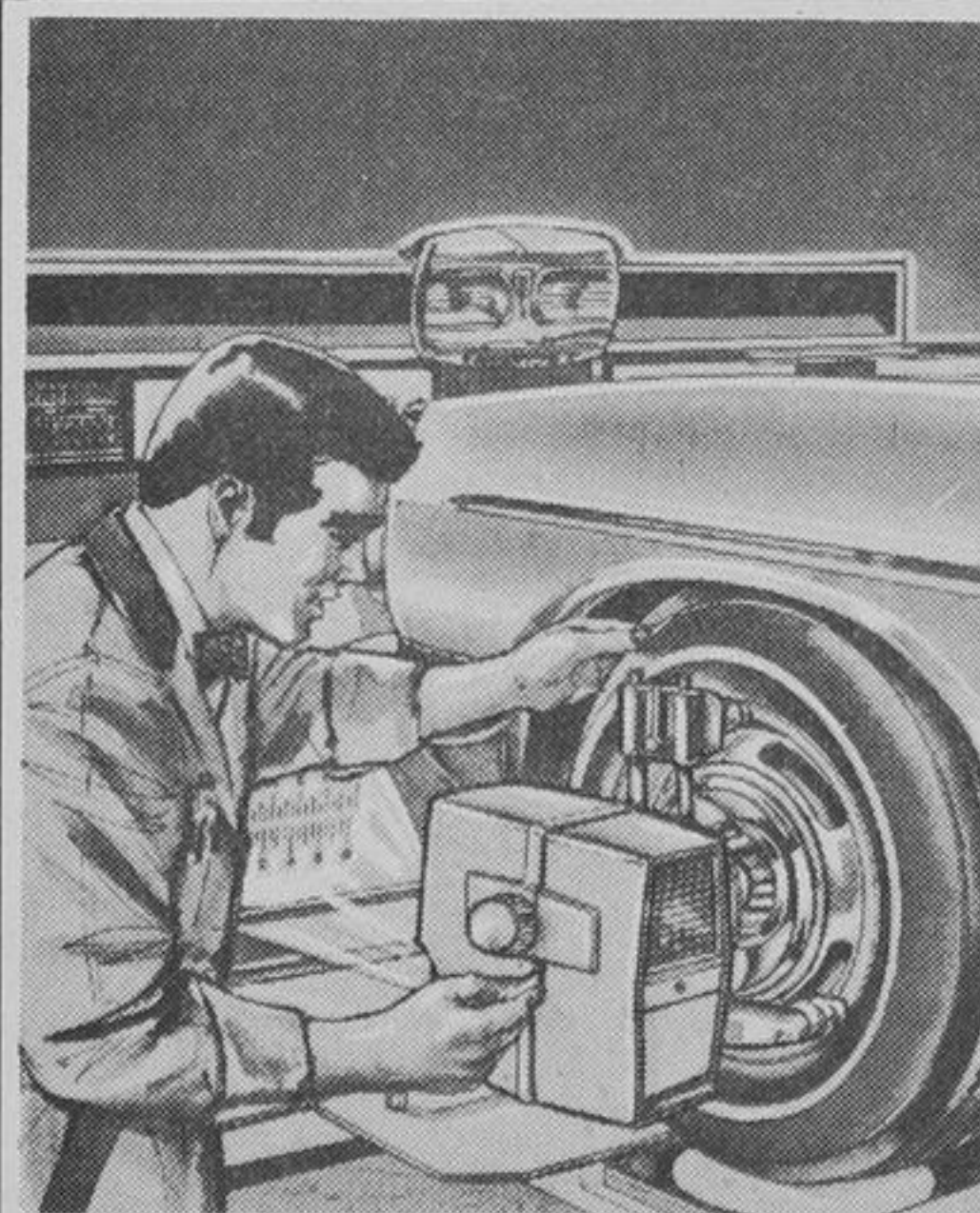
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