



**regional viewpoint**

*2 schoolgirls didn't call*

By Jim Irving

I was asked by some young people the other day to speak to them at a later time on a particular aspect of the newspaper business. But unfortunately I was unable to make it.

That very thing—the newspaper business—prevented me. They have a quaint custom here at The Liberal where they expect their minions to be around on certain days to put the paper together.

Two days—Monday and Tuesday—especially. That's when they decide what stories go where and what stories go nowhere and have to be killed because of lack of space.

The public gets its chance the next day to kill the editors for omitting favorites stories, and often for running others that they would rather were left out.

You know the kind: a prominent citizen has kicked out all the windows at the service club's annual bash; or maybe it's just some petty domestic spat where one spouse has clobbered the other because they threw out the Sunday paper before the other had a chance to read the Crime Flashback.

But to get back to the young people.

**Question of facts**

I was approached by two of them, plus a couple of adults, just as I was about to flee a school board meeting last week before the board members did any more damage before my eyes. And I might be called up sometime as a witness to testify whether or not there was a full moon on the night in question.

After being introduced to the girls, one said their class would like to know if newspapers should print the facts.

"Print the facts?" I said, a bit incredulously. "Well, that's more or less the idea."

"See, I told you it was a dumb question," chided her companion.

I blurted out something else at that point, something to the effect I thought maybe I knew what she meant now; that perhaps she wondered whether a reporter had the right to introduce his comments along the way.

I tried to think of a quick example, but didn't fare too well. I wanted to say that, after the reporter had listed who, what, when, where and why, there was nothing wrong in speculating on a few reasons for some of the above. In fact, he owed it to his readers if he knew some of the background.

**More than facts**

If, for example, a man was picked up

for going beserk in a candy store and separating the white jelly beans from the black, it would help some to know he formerly was a member of Ian Smith's government in Rhodesia.

I'm being facetious, but the idea is that printing the facts isn't just a straight recital of black and white and nothing else. It often goes beyond that. A fact, just as many words we took for granted for so long, may have to be redefined.

But don't ask me to redefine it. I'll stick with the dictionary definition: perpetration of act—occurrence of event; datum of experience (often with explanatory clause or phrase).

If I interpret that last part correctly, then it backs up what I'm saying.

**Guilty government**

But maybe the young student wasn't even talking about those set out in she meant facts such as that. Maybe she in a story recently purportedly showing doctors' earnings under OHIP and which caused a great outcry.

Even Premier William Davis, whose government quietly destroyed the education system (and which also gave youngsters the right to drink along with Joe and the boys but never felt the need to apologize for any of that) rushed to beg forgiveness of the doctors.

He did have a point this time, however, as the facts weren't completely on the line. Some of those gigantic sums covered medical staff as well and were not always what the good doctors could claim for themselves.

So one could ponder if the release of figures was right.

Without too much pondering, I'd say it was wrong. At the same time, I think many doctors probably gloried in the idea of being up there with Tommy Hunter and Bobby Orr for a brief moment, and so not much harm was done.

**Girls didn't call**

I have rambled on and have not been all that satisfactory in my answers. But I didn't have that much time to talk to the girls, who I thought were to call the next day to enlarge on the matter.

They didn't. But maybe I couldn't have said much more to them, anyway, than I did when I left them at the board offices.

"Yes," I said, "tell your class newspapers should print the facts."

However, I probably could have added: but only if they have them.

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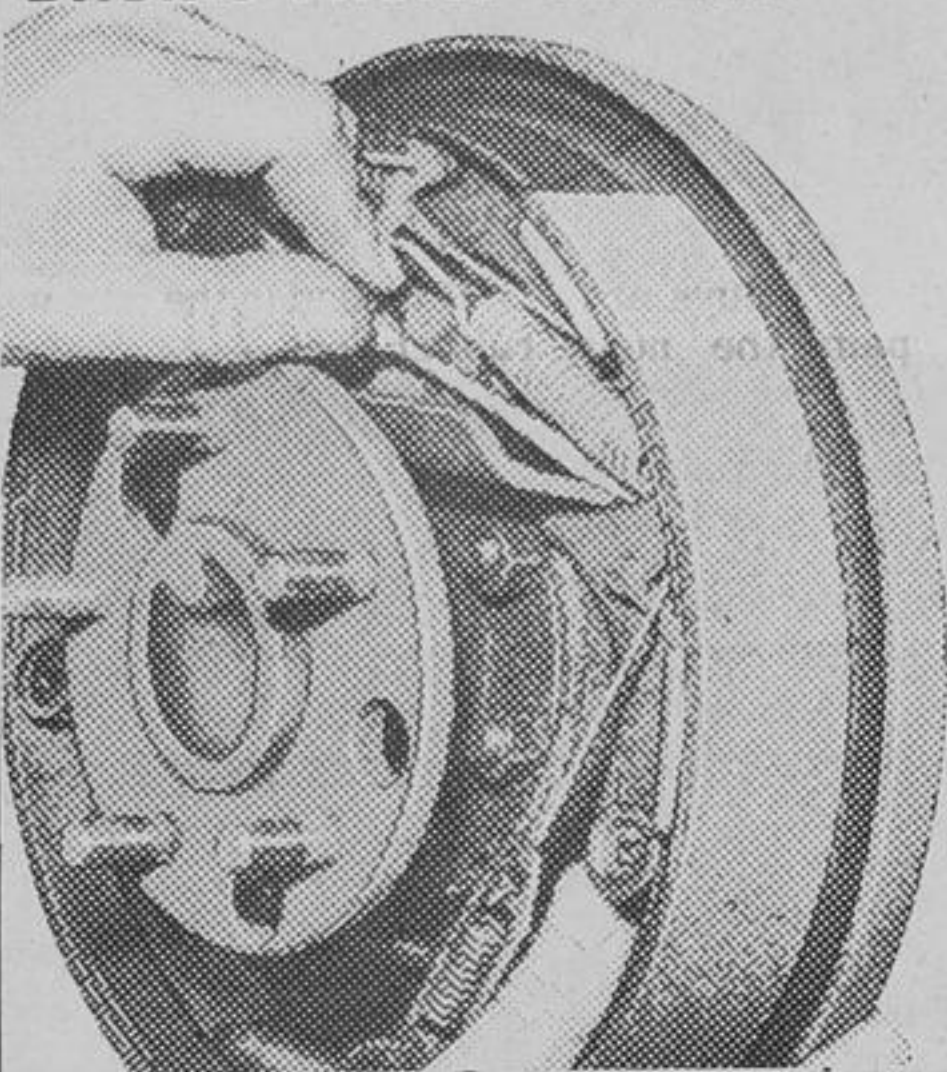


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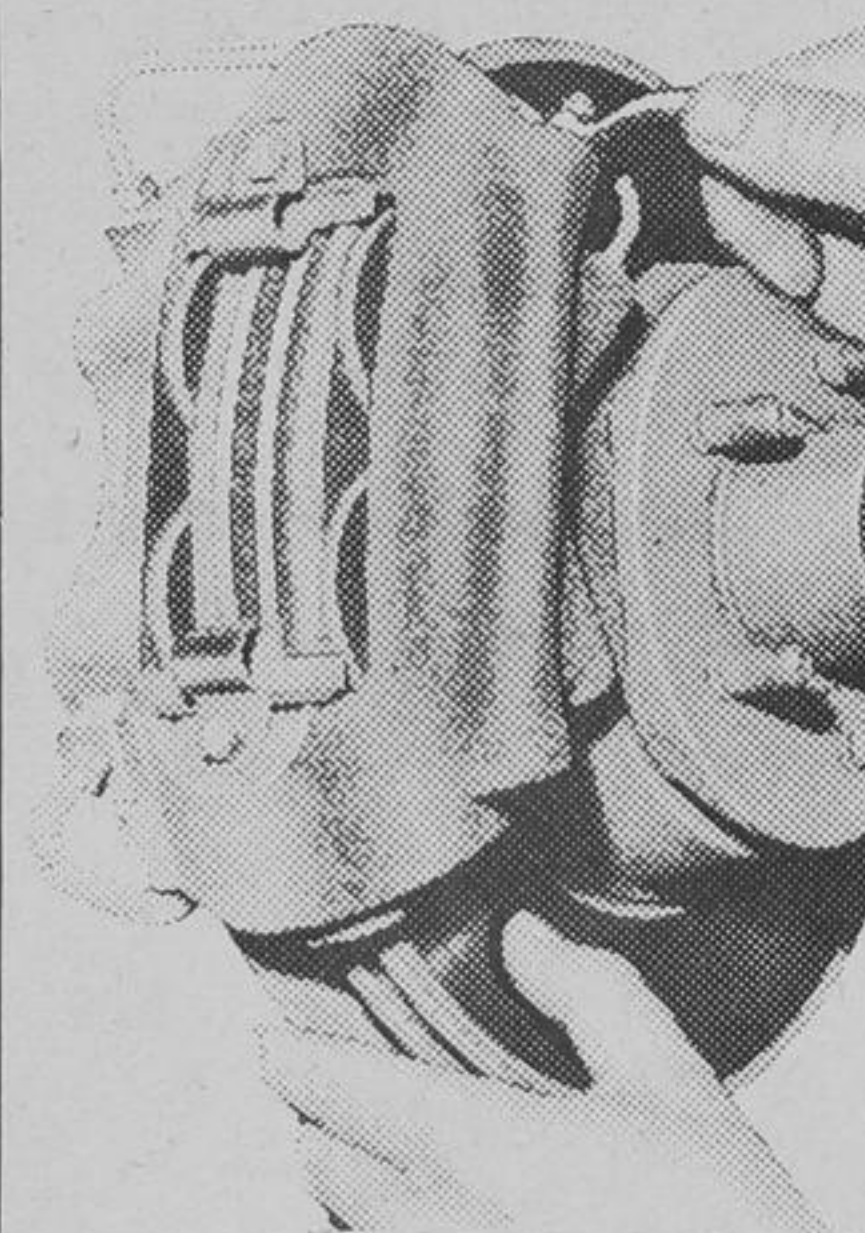
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