

How to satisfy AIB with an 8.2% raise

The Anti-Inflation Board, which seems to have about as much influence as the United Nations, has, in a sense, been sidestepped by the York County Board of Education in approving salary increases to its secondary school teachers.

The board, to no one's surprise, has approved an 8.2 per cent increase to the teachers, which, according to the AIB, is a bit more than the maximum it allows in such things.

However, as in every legal matter in this old life, whether it's opening private mail or having mass murder reduced to manslaughter, there's always a loophole.

In the board's — and the teachers' — case, it's a matter of increments. By only declaring a six per cent wage increase, which it is legal to do, and then adding the benefits later, the board can beat the AIB gun, and the teachers emerge with an 8.2 per cent hike.

That is, of course, if they approve it when their representatives get together today to see if the increase will cover the cost of coal and perhaps, all those electronic toys the kids would like to see in their socks this Christmas.

However, whether the teachers approve, and the public, which is already facing more hikes than Banff National Park, disapproves, the fact of the matter is, that rules really don't mean much where power and money are involved.

There are ways to get around anything.

But don't despair. Trustee Donald Cameron of Vaughan plans to introduce a recommendation at the next board meeting that will have students paying an annual fee for erasers.

Which is sound planning, because how else are you going to remove those red figures on the budget without erasers.

Transit problems plague Markham

Whether you agree with their policies or not, Markham council has shown the ability to get things done.

The planned growth of the town to a present population of more than 59,000 is testimony to that.

But no one is perfect. The biggest failure of the year is the failure to come to grips with the town's transit problems.

Markham transit is heading for a \$200,000 deficit this year, partly because councillors can't decide whether they want the system to support the town's political goals or simply take people where they want to go.

Councillors did not like one transit study so they have ordered another one.

The figures show most people want the system to take them out of Markham to the Finch subway station, a fact that seems to hurt the pride of some Markham

patriots. They do not want to give up the route that ties Thornhill, and Unionville and old Markham together, a cause that few people except councillors care about.

Empire building is a temptation to be resisted at all times but empire building with mini-buses is ridiculous.

Markham council is behaving a bit like some African potentate who decided the first thing his country needed after independence was its own jet airline.

Comment

The comment of the week goes to our very own Fred Simpson, who, in his column on Page B-1, notes:

"I love snow. I think every Christmas Card should have some...."



sharon's sunshine

The joys of buying gifts for parents

By SHARON BRAIN

In my family, the children and their spouses get together each year to decide on a present for our parents.

It is one of those traditions that has had mixed success.

But it continues, if only because it means that Father does not have to unwrap a steady stream of socks on Christmas Day.

You know men are so hard to buy for. It began the first year we were all away at school. The idea was to give our parents a portrait of their now adult children in the hopes that they would remove all the embarrassing photos of us with and without teeth and clothes from the top of the piano.

We converged on Richmond Hill one Saturday morning in November from our various schools and presented ourselves to the photographer.

We were not an inspiring group. Unfortunately we had all been celebrating festivals of autumn in one way or another the night before, and the circles beneath our collective eyes were clear evidence of it.

When the portrait was unwrapped on Christmas morning, the general effect was funeral rather than festive, and the photo itself has long since vanished.

But the tradition of communal giving goes on.

For a few years, my second brother was in charge. Since he drove a delivery truck for Simpsons, and got a

discount as a reward, and since we were all struggling students, we gave him carte blanche for two years.

The door bell he bought was okay, except that the men in the family spent all Christmas day in the basement drilling holes in the walls and floors with more enthusiasm than skill.

But the Electric Egg Cooker he presented next year was not a big hit with the givers, even though the receivers assured us that it was just what they wanted.

After we told them what it was. The next year he began talking about walkie-talkies and his Licence to Purchase was lifted.

I got the job. My first effort was an antique copper wash tub that was such a clever thing to store fire-wood in.

It might have been more successful if my brother hadn't told me Christmas Eve that there was one just like it stored over the drive shed, collecting dust and pigeon droppings.

My family is not into antiques. For the next three years I went practical. They needed lamps so they got them.

1973. table. 1974 floor. 1975 swag.

In 1976, I was accused of being terminally boring and relieved of the job. Last year's present was a joint device.

It was a triumph. Who would have thought a tape recorder could bring so much delight?

Imagine having preserved forever the voices of the grandchildren as they fought over possession of the drumstick.

Or being able to listen to the family carolling off key well into July.

Or hearing a father and an uncle converse in supposed private on the inadequacies of a game they are trying to set up?

But Christmas 1976 is not the only thing on tape.

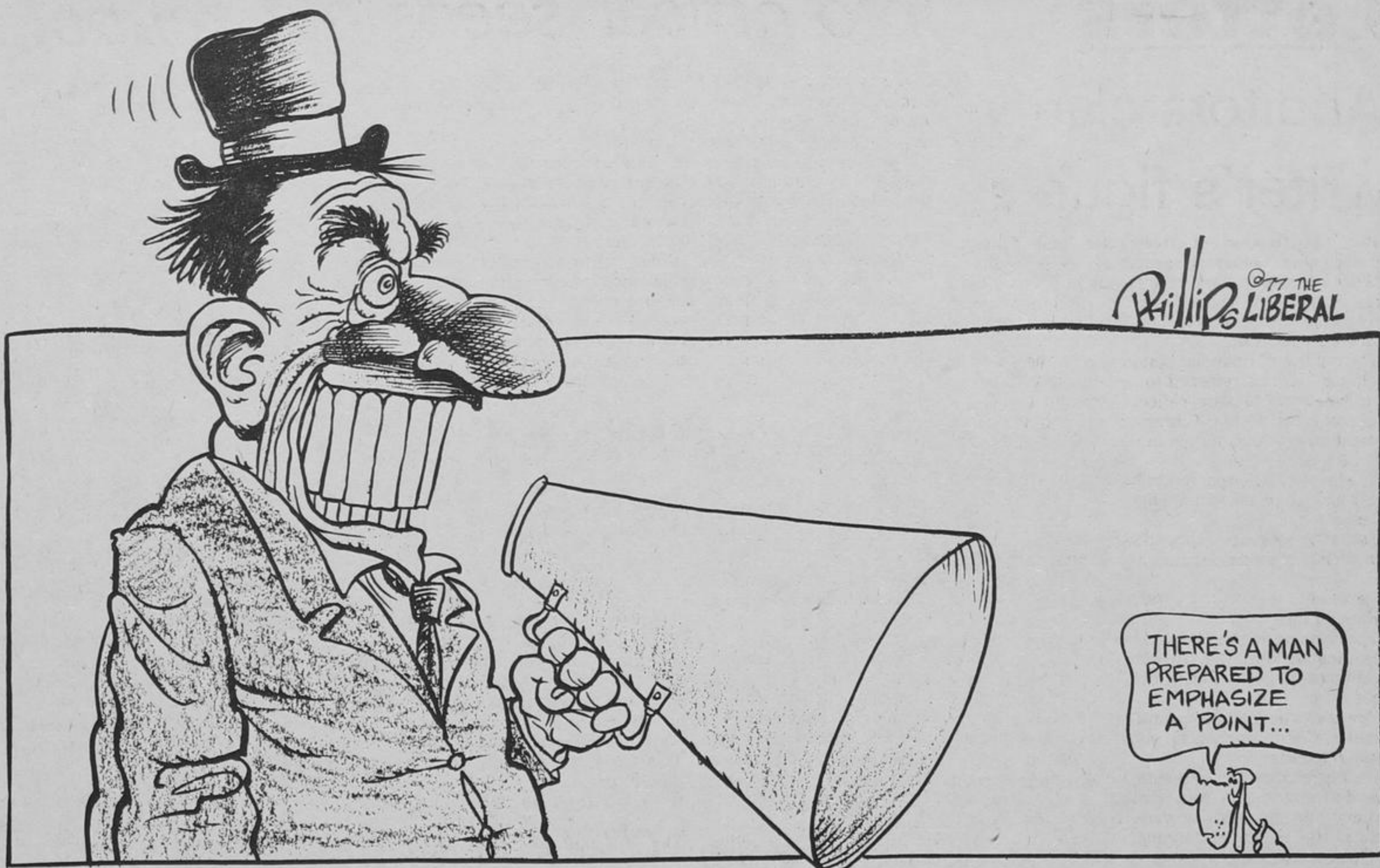
Whenever you go to my parents for dinner, there is a good chance the tape recorder is under the table and the microphone concealed in the bread basket.

My father would not have been wasted in the RCMP.

Which brings us to Christmas 1977. For the first time, we have put my efficient sister-in-law in charge.

Right now, she is busy ferreting out information about what our parents really want and need.

A novel idea.



"Meet the Mayor" tonight

By Bob Rice

December means one thing- "Toyland"

By BOB RICE

Well gang... here comes December! Santa has already transferred his residence to all of the Malls in the area and the annual hustle is on via radio, TV and the papers.

Pretty soon all of the homes will be decorated with flashing lights or multi-colored spots and within a few weeks the furniture in the living room will be rearranged to make room for the tree.

For the younger readers I would like to point out that Christmas wasn't always like it is today.

Back in the early Fifties it was necessary to journey down to Toronto if you wanted to get to sit on Santa's knee and pull on his beard.

Although the local merchants on Yonge Street made every effort to dress up their windows and get into the spirit of things, most families made at least one trip to the Big City and usually spent a fair amount of their loot at either Eatons or Simpsons.

For our family the usual destination was Simpsons and from the moment we passed the old city limits a countdown began among us children that continued to the top of the escalator on the Fourth Floor.

The journey up the red carpet to Santa's throne was always delayed so that we could look through the toy department just in case we had overlooked some item in the catalogue. And what a selection there was.

I usually headed for the electric train display and spent endless minutes watching the Lionel and Marx rigs travel through tunnels and valleys on the gigantic layout.

The model airplanes were constructed of balsa wood and fabric with the odd aircraft or two having been made of metal.

Although World War Two had been over for almost a decade, young boys would gather around the Military display with its wind-up tanks, cast metal soldiers and other paraphernalia remembering some of the stories

that their fathers had brought back from overseas.

The Saturday matinee heroes were well represented too. Cap guns in cardboard fabricated holsters bore the monograms of Hopalong Cassidy, Roy Rogers and Red Rider.

Lest you think the females were left out, Dale Evans Cowgirl outfits and pistols were also featured.

The purpose of the trip was actually twofold. While Dad shepherded us through the delights of Toytown, Mom would renew an acquaintance or two over lunch in the Arcadian Court.

Living in Richmond Hill back then was akin to moving the whole family to Anchorage, Alaska, in some relatives eyes and Mom would make sure a few of these folk would be present for tea and cakes on our annual shopping spree.

Battery operated toys were yet to come on the scene and the majority of the mechanical goodies were run by a wind up spring motor. Hockey and football games were other favourites amongst the boys as were tea sets and doll houses for the girls.

Then came the doll counter. Being a strapping young lad I had no interest at all in these sissy things but Dad always made sure my younger sister got her equal share of time at this display. Mom would join us after lunch and then we would make our way to the lineup for Santa.

As we wound through the rope maze, it was always amusing to watch the reactions of the other kids as their time for meeting Santa neared.

Some would be ecstatic at the thought of sitting on the old gent's knee while others would show looks of concern or bewilderment. There were always the criers, of course, and these were the ones who baffled me completely.

I just couldn't understand why anyone would be scared of talking with such a nice man. Perhaps it was the fear of knowing Santa knew when you were 'naughty or nice' or maybe it was that fact that suddenly right

before you was this person you had always heard so much about.

For whatever reason, there were as many criers back then as there are today... I guess that some things never change.

We took our turns with Santa based on seniority. Bill was to be first, I was second, Jerry third and Maggie brought up the rear.

I would wait impatiently as my older brother would rhyme off a list as long as your arm and cool my heels further while the picture was taken. Finally, after what seemed to be forever, it was my turn.

Making sure my bow tie was straight and my cowlick was slicked down, I took my place on St. Nick's knee. I knew he already knew my name and was always a little surprised when he asked who I was (I guess it is darn hard to remember everything) and then I would assure him that I had indeed been good all year long.

Then came the big question. I saw my Mom and Dad lean forward to hear what I was saying to Santa but, what the heck... this was just between him and me. I looked up at his round, smiling face and then, with the utmost secrecy, whispered my answer in his ear.

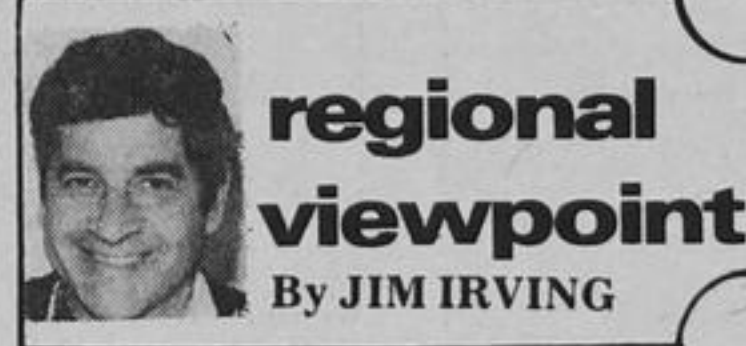
Following acceptance of the candy cane and the taking of the portrait, I slid from his knee and jaunted down the runway to join my parents.

Mom and Dad would compliment me on my behaviour and neatness and then Dad would lean forward and say... 'Well Bobby... what did you ask Santa to bring you for Christmas?'

With as much politeness as I could muster I would simply state... 'Aw c'mon Dad... that's a secret between him and myself!'

I never broke the secret through the ensuing weeks in spite of repeated questioning, and sure enough, just like Santa said, there was the gift that I had asked for, under the tree on Christmas morning.

The ol' Millpond Philosopher once said... 'Christmas is a time for children... for it all began with a little Child.'



regional viewpoint By JIM IRVING

Teachers have enough trouble with English

According to the late American critic, writer and philosopher, H. L. Mencken, "Nobody ever went broke underestimating the intelligence of the American people."

I always liked Mencken and his cynical and usually wise utterings, but I always felt that that particular bit of generalizing was just that; more clever than thoughtful.

Nowadays in Canada, our leading literary lights — or the "cream of the literati," as a group of them referred to themselves recently — enjoy playing the same sort of game with the Canadian public.

In struggling to get their cream to the top of the bottle, they spend much of their time lamenting about the problem of living in a land where the people — the "cream of the literati," apparently, not falling into that category — are unable to feel any great response to them, and — or — their works.

The reason, the geniuses feel, is not through any fault of their own, but strictly because of some flaw in that great, grey mass of quivering dependency, known as the people. Mordecai Richler and Irving Layton, for example, not content with their own considerable talents, seem to feel it necessary to flail away constantly at the poor, old white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant — a term contemptibly reduced to WASP — reaching what they apparently

think is the height of great satire by deriding them for ever living in Westmount or Rosedale.

According to these two, no one ever lives there for any other reason than to show the rest of the poor dolts around him, that he has indeed arrived.

To say otherwise, would be typical of the great hypocrisy of the WASP, whom they also fault as soulless louts, responsible for most of the country's inability to charge about like tourists on the Yonge Street strip, 24 hours a day.

Writing in this month's Toronto Life, Robertson Davies, professor, novelist, playwright, etc., whines away about the lack of recognition in his own country from the "middle class," whoever they might be.

"Our condition is stuporous, dully contented and stuporous," according to the Master of Massey. Another writer, Marian Engel — just so the ladies won't feel left out — whom, it seems, can only relate the act of love through having her heroine bed down with a performing bear — calls Canadians "passionless."

We Canadians are used to this sort of generalizing, which says as much about the critic, as it does those criticized, and which has forced a kind of gratuitous humility upon us over the years.

But it's not really that surprising

when you remember that we grew up — and still are — sandwiched between the United States and Britain. So that when asserting ourselves, we're bound to be a bit self-conscious about our merits. After all, we've always had to acknowledge those walls on either side of us; the stage never been completely our own.

Now, closer to home — you wondered what this was all leading up to, didn't you? — we have the spectacle of our Canadian heritage being further questioned by a group of Italian people in Vaughan.

Apparently, they feel their children should be taught Italian at the expense of the York County taxpayer, instead of by the simple expedient of telling their kids to "keep out of the cookie jar," at home. ("Non toccare il vasetto dei dolcetti.")

York Region Roman Catholic School Board, to whom this project is being put — and not for the first time — is moving cautiously. But not for the reasons one might think. The board doesn't seem so much concerned that the idea is preposterous, that this is, after all, a new country which these people have chosen to come to — can you imagine Italian or English or any other language being added to the curriculum in China, or India, or maybe, Russia, to appease the

immigrants on hand? — but is more concerned with the "backlash factor".

"Backlash, which sounds like a dirty word, is really an objection by people, no doubt confused enough about their identity as it is, stating that they would like to see people assimilating, rather than dissimulating, as it were.

For that's what the latter amounts to in the long run, if newcomers feel their own culture comes first and that it's up to their adopted country to preserve it for them.

"The children shouldn't feel Italian culture is second class," said the Reverend Donald MacLean of Vaughan, a separate school trustee. "It's a most glorious culture. They should keep it out in front, not hidden."

It's a condescending statement by the reverend, who, no doubt, sees his utterance up there with the Bill of Rights.

For nobody's denying them their culture; nobody's saying it isn't a good one; all they're saying is, don't expect the schools to preserve it for you. We're having problems establishing our own.

Besides, York teachers have enough trouble teaching the English language.

Do you want your children to speak bad Italian as well?