

The Liberal

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French program

Boards exercise different planning

In its latest major program recommendation, a committee of the York Separate School Board has proven once again the Catholic system is different — no worse off than the public schools — but different.

It looks like French language instruction will be offered to all children beginning in Grade 1 next year, for 20 minutes daily.

The issue is bound to create some controversy in the region's Catholic communities but no more than the outcry of public school parents whose children are now exposed to 40 minutes of French per day.

Each board had its own way of deciding what type of program to implement, helped by ministry guidelines.

The York Board opted for double the amount of time because the province pays it significantly more money per student and per teacher for 40 minutes of French per day.

The Superintendent of Education for the Catholic system said his board has never been motivated to offer a program because of increased financial incentives. They're proving that point again.

Of course, there are other considerations like timetabling problems, which subjects get pared and parent reaction to the whole question.

However, there is the school of thought which says the more time a young student gets in language instruction, the better the chance for a high rate of retention and facility in its use.

The public school program will see to it that students who reach the end of Grade 10 accumulate 1,200 hours of French study in a core program.

With the Catholic program, even if a student finished Grade 13 (which currently doesn't exist) the most he could hope to get is 1,080 hours of French.

The crucial time for Separate School students is at the end of Grade 8 when they'll have accumulated 480 hours of instruction compared with twice that much by their public counterpart.

Many of them then decide to attend a York high school. What they'll find, if they continue French studies, is a whole new ball game in terms of what they don't know.

The Planning and Development Department of the York Board has the foresight to recognize the potential disparities between the two groups of kids and hope to have several different levels of French courses ready when the time comes.

They also plan to assess each child in his French studies as he comes from Catholic elementary school.

What the Catholic people have done is manage to provide French instruction for all its students at a uniform starting point without worrying about incentive grants (or the withdrawal of them) and parents who think 40 minutes per day is too much.

Later, they may take the option of increasing the time at the junior level (Grades 4, 5 and 6).

A letter was sent from the chairman of the public board to the chairman of the Separate Board, stating the program department would be happy to meet and begin ironing out problems with French studies.

In one way, we have a national subject unifying two local elements. Let's hope the invitation is accepted so Catholic kids with a genuine interest in French can overcome a disadvantage.

School boards should be able to negotiate

It was as fashionable in the municipal election campaign as usual for members of local councils to knock the school boards for irresponsible spending.

It is in one sense a bum rap. School boards do not have the negotiating power that municipalities do.

After the local council has removed an arm and a leg from the developer's profits in the form of lot levies, required engineering works, park dedications and even landscaping allowances, so that it can build firehalls, libraries and plant trees in the parks, the school board has to provide a place for children to go to school.

But the school board has to buy its school site and bus the children

somewhere else until a school can be justified.

Then it has to borrow the money to pay half the cost of building it, while the province borrows the money to pay for the other half.

It is time that the school boards got the same right to negotiate with developers that municipalities have.

Either they should extract it by holding up subdivisions or litigation or demand it through provincial legislation.

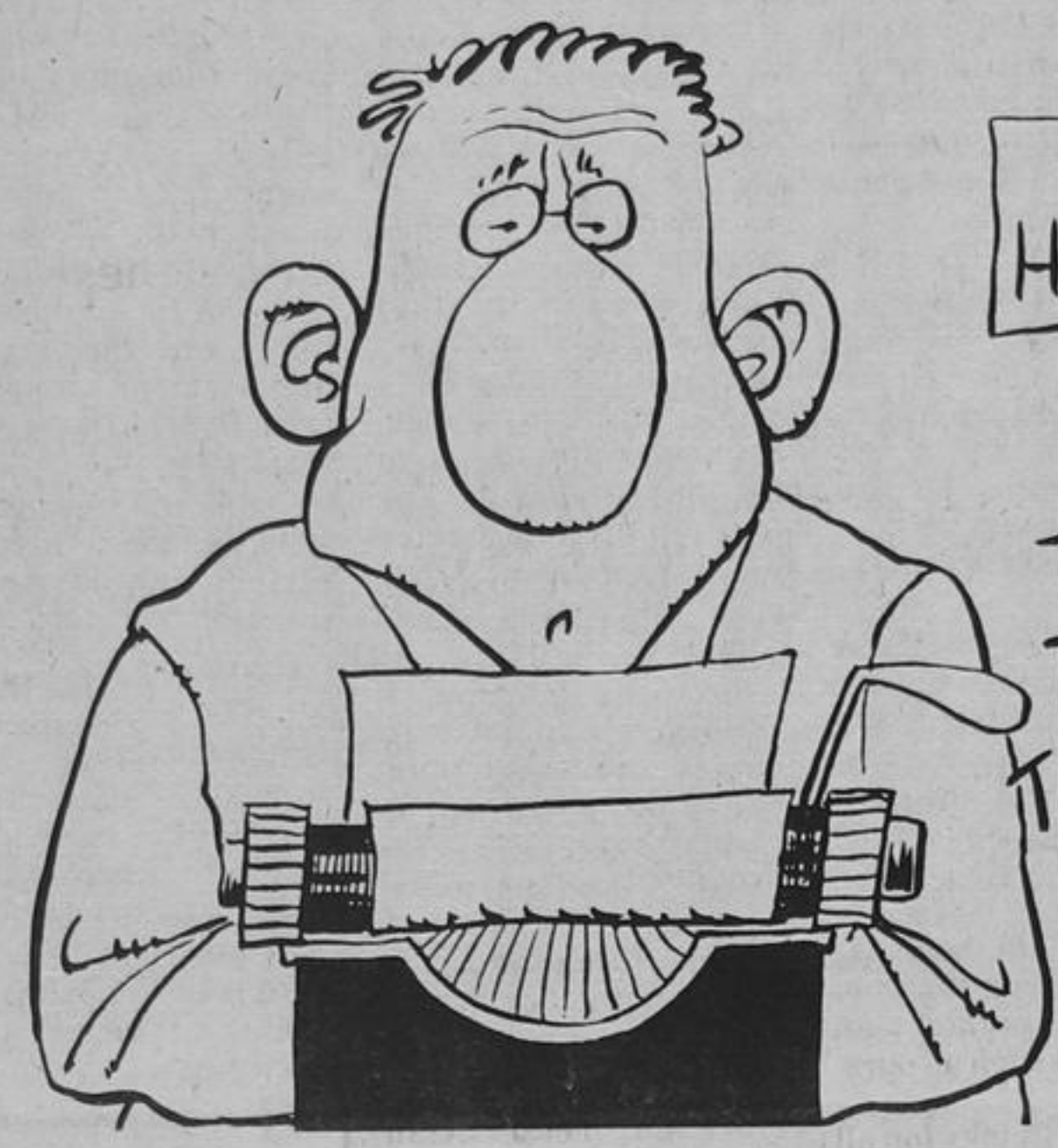
The Town of Markham has required the developers of Risebrough to provide a \$1 million arena but not one cent of the developer's money has to go for schools.

Someone's priorities are mixed up.

... AND OF COURSE THERE ARE THOSE UNHAPPY WITH THE OUTCOME ...

... SOB... SNIFF...

ELECTION HEADQUARTERS



Phillips the LIBERAL

Highlighting your Jamaican trip

By BOB RICE

This week's column is directed at the two lucky people who will be spending the week of January 22nd as my guests at Club Guava at Malvern in Jamaica. Since any of you could win the trip, I guess that all of you should pay attention.

When you are busy working on your assignment about this delightful hotel and the many attractions that are offered, try to put aside some time to take a side trip to Ocho Rios and pay a visit to the Chez Robert restaurant at Coconut Grove Shopping Centre.

Before I fill you in on what awaits you at Chez Robert, allow me to whet your appetite by describing some of the many things that you should try to do while on this beautiful island.

Since you will be staying on the outskirts of Montego Bay, some trips into the bustling town will be inevitable. The Club Guava operates a free shuttle bus that treks constantly between Malvern, the original Club at Chatham Beach and downtown 'Mobay'.

Known as the tourist capital of Jamaica, Montego Bay is a conglomeration of street vendors, duty free shops, straw stalls and various hotels and guest houses. You will, no doubt, spend some of your time on Doctors Cave Beach which boasts the

whitest sand in the Caribbean. In addition to shopping, there are several nightclubs offering native floor shows with the usual array of limbo dancers, calypso bands and some excellent steel drum acts.

The Jamaica Tourist Board mans an impressive office next to Doctors Cave Beach and helpful guides are stationed throughout the town to answer your queries.

If you would like to have a true taste of the island, I might suggest that you spend a couple of bucks for the Evening On The Great River which operates every night.

You will be met at your hotel by the tour bus and driven through Mobay. After several stops at other hotels, you will be brought to the mouth of the river where you will board the boats that will take you upstream. In a most impressive setting (made even better by a dazzling light display on the rushing water) you will watch a native floor-show and then partake of a Jamaican Feast.

The menu varies but is always interesting. You could be sampling carried goat and patties one night and an excellent stew with plantain the next.

The return down the river by tor-

chlight rounds out the unique experience.

The drive from Montego Bay to Ocho Rios will take you through some of the most colorful countryside this side of Eden. Sugar cane grows along the roadside for part of the journey and then is replaced by towering palm fronds and banana trees. The newly opened highway that passes Rose Hall (another must) has cut some time from the journey which used to take about two and a half hours. Personally, I miss the hairpin turn near Falmouth with the constant honking of horns and screeching of brakes, but I guess that this little gran prix corner was too much of a hazard.

As you hug the northern coastline you will pass through small communities with colourful names. Discovery Bay marks the spot where Columbus landed and Runaway Bay brings back haunting memories of a people trying to free themselves from oppressive rule by colonial landlords and owners.

Whereas Montego Bay hustles, Ocho Rios pleasantly flows. Hidden behind giant growths of Hibiscus and Bouganvillea, private residences and small Inns share the reef protected waters with high rise hotels.

A walk down the main street will take you past the straw market stalls with

an excellent assortment of baskets, hats and what-have-you. The vendors love to 'higgle' over the price and deals are made quickly amidst the constant din of the patois dialect.

There are a couple of shopping centres that cater to the duty free trade. Coconut Grove is, to me, unique. More reminiscent of a Moroccan Bazaar, you find yourself wandering a maze of miniature streets before finally emerging into the central courtyard. The fact that you have actually come full circle is almost hidden except that your car can be easily seen just a few feet from you in the parking lot.

If you pause for a moment, new aromas can be sensed, mixed as they are with the spice and floral bouquet that is evident everywhere in Jamaica.

Ahead of you is an open window and, should you chance a look, you will become aware of a chef and several assistants preparing the many dishes that are served daily at Chez Robert.

Even if you don't win the trip, try to put aside some time in the near future to pay a visit to this charming dot on the map.

Until next week, remember if you will the words of the ol' Millpond Philosopher... "to win is one thing... to have tried is better!"

LIBERAL SPRINKLINGS

One day and it's done for the year

By MILLIE STEWART

This is it. Today's the day I finally gather together what little wits I own and make my annual onslaught on the local shopping malls to try to accomplish in one day what most people spend months doing... Christmas shopping.

I am going well-armed, greedily clutching in my grubby little paws all the cash I could find. I have my trusty Visa card and my cheque book, and I'm off and running. Well, running may not be quite the word I'm looking for. Maybe slithering or crawling would be more appropriate.

I am taking a friend along for company... after all, I do have to have lunch, and no one likes to eat alone.

LADIES FIRST

By now, you can probably visualize me with a list eight miles long clutched in my little mitts.

No way, I hate lists for anything... never make them... and certainly wouldn't stick to one if I did.

I simply start with the hardest gifts to buy. Both mothers are at the top in this category.

Each year I ask my darling husband what I should buy his mother, and each year I get the same answer.

"How the hell do I know. Get her a sweater or something."

Good grief, if I bought her a sweater every year, she would now have enough wool for a flock of sheep.

No, this year the mothers, both of them are getting something totally feminine, something they wouldn't buy themselves.

GENTLEMEN PREFER.....

This is where I usually run into problems... buying for the fathers. I have enough trouble choosing something great for my husband without having to add two fathers to my headaches.

The poor fellas usually end up with some practical item like those neat little cases with all the tiny drawers for nuts and bolts and such.

getting, and when they see their gifts, they will both put me right at the top of their 'People I really like list'.

What are these great gifts? Nope, I'm not telling. One can never tell if my dad just may decide to read what his daughter writes this week, and then my surprise would go "poof!"

FUN TIME

After a long lunch with my friend, it's time to do the good stuff. Shopping for kids is always fun, at least I think it is.

The stores are just packed with millions of great toys that every boy or girl would just love to have. In fact, my own girls have already decided on half a million toys each.

In my opinion, shopping for girls is easier than shopping for boys, but maybe that's because I don't have any boys, except an overgrown one who will never grow up.

Thank goodness, I don't have many boys on my list.

Girls like dolls, and I like dolls... always have. Today's toy market is just crammed with dolls of every sort, those that wet, eat and do other

things, and maybe even one that sings.

If there is a doll out there that sings, please, I don't want to know about it. My choice is hard enough.

Whatever happened to puzzles, blocks and coloring books?

ESSENTIALS

On every Christmas list, there are essential gifts... teachers, bus drivers, baby sitters and on and on. I have some of those on my list, and I always try to find something a little unusual for these people.

I am sure there is not one teacher who really looks forward to 14 more bottles of perfume or cologne, anymore than I would.

It should now be late afternoon, and time for a break for some liquid fortification, and by now I should be in need of a break.

My feet will need Dr. Scholl personally and I will probably have a thumping headache, but maybe, just maybe I will have accomplished what I set out to do.

I intend to give it the good old college try, and we'll see.

Next week: Larry Johnston.

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