

## Wretched living conditions here

Some of our readers may be wondering why a story about the down and out would appear on the front page of The Liberal.

It certainly is not a story to appeal to trendy-setting young consumers that newspapers are supposed to be going after lately.

It is not one that you will "enjoy" reading and it was not exactly a joy to write.

But it is important because there are at least 1,229 people on general welfare assistance in York Region, who may or may not be in a similar plight as Arthur Smith and Evelyn Rivers.

Those were the figures for November, and they always go up in the winter. They do not include women getting a mother's allowance or anyone on other long-term provincial programs.

We do not know very much about them because they have not taken the unusual step for welfare recipients of seeking publicity.

We do know, because welfare officials have said so, that wood is a common fuel for home heating in

York Region and that the welfare department is aware that the heating allowance may go to buy wood rather than to pay oil bills.

We also know that there are only about a dozen units of government housing for people under 65 in York Region where rent is geared only to the ability to pay, and that forces many people into basements or summer cottages for the winter.

If the Richmond Hill council took the same attitude as the rest of the political bodies in York Region, where, to be relegated to deal with health and social services matters is considered the next thing to burial, there would be no such housing for the unemployable anywhere in York Region.

If the rest of the region would follow Richmond Hill's lead, there might be a chance that people like Arthur Smith and Evelyn Rivers could live in considerably better conditions.

What we have here is not very appealing.

## LETTERS

### The bus driver's side of the story

As a resident of the Willowbrook subdivision, and as a Travelways school bus driver (driving for a Separate school in Thornhill), I feel that the recent bussing controversy has overlooked the position of the bus driver.

A school bus driver must be punctual in getting the bus ready for a run. He (or she, in each case) must remember where each stop is to be made.

Upon loading a few children, he becomes combination driver and

disciplinarian — and kids try just about everything imaginable. So far, not bad.

Then come the goodies. Cars regularly clog the loading and no-parking zones around the schools, and buses must carefully avoid each and every one.

Parents sometimes make special requests for their children to be dropped at alternate locations, and the driver must remember these. He must brave all kinds of weather and road conditions.

He must find alternate routes when construction,

moving vans, or stranded vehicles block scheduled streets.

He must be prepared when the bus breaks down en route, or when a child vomits in the aisle of a full bus, or when a child takes off a lot more than just his coat, or when a hydro wire falls on the bus while it proceeds through an intersection, or when the bus signal lights fail to flash when required, or when a misbehaving child falls and hurts himself, requiring first aid.

(All of these things have happened on my bus within the past three months.)

However, there is a brighter side. My kids call me "Uncle Ken" and the bus is "Bonnie" and — well, I admit I have my favourites among the children, but each one has earned the distinction. Along with the monsters, there are a few angels.

Parents should temper their criticisms in the light of the responsibilities drivers face. I challenge almost any of them to get their own special licence (not an easy feat for many), drive a bus for a week, and still come out sane and smiling.

I simply cannot understand parents griping because a driver who is also a mother takes her own child along; I cannot think of a better way to guarantee that she would drive carefully, since her own child is among the group.

I doubt that the bussing controversy is over yet, and I am not trying to cover up for any driver who may be incompetent; however, I plead for fairer consideration for those of us who assume a lot of responsibility two or three times a day to transport children to and from their schools.

I also appreciate Travelways as a company; they are trying hard to do a good job, even though they are sometimes misunderstand.

that the cost of burial is outrageous.

Whereas the line could be put underground for a short distance at reasonable expense, this would be impossible to demand for the communities from Bathurst to Willow Brook.

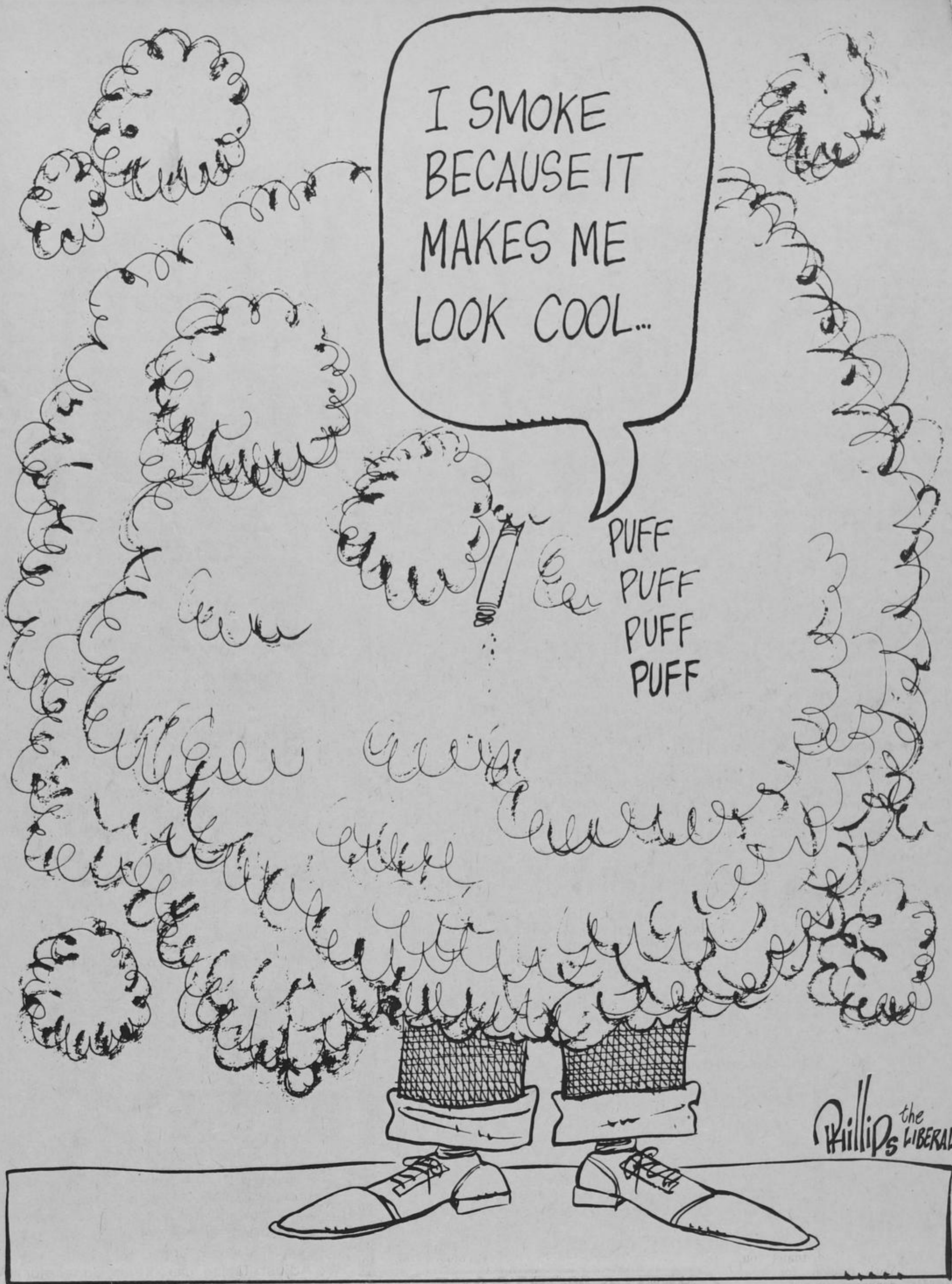
This is a Catch-22 situation where if few people want burial they can easily be turned down, but if many people want burial they, too, can be turned down because of the high cost.

In this struggle our political representatives must remember that they should not be fractionalized along community lines, nothing has been built to lock the line into our Highway 7 corridor, and finally that very many citizens are willing to publicly support this committee in opposing the route through Thornhill.

The decision taken to follow this route can be altered; it is not as yet a natural disaster.

Andrew Meles,  
3 Jondan Crescent,  
Thornhill

Kenneth H. Kepler  
165 Tamarack Drive  
Thornhill



By BOB RICE

## Aw, c'mon; not a robin already??

A lady phoned Millie Stewart at The Liberal Monday morning and reported that she had sighted a robin. I realize that it is always a big deal to see the first Robin of Spring and no doubt most of you will now start reporting similar sightings but, let me set you straight. It is entirely possible that this was not the first harbinger of spring but instead one very dumb bird.

There are many reasons that could have kept our little birdie up here for the frozen times including (a) he can't find his way around the block, let alone all the way to Tampa, (b) he is, in fact, a masochist who digs walking around in frozen slush saying "look at me folks, see how brave I am?" or (c) he is indeed a very smart Robin and would rather feather his nest up here in Ca-Naaa-Daa than risk losing it all down South with the devalued dollar.

### THEY'RE OFF

While the rest of us spent Monday digging out from the snow that fell on

our bodies Sunday, Rhoda and Walter Boeinyshyn boarded an Air Jamaica Boeing 727 and escaped to Montego Bay, Jamaica as the guests of Club Guava at Malvern.

As luck would have it, I just happened to be passing Toronto International in the CKEY Skymaster as the south-bound flight received its take-off clearance and rolled down the runway in quest of the sun.

You know . . . there are times that I wish I was crooked and evil and then I would have rigged the whole contest and Rhoda and Walter would still be in Thornhill and I would be you-know-where.

### PRICE HIKE?

There are reports in the news of late that good ol' hamburger will go up another 60 cents by spring, just in time for barbeque season.

Another item I saw stated that some fellah in the Excited States has been working for a couple of years perfecting

a hot dog made from Soya instead of meat and stuff.

And in Michigan some guy is still trying to breed a four-legged chicken so that those of us who like dark meat can get more on our plates. Who said the world is going crazy . . . eh?

### HE SHOVELS IT

I missed my big chance for a Canadian Newspapers Association League of Photographers and Great Pundits award Monday morning.

As I negotiated the tricky turn from Yonge Street into The Liberal executive parking lot, I caught sight of our illustrious leader, Grand Poobah Wallace, putting his all into clearing the front steps of the building of some remnants of the snowfall.

As luck would have it, by the time I parked my car (sorry Fred, I'll replace the tail light from my next pay) and retrieved my trusty Pentax from the glovebox, Rapid Ronnie had retreated.

Oh well, maybe I'll get him next time. . . . I still have to get even for

his 'fatty, fatty, two by four' caption a few weeks back.

### NO CHARGE

Mother Bell has come up with another winner folks. It seems that those of us with a Thornhill number (881 or 889) can now dial the Stouffville exchange (640) free of charge. Neat . . . eh? But . . . and here is the goodie gang . . . if you live in Richmond Hill and have an 884 or 883 number, you still have to pay the long distance charge.

How do we have to pay the charge here in Richmond Hill when Stouffville is closer to us than Thornhill? To be sure . . . in the future we will all be able to call 640 free but . . . why this terrible injustice at the current time?

On second thought . . . who would want to call Stouffville anyway?

### HE SAYETH

The ol' Millpond Philosopher once said . . . "show me a man who laughs in the face of danger . . . and I'll show you a nut."

## LIBERAL SPRINKLINGS

### First plane ride tomorrow

By STEVE PEARLSTEIN  
Liberal Staff Writer

The thought of flying always fascinated me. My preoccupation with airplanes and airports began before I could ride a bicycle. I remember my father tossing me into the front seat of his car on a Sunday afternoon and driving to a dead-end street which abutted on Downsview Airport in North York.

We used to sit there for hours watching the Royal Canadian Air Force planes land and take off effortlessly. It was beside the point we were escaping from my screaming mother. To us, it was just a great, almost imaginary afternoon.

We'd pick up a few candy bars or some popcorn and while the hours away pretending we were air traffic controllers.

I've never been in an airplane. When I tell that to people I know they just give me an incredulous look and ask me where I've been for the last

hundred years. At that point, I usually unleash about six dozen excuses, try to look sheepish and then I quickly change the subject.

Never again. Tomorrow I'm going to take my first plane ride and barring a skyjacking, I think I'll love every minute of it.

Not that I don't feel a little apprehensive, mark you. As a matter of fact, I've had a few experiences since the New Year began that could convince me to cancel the whole trip.

The first episode was on December 30 when I had to pick up my brother-in-law and sister-in-law on their return from Florida. Let me say that transmission of misinformation and incoherence is endemic to that part of the population called mothers-in-law. It seems they never get anything right or else they know everything.

"Which terminal are we going to?" I asked.

"Susan called me and said the same one she took off from — Terminal 1," answered my mother-in-law.

So there we were — five of us waiting at Terminal 1 of the Toronto International Airport — for a flight due at 10:30 p.m. After two-and-a-half hours I started to get a little uneasy and wondered if we weren't in the wrong place.

It was about then a customs official came by and said our relatives had been waiting nearly three hours for us at Terminal 2. When we all finally got together, the fireworks could have lit up the tarmac.

If that wasn't enough, our New Year's Eve was spent out at the airport (didn't I say I liked airports?). My wife and two friends talked me into ringing in the New Year at a place called the Aeroquay.

Admittedly, it's a nice restaurant with a wide, sweeping window so you can watch the aircraft land and take off while you eat. That night, visibility was down to about 20 feet so all flights had been re-routed or cancelled. The live band was so exciting I enjoyed trying to count the airstrips through the fog, much more. Remember the rain that night?

I thought I'd had my fill of airports for a while but just last week I had to pick up my mother-in-law on return from a southern trip.

This time, I didn't go out to Toronto International without the proper information. Her plane was due at 4:30 p.m., but knowing that, wasn't enough for me this time. I kept calling a recorded message on Air Canada's flight information line — and sure enough, like they knew I was planning to drive out there — the flight was delayed three times.

The plane finally landed at 4 a.m. I played it cool and stayed in bed, letting somebody else take care of the pick-up.

You can see how one develops attitudes about airports and flying. I'm hoping all the mundane and upsetting things like flight delays, cancellations, misplaced luggage and porters with bad breath can be overcome by smooth, safe ride tomorrow.

Next month, I'll tell you how the trip was.