

CASTOR COMMENT

Heritage worth preserving

So now we know. Several homes and other buildings in the Castor area have been designated as Heritage buildings, that is, buildings that contribute through their design or age or historical quality to the traditions and esthetics of the area. These are buildings regarded by officials as worth preserving and, generally, not to be altered without consultation and expert guidance which they, apparently, are willing to provide.

This doesn't mean that these buildings are better or superior to others in the area; but simply

that their design and history is such that they contribute to a better understanding of early Canadiana.

The Heritage people have been doing a good job for Canada. They have saved old buildings in Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver and even Ottawa from the wrecker's ball. Unfortunately, they were not able to save Sir William Van Horne's mansion in Montreal from the rapacity of developers who simply demolished one of the finest examples of early Canadiana in existence.

We understand the Quebec

government has roused itself and is taking an interest in the Papineau Seignory at Montebello, where both Louis Joseph Papineau and Henri Bourassa, his grandson, lived. Not so long ago, the magnificent old seignory was in a bad way, staircases crumbling, wall affected by damp and neglect. Now this architectural treasure, which belongs to Canadians, is being restored.

Perhaps because of author Pierre Berton's vivid concern with the Yukon where he, quite literally, sprang into this world, a number of buildings in Dawson City have been brought under the Heritage umbrella, including one of the more famous dance halls.

Heritage preservation has been slow getting under way in Ottawa, the Capital of our fair nation. Nicholas Sparks' home, for example was ruthlessly cast to the ground despite all of Charlotte Whitton's efforts to save it. The Old Supreme Court at the foot of Parliament Hill was torn down, so that not a stone was left standing upon a stone. The stents in fact, wonderful examples of the Scottish stonemason's art, were used to build walls around a government parking lot in one of the more noteworthy acts of official vandalism committed by the powers who direct our humble destiny.

Laurier House is an example of heritage preserved. This was due to the efforts of Mackenzie King, not to any official action. Arthur Meighen's home on Cooper street is now a concrete block. Sir Robert Borden's home on Wurttemberg, once the Chinese Embassy (Nationalist) was razed to make room for a massive cubicle container for modern cliff dwellers. The mantel piece from Sir Robert Borden's fireplace, on which he had often placed a book or a few lines from a speech, ended up in a second hand shop in By Ward market. Thus have we treated our great men.

The philosophy in our country has always been to rip down and replace anything that was no longer functional, rather than to repair and preserve, as is done in Europe. In Britain, the Netherlands, France, a three hundred year old farmhouse is regarded as quite serviceable. Here, we start looking askance at structures after twenty years.

The Daley Building in Ottawa is a subject of controversy. It represents the most blatant, ugly, functional disparities of the so-called Chicago period in architecture. Perhaps if we keep it, in a hundred years or so, it may acquire charm. In simple fact, age itself adds an element that cannot be supplied by architecture. The North Russell Cemetery in another hundred years or so, may rival Stoke Poges where Gray wrote his famous Elegy.

Be that as it may, Russell, Embrun, Metcalfe, Morewood, Kenmore and points east and west have come under scrutiny by the Heritage buffs. This cannot but be helpful and may even arouse in some of these communities a kind of community pride and determination to do the best for our towns and villages that is often sadly lacking.

Correspondence

Editor, Castor Review,

To those whom it may concern. I do like your paper very much. Keep up the good work. Best wishes for a bright future.

Merry Christmas,
Mrs. Edna Hume,
Ottawa

ABSENTEE POLICE

An element conspicuously lacking in Russell Village is the essential element of police protection. Although ratepayers are paying taxes earmarked for police protection, the fact remains that a police detachment at a distance of twelve miles cannot render assistance when needed.

An example of this was provided recently when a highly respected citizen of the village was attacked by a burglar whom he surprised in the act of ransacking his home. Both the citizen and his wife were savagely assaulted by a man who obviously knew that he was in no danger of being interrupted by police or even of being pursued.

This is far from being an isolated incident in the Castor area. There has been arena breakings and fires such as the Knights of Columbus fire at Embrun; there has been vandalism and other forms of lawlessness which can be directly attributed to the fact that many of the villages on the Castor are totally devoid of police protection except on those occasions when the O.P.P. take a leisurely drive through town before going on their way elsewhere. Absentee protection is not much better than no protection at all.

HISTORICAL GEM

We hope provincial authorities will think carefully before moving ahead on the plan to construct an addition to the registry office.

This building is one of the architectural gems of this area. It should be preserved and restored in the way the the Osgoode Township Hall is being restored in Metcalfe.

It is doubtful to us that an addition can be constructed without destroying the heritage and architectural values of the building.

We have a suggestion: Select an appropriate site in Russell Village and construct a new, modern registry office (architecturally in line with the best traditions of the past). Then let the old registry office which has been paid for ten times over by the taxpayers of this area, be turned over as a community library, replacing the present Russell Library in the basement of the Odd Fellows' Temple.

Restored and rehabilitated in the style of a hundred years ago, the registry office would be a marvelous asset as a community library. An addition on the other hand destroys the lines of the present building and costs about as much as a new building. We trust the authorities will give the matter thought before acting.

SOMETHING SMELLS

Ontario Federation of Agriculture president Peter Hannam has criticized what he describes as the provincial government's "half-hearted commitment to agriculture". The government's policies, says Hannam, could make farmers "an endangered species."

While we feel Hannam is exaggerating the situation as it now stands, his complaint that the government is allowing urbanites to impose their life-style of rural Ontario is certainly valid to a point.

"City people who move to the country think they are moving into a park," quote Hannam, "Before long they are trying to stop odors, noises, drainage projects, machinery on the roads and other necessary farm activities."

Because government agencies don't have to live up to the same land-use planning guidelines as farmers, says Hannam, farm communities are cluttered with garbage dumps, hydro generating sites, gravel pits, transmission corridors, airports, highways, pipelines, nuclear dumps, snowmobile trails, poisonous liquid waste disposal sites, "and all sorts of other urban intrusions."

We maintain the government should — and hasn't always — taken every reasonable precaution to insure the amenities listed by Hannam are installed in marginal land rather than productive farm land. Let's face it, we can't keep gravel pits and highways out of the country but we can in a lot of cases avoid obliterating good farms.

And city people must realize that if they want to avail themselves of the many joys of country living they must accept things as they find them. If you really want to rub long-time rural denizens the wrong way, move into their communities and start telling them that manure shouldn't stink and heavy equipment shouldn't make noise.

UNION STUPIDITY

We support unions and feel that they have done a great deal in improving the financial and social standing of people who work for a living, which includes nearly all of us.

But unions, like other institutions, grow old, grow fat, grow more concerned with their prestige, their position in society, the concerns of their paid, professional leaders, then with the rights and progress of their members.

Last week came news that the world's greatest newspaper, the Times of London, has been closed down because of labour troubles. The Times joins a long list of papers, including the New York Daily Mirror, the Philadelphia Inquirer and the Toronto Telegram, to name a few, closed up by union action.

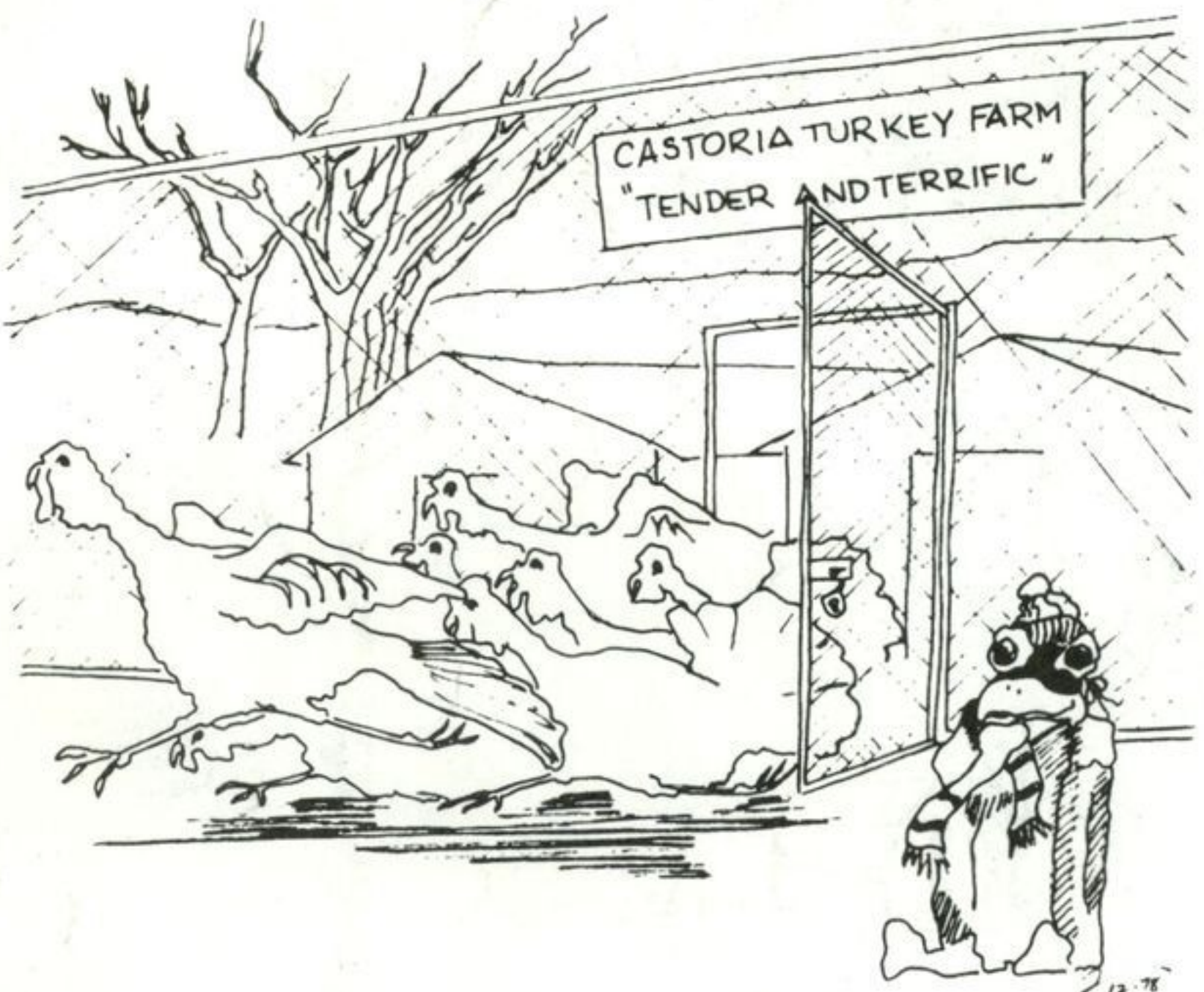
We ask, in what way does the closing of a great newspaper benefit its employees? The Montreal Star, for example, has been off the streets for months. How does this help the employees?

While the loss of jobs is serious in the closing of great newspapers by union activity, so is the detriment to the right of the public to know what is happening in the world.

Surely, there is something here for governments and legislators to look at. If great newspapers are to be harassed and bedeviled, is there not a point where they must close their doors, by union activity to the point where the public welfare in the suppression of news and information?

The very first move of a totalitarian system is to shut down the free newspaper, as it too often is, or by ideological considerations, as it has been on several occasions in Canada (notably the La Presse strike) is a threat to freedom of the press and freedom of information which a free society cannot tolerate and survive.

CASTORIA



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