



Opinion

An interview with the Chairman of the Lake Superior Board of Education

The controversy over the Schreiber School Closure has drawn nation wide attention. The issue was resolved last week at Tuesday night's School Board meeting in Schreiber, where the NEWS interviewed Board Chairman Mike Reid.

The NEWS: Mike, you have been in the forefront of the fight to keep the Schreiber school open for the last two years. How does it feel to have the Board finally resolve the issue the way they did?

Mike Reid: Great, it's a relief. It's a relief for me personally, for my family and friends and I think a relief for the community of Schreiber. To paraphrase Inez McCuaig, "It's good to see the little people win one."

The NEWS: What does this decision mean for the Board?

Mike Reid: It is all summed up in the first motion we passed. We have a new philosophy. We are not here to close schools, we are here to run them.

The NEWS: The five dissident Trustees obviously do not concur with this decision. The people of Schreiber and obviously the majority of the Board now consider the question of Closing the school decided. They don't want to hear about it again. Do you think the dissident five are going to continue to raise the issue and attempt to Close the school?

Mike Reid: It certainly would have been desirable to have had a full Board at the Meeting. The five Trustees' main objection was that the money the Report recommended had not been provided by the Minister before we voted on the course of action the Allan Report recommended we take - keeping the school open.

I have every confidence that the Minister will live up to her responsibility to provide the money for Northern schools very quickly now that we have shown our good faith by carrying out our responsibility. Once the Minister provided the money there is no reason to again raise the question of Closing the school. If the Minister is slow to live up to her responsibilities, we

along with all the other Northern Boards of Education will be aggressively reminding her of what the responsible course of action in this situation is.

I have no doubt that the money will be there, but entirely removed from these financial considerations I think it was quite clear on Tuesday night that the Trustees voted to maintain education in all our communities because it is the right thing to do. That decision was not based on whether this grant or that funding mechanism was in place or not. They were interested in more fundamental questions then the details of financial administration. It came down to what their philosophy of education really was, and they made the right decision.

This Board and future Boards are committed to operate community schools and this is the philosophy of the Lake Superior Board of Education.

The NEWS: But do you think they will press for Closure again?

Mike Reid: A couple of them may raise the issue again. I think it is important to realize that this group of five is not one monolithic voting bloc. There were a number of issues that brought them together and led them to make the decision they did. The single Trustee from Manitowadge was concerned about Program and felt that in the long run more programs and a higher quality of programs would probably be offered in one building in Terrace Bay. All the studies conducted by people on all sides of the Closure issue agreed that just the opposite was going to happen. However she still felt that way and so she was not prepared to support the retention of the Campus. Now that the issue is decided, I can't see any interest on the part of any Manitowadge Trustee in raising the question again.

The two Marathon Trustees were concerned about the long term cost of running the Schreiber building. How it would affect their taxpayers and how it might absorb money that otherwise might be spent on

several of the building projects we are considering in Marathon.

Of course the Marathon Trustee who has been the most persistent in pressing for Closure has resigned from the Board and that will change the situation, but I don't want to tie the two together.

The NEWS: Where does the Board go from here?

Mike Reid: On Tuesday we dealt with the last of the controversial issues left over from the last Board. Now we can get back to education. We have to formulate our Response to the Allan Report and one of the key parts of the Report is the recommendation in terms of taxation. Speaking for myself and not as Chairman, I am in favour of a complete '86' (property tax re-assessment). It is the only way to go. It will mean more educational tax dollars will be generated. Taxes can be levied on a much fairer basis and it will largely correct any inequities that exist in representation.

Of course the town councils have to do the '86'. We can only recommend it to them, but I think we will be seeing them move on it in the very near future.

The NEWS: One of the unfortunate facts we have to face is that this push to Close the Schreiber school has driven a wedge between Schreiber and Terrace Bay. Do you think the Board or you as individual Trustees can do anything to help change the situation?

Mike Reid: I think we have done the best thing we could possible do to correct this. On Tuesday night we closed the book on the whole issue. We put it in the past.

I agree that it is unfortunate and it has been completely unnecessary, but I think that it will pass quickly. I was pleased to see the Reeve and some of the Council from Terrace Bay at Tuesday night's vote. What has proven to be an obstacle in the relationship between people in the towns has been resolved.

The NEWS: Any last words?

Mike Reid: Yes. The kids are the Winners.

Arthur Black

Mad for monarchy

The famous French philosopher Voltaire once opined: "The best government is a benevolent tyranny, tempered by an occasional assassination."

Well, old Voltaire was a bit of a cynic, and given that he penned his acidic aphorisms back in the 18th century, he was probably thinking about royalty when he talked about tyrants. He lived in an age when kings and queens carried some clout.

Back then, if someone told you "The Queen is not amused" — it meant you'd best not make any long range retirement plans. And when a monarch said "Off with your head!" ... there was no point in shopping around for a lawyer.

Times have changed. Kings and queens have largely been shouldered out by presidents, prime ministers and politically

agile generalissimos.

Most of them, that is. Not in good old Great Britain.

Curious thing about British royalty. Britain has its Royal Family, and the British press can't stop carping about it. They cost too much to maintain. Anne is too snooty. Margaret is too frumpy. Andy is too randy ...

The Americans don't have a royal family — and they can't stop raving about them. They pay lip service to democracy, but in their Republican red-white-and-blue hearts they're head over heels in love with anything that wears a crown.

When the Queen and Prince Phillip toured the U.S. west coast recently, Americans turned out in the tens of thousands — even though monsoon rains were racking California. Frank Sinatra

threw a party. President Ronnie touched up his Grecian Formula and the First Lady curtsied.

Yup. Americans are mad for monarchy. Latest manifestation: *The Book of Royal Lists*, published by Simon and Schuster.

The book was written (appropriately enough) by a Limey / Yank duo — Englishman Craig Brown and American Lesley Cunliffe. Cunliffe was born in Massachusetts, but for the past 13 years she lived in Britain and worshipped the royal family.

It's not exactly a worshipful book though ... For one thing it chronicles certain regal oddities which I'm sure Britain's blue bloods would rather see forgotten.

Anne Boly had three breasts and an extra finger; James I had a tongue that was too big for his

mouth; Edward the Confessor was an albino.

The book also demonstrates that royal-types can be just as philistine as the lowliest commoner. Example: George V to Queen Mary while looking at a Cezanne painting: "Come over here May. Here's something that will make you laugh."

Edward VII's assessment of Rome: "You look at two mouldering stones and they tell you it's the temple of something."

Prince Phillip's reaction to a sculpture at the San Francisco Art Museum: "That looks to me like something to hang a towel on."

British royalty is a trifle odd when it comes to collections as well. According to *The Book of Royal Lists*, the most prized possession of Henry VII was Sir George's mummified left leg.



And there's one other "collection" Britain's male monarchs made rather a specialty — 16 of the 34 kings since William I fathered illegitimate children.

The book is crammed with just about everything a royalty watcher could crave — anecdotes, habits, peculiarities ... even quips about royalty by non-royalty.

Which brings me to my favourite in the book. The famous British novelist E.M. Forster, near the end of his long life, was invited to St. James's Palace for a wedding. Mister Forster was very old, and very short-sighted. Asked by a friend if he would like to meet the Queen Mother, Forster said: "Oh, I thought that was the wedding cake."