

Editorial

Sloppy Selection

No one could be impressed with the manner in which Markham Township council chose their representative for the Stouffville District High School Board, last week. This is not meant to be any reflection on the party whose name was inserted in the appointment bylaw, but on the manner in which such an important post is filled.

There have always been demands that the members of the high school boards should be elected, not appointed, and making the appointment in such a sloppy manner as was done last week, could do little but strengthen this demand.

Apparently little thought was given to the selection of who could

most ably fill the post, and the lady who was selected had never given any consent that she would act. In addition to school board appointments, this idea of "any name will do," is not good enough for council appointees to other positions as well. This is not a fault peculiar to Markham Township alone, as visiting many councils, we have seen countless other appointments made in just such a careless manner.

Now that the New Year is approaching and the time when a great many appointments are made, it might be well if councils would give just a little more thought to whom they put into positions of responsibility.

A Compliment, Well-Earned

A sincere compliment was paid to out-going Reeve, Gar Lehman by a member of the 1960 Council on Thursday evening, when he remarked, "You have done as much work in the interest of Stouffville as any previous reeve." To say that Reeve Lehman was conscientious concerning the duties of his position could almost be considered as the understatement of the year. Accustomed to the physical labours of his own business, he displayed much of the same energetic enthusiasm at his municipal post.

No job was below the dignity of his office. A clogged culvert, a faulty sewer line or a flooded basement were among the hundreds of complaints that would receive his

personal attention. If one wished to criticize the Reeve's handling of the town's business during the past two terms, we could only suggest that he was too ambitious. This, however, could hardly be classed as a fault.

While veteran councilmen were toppled from office during the past district election, Reeve Lehman retained his popularity at the polls. Although he has relinquished his grip on the gavel for the 1961 term, he will still perform a very important function as a member of Stouffville's governing body. If past records are any measuring stick, one may be assured that he will shoulder his share of the load, regardless of his position on the municipal ladder.

An Old Warrior Returns

An old warrior, in the sense only of municipal service, has been returned to a council post in the Township of Markham. Charles Hooper of Buttonville was elected to fill the position in ward 2, made vacant when Lawson Mumberson moved up to successfully contest the deputy-reeveship.

The electorate will be watching Mr. Hooper with considerable interest during the forthcoming term. His fiery oratory which has featured many Nomination meetings in the past, was noticeably subdued this year and many ratepayers are wondering if time and tide have softened his approach to the ever-present problems that lie ahead.

We must agree that both the township and its governing officials have changed since the day when

Mr. Hooper occupied a seat at the Council table. We do not speak disparagingly, however, when we suggest that we do not feel Mr. Hooper, as an elected candidate, has been converted to a follow-the-leader representative. He has enjoyed too much experience in the municipal mill to merely sit on his hands for the next twelve months.

The Tribune has not always been in complete agreement with Mr. Hooper's thinking on specific matters of township business, but as a newspaper, we have admired his willingness to express an opinion on any subject. A "bump on a log" member is of no use, either to his ward or to the municipality as a whole. The Charles Hooper of old was not one of those. We trust that the Charles Hooper of 1961 will be little changed.

Yes, There Is A Santa Claus

What is perhaps the nation's most reprinted editorial was written in the year 1897, in response to a school girl's simple question about the validity of the Santa Claus legend. Virginia O'Hanlon, then eight years old, sent this question to the editor of the New York Sun: "Dear Editor: some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus. Papa says, 'If you see it in the Sun, it's so.' Please tell me the truth, is there a Santa Claus?"

The answer to this question, penned by an editorial writer named Francis Pharcellus Church, has become an American classic. Here it is in full:

"Dear Editor—Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus."

Virginia, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except what they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men's or children's, are little. In this great universe of ours man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect, as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! how dreary would be the world if there were no Virginias.

There would be no child-like faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies! You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world.

You tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else more real and abiding.

No Santa Claus! Thank God! he lives, and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood."

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Sugar and Spice

By BILL SMILEY

Another Christmas is "upon us." And we're acting as though it were a fearsome monster, advancing to engulf us. From all sides come the annual lamentations and lachrymations of the spoilsports. Most of them are in, or near, middle age. At every turn, they bewail the "paganism" and the "commercialism" of our modern Christmas, and wonder plaintively "what's happened to the good, old-fashioned Christmas?"

I can tell them. The same thing has happened to the good old-fashioned Christmas that has happened to the good old horse and buggy and the good old Saturday night bath in a tin tub in the kitchen and the good old two-hour sermon on Sunday morning.

Most of the people who do the wailing about our manner of celebrating the occasion today would have to be tied, hand and foot, before they could be dragged back through the years to their good old-fashioned Christmas. Because it wasn't all that good.

What they think they remember as "the good old-fashioned Christmas" is a nostalgic dream they have concocted out of vague and distorted memories, stories they have read and heard and the tendency of humans to deplore today and see yesterday through a rosy haze.

The trouble is, they try to convince their children that this phantasy they're describing was infinitely superior to the crass materialistic Christmas of today. I know the story pretty well. Perhaps because I have told it quite a few times.

It goes something like this: "Christmas was a much happier occasion when we were children. You kids, all you can think of is what you're going to get. You don't have any real fun out of Christmas. The tree, for example. Nowadays we just buy a tree. Why, when we were young we'd all go out to the bush with Dad and cut our own tree. And when we came home

Mom would have hot soup and home-made bread for us, and we'd have a jolly time decorating the tree." And so on.

This little story is typical of the rest of it, half fact, half fancy. My father, for one, had more sense than to go floundering around in the bush, up to his waist in snow. He had a much better system. He simply told me to go and get a tree. And I cut it and dragged it three miles home and arrived exhausted and half frozen. And my mother decorated it, as mothers have been doing since the first Christmas tree was cut.

Parents of today say they are appalled at the sophisticated greed of their children when it comes to Christmas presents. The kids aren't satisfied with a pair of skates, or a big doll. They want a portable TV set, or bongos drums, or a transistor radio. According to the "good, old-fashioned Christmas" fairy tale, when we were children we accepted with shining eyes and little squeals of appreciation anything that we found under the tree.

Well, I am here to tell you that this is pure piffle and poppycock. Greed is relative. I coveted a pair of real hockey skates as furiously as my son covets a tape recorder. And if my eyes were shining when the new skates turned out to be a new suit of long underwear, it was because there were tears in them.

Another hallucination about the good, old-fashioned Christmas is that gift-giving was much more simple for parents in those days. I disagree. One Christmas I eavesdropped on my parents as they talked about presents for their five children. It was during the depression, and the conversation was heart-breaking, even for a fairly tough 10-year-old. They were deep in despair because there was no money for gifts.

It's true that today's Christmas has attracted some undesirable features: too much ad-

vertising, too many phony Santas, too many Christmas songs, dinned at us for too many hours each day, too much eating and drinking. But it's equally true that today's Christmas retains the best things of the old spirit of Christmas.

Our ears throb and our stomachs heave at such musical abortions as Jingle Bell Rock, but Good King Wenceslas is still with us, and I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas shows no signs of pushing Silent Night into oblivion.

We spend far too much on gifts and cards. But we still shop with the idea that it is more blessed, as well as more fun, to give than to receive. And every time we send a card, we are sending a little piece of ourselves, and there is a moment of warmth and pleasure for the recipient, when he opens it.

Our children are just as excited about Santa Claus, and the Christmas tree, and the mysteriously wrapped parcels, as ever we were. And they know and love the story of the Christ-child as well as ever we did. And they sing and enjoy the lovely old carols as much as ever we did.

For those crabs who can't enjoy the Christmas of today because they never stop talking about the "good, old-fashioned Christmas," I have a suggestion. Wake up. Forget the dream. It never was like that, really. Stop throwing cold water, and start dispensing warm love. For underneath the ballyhoo and the bad taste, Christmas is still a time for joy and love, for giving, for sentimentality, for renewing our faith in the miracle at Bethlehem.

Out with gloom and carping. I'm going to do my very best to have a Merry Christmas. And for all the readers of Sugar and Spice, I want the same. Even the crabs.

Anybody who is trying to attain longevity should on weekends and holidays stay out of anything that has wheels on it.

Whatever your way of life, your future depends upon your heart. No one is immune to heart disease. Canadians everywhere are learning that cardiacs can resume their places in their communities as useful and productive citizens. Heart disease is an enemy that takes more lives than all other causes combined.

For Parents Only

By Nancy Cleaver

Unless a child is ill and running a temperature, or unless the weather is extremely disagreeable, a period of play outdoors is a 'must' for a preschool youngster. A child needs brisk exercise when he can run and shout, using his big muscles and filling his lungs with fresh air.

He has a sense of joyous freedom which is almost impossible in a modern house where the living quarters are none too large. Even in late autumn and winter, a child benefits from sunshine. Outdoor play promotes a keen appetite, a regular bowel movement and sound sleep.

Mothers can save themselves a lot of trouble if they put more time and thought (and if necessary spend a little money) on play clothes. They should be comfortable, not difficult to get into, warm enough without being too hot. Children love bright colors. The gay reds and greens and blues in snow suits delight their eyes. Bright shades also make it easy for mothers to see them when they glance out the window or go to look for their children.

Essential Clothing Caps or helmets, mitts and galoshes should also be easy to put on. Have one place in the house for all articles needed for the child's outdoor play. If he asks for assistance, give it to him. But do encourage him to dress and undress himself. Praise him for this really big accomplishment for a little child!

Once a child is past the play pen stage, an enclosed back yard is a great boon to a family with small children. If the home is on a busy street, where a child may be killed by a passing car

Gift Giver Has Different Names

The Christmas-time gift-giver has many different names in the various lands of the world, and even in Russia youngsters annually await the arrival of two legendary benefactors.

Kolya (Nicholas) is supposed to go about Russia on Holy Night, leaving tiny wheat cakes on the windowsills and in addition there is "Babushka" who also gives gifts to little boys and girls (in repentance, a legend says, for supposedly misdirecting the Magi on their trip to Bethlehem).

Italian Children await the arrival of "Lady Befana," a fairy queen who presents gifts. Some Spanish children believe the gifts come directly from the child Jesus—"el Niño Jesus."

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

How bright are the lights that shine at Christmas; the colors of the rainbow, the forest and the lake. They shine and they beam, they blink and they beckon; their reflections are captured in plate glass and passing car windows. But where are they brighter still?

Capture, if you will, the reflection in the eyes of the very young . . . eyes so alive with excitement and anticipation, so full of joy and brimful of hope and eagerness.

Christmas lights the eyes of the young, but it is not a mere reflection. It is a light that comes from deep within, from the realization that there is something deeply wonderful about the season of Christmas; that there is a significant meaning about to be grasped and yet to be realized.

This is the light that shines in the eyes of the young. It is hope; it is anticipation — and eagerness — to grasp the meaning of Christmas, completely, fully.

May the true spirit of Christmas come to each and every one.

EDITOR'S MAIL

Richmond Hill, Ont. Dec. 12, 1960

Mr. C. H. Nolan, Publisher The Stouffville Tribune, Dear Mr. Nolan,

This is to express the grateful appreciation of the Campaign Committee to yourself and staff for helping us in the recent drive for funds for the Thornhaven School for Retarded Children.

The ample publicity and news coverage given by your paper was a great help to the canvassers in making their calls in your area.

The response from Stouffville Area was terrific and we feel that you were mainly instrumental in bringing the cause of Retardation to the attention of the public.

For the excellent co-operation throughout the Campaign, by your paper, we extend our heartfelt thanks.

Yours very truly, George R. Sweeney, Publicity Chairman,

P.S. — Will any canvasser for Thornhaven School for Retarded Children who has not turned in their receipts, please forward them to their Area Captain or to Thornhaven School, Box 333, Richmond Hill, Ont.

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