

Farm

Tribune

Editor's Mail

# Uxbridge 'cold shouldered' by OMB

Dear Sir, "Justice should be brought to every man's door" is the old principle on which England's County Courts and our District Courts were founded. But it is not a principle of justice that is given much regard by the Ontario Municipal Board, to judge from the fact that the recent hearings relating to the gravel mining operations in the Township of Uxbridge were not held where they could easily be attended by the people whose property values and quality of living were at stake.

At a preliminary hearing at the Township hall in Goodwood in the Fall, the Chairman ruled that the facilities were inadequate and that the main hearing would be transferred out of the Township to Whitby. The chief reasons reported were that there were no flush toilets, no private room for conferences between Board members during recesses. This decision caused a wave of affront and resentment to spread across the township. As one of my neighbours put it, "They made us out to look like a bunch of hicks, meeting in a barn."

Two weeks ago I went to my first meeting at the hall, expecting from the publicity to find something rather squalid. But I found a pleasant room, able to seat at least 100 warm, clean, well lighted, paneled with light wood. It has the natural dignity of a place that plays an

important part in the life of the community, and is respected and cared for by those who use it. Half a block away are the township offices, where running water and private offices could have been used by the OMB members, and O.C.'s from Toronto.

In transferring the hearings away from the people affected, the OMB made it impracticable for most ratepayers to attend any part of the hearings. And it deprived the township supporters of their right to the psychological advantage of "playing on home ice".

Gravel is a necessity, and no one in the township can reasonably expect or wish the mining operations to be shut down. The point at issue is whether the people of the township are to be allowed to have any voice in regulating the how, when and where of the operations. Township Council passed a by-law to secure such a right, but it was challenged in the Supreme Court by the gravel industry, represented by a huge array of legal talent, and the by-law was quashed.

Now Council are asking the OMB to approve an Official Plan and zoning restrictions, as another attempt to establish some right of regulation over an industry that impinges on just about every man, woman and child in the area, every working day.

The strip mining is inflicting huge scars on one

of the loveliest parts of Ontario (the Dagmar hills are about three times as high above the lake level as Hamilton Mountain). Also there are many little used pits that seem to be started for commercial policy reasons rather than for the immediate removal of aggregate. These are slow growing pock marks on the landscape that in some instances would need more than 100 years to work out at the present rate of extraction.

In addition, the industry's trucking operations are objectionable. The noise, dust and road wear are perhaps unavoidable; but the over-loading that leads to gravel being shot from the top of the pile, at speeds up to 60 mph is inexcusable. Although I have been a resident here for only 16 months I have had glass broken on four separate occasions, in addition to several showers of gravel that inflicted body damage but missed the glass. The last salvo, although it hit at an oblique angle, was heavy enough to break both side vent and side window. It can be imagined what this shrapnel might have done if it had caught a group of children waiting for the school bus.

On Monday, Jan. 19th, the OMB hearings opened in the majestic surroundings of the Whitby Court House. Uxbridge Township was represented by one lawyer; the gravel interests by 15. Evidence was completed by Jan. 23, leaving only the all-important "arguments" by counsel for the various parties. Friday Jan. 30 was set for this wind-up and the hearings were transferred to the OMB building in Toronto, since most of the lawyers "come" from Toronto.

While witnesses called by counsel were on the stand, the conduct of the hearings was impartial and thorough, and must have impressed all citizen observers with its fairness. But the hand-

The John Deere Company had an excellent display at the Farm Machinery Show on the Exhibition grounds, Toronto. In attendance was branch dealer, Keith Hutchinson (left) of Stouffville, chatting here with George Kovacs of Hamilton, general sales manager. —Peter Harris



his own way, was a hammer blow to those residents who cling to the belief that the municipality, and the individual have some importance in the democratic system.

The OMB will come up with a just ruling, no doubt. But there is considerable doubt that it will be accepted as just by all the affronted people in this area. It will be a ruling handed down from

an eminence in Toronto; it would be understood and accepted much better if the people had seen it worked out on the one-level floor of Uxbridge Township's hall in Goodwood.

It seems remarkable that an image-conscious Provincial Government can permit an arm of Government to antagonize a whole community by putting the convenience of

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