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Editorial

Choosing 'the easy way out'

The announcement that the originators of so—called 'new Mathematics' have come to the point where they admit that it doesn't work too well and possibly we should return to basic arithmetic cannot help but draw smiles from some of the older generation who have always believed that addition, subtraction and multiplication were basic.

Ontario Liberal leader Robert Nixon has called the Ontario school offerings 'a cafeteria of curriculum pablum.'

'Suggesting that todays curriculum choices allow students to avoid basic subjects, Mr. Nixon, a former science teacher himself, said the province should insist that students study English, arithmetic, conversational French and Canadian history.'

Anyone who has had the problem of trying to make sense out of some articles which reach the average newspaper office, will agree with Mr. Nixon. It has always been a conundrum to many of us how a student can spend a year or two or more in a secondary school and still be at a loss when faced with the necessity of writing a sentence or punctuating a paragraph. It's also a mystery that a student has the same trouble, unless provided with an adding machine, of adding or multiplying a few figures.

So—called broadening subjects available to students can contribute to their well—being, but only if he has first learned the basics. There is little use in a communications course for the student who can't spell or doesn't recognize a sentence when he sees one.

The present generation is no different than others and students will be quite happy to select what appears to be the easier courses and avoid those that require some concentration. The difference is that today you can get away with it.

We agree there is not much glamor in maths as compared to Instrumental Music or consumer education. However a student who is required to master arithmetic and other basic subjects, will, in the years to come, appreciate the fact he was not allowed to take the easy way out.

A 'charge' for attending church

For the first time, a period known as 'Police Week' was proclaimed in the Region of York.

The idea, undoubtedly authorized by Chief Bruce Crawford and endorsed by the Commission, was meant to focus public attention on the work of the Force, and enhance the image of its members.

Unfortunately, what was accomplished during those seven days, has been torn to shreds with the report out of Regional Council that 52 officers requested and received 'overtime pay' for attending a church service, organized in their honor, on their week.

Ray Twinney, outspoken Regional Councillor and Police Commissioner, appeared tight-lipped and embarrassed when questioned by Aurora's Mayor Evelyn Buck on the issue. And no wonder.

Embarrassed too, should be the executive of the Police Association who, we suggest, must accept a degree of responsibility for conduct of this kind.

Rather than approve additional pay, the Commission, in our opinion, would have been within its moral right to have admonished the individuals concerned and slapped them with a penalty.

Fair Board criticism unfair

According to reports filtering into this Office, a feeling of opposition is mounting over the likely sale of the Markham Fair site, located on the south-east intersection of Hwys. 7 and 48.

There are those who point to the scarcity of park property in the former village. They suggest the land should be used for this purpose rather than residential or commerical development.

But who is to pay the price? Hardly the municipality at least not at to-day's inflated figures.

Is the Agricultural Society then to give it away — play Santa Claus and simply hand over the site to the Town? Not likely, since replacement property must be acquired in the immediate area.

We would suggest the Board negotiate the sale of twenty-five acres, and reserve the remainder, five acres, for recreational use, to be purchased by the Town.

In this way, both sides would profit from the transaction.

The old Town of Markham, it has been said, has insufficient park land for its present population.

Who is to blame? Certainly not the Fair Board.

Then why should the executive feel responsible for baling the municipality out of its predicament?

It shouldn't. However, in the interest of continuing close co-operation, the Board might 'bend' a little and seek a saw-off settlement that would benefit the two parties concerned.

Editor's Mail

Dear Editor:

I wish to comment on a recent article published in the Toronto Star under the heading "Grade 13 Literacy Appals Professor".

As Robert Hayes and Jill Conway, both university professors stated, the degree of illiteracy among high school graduates is appalling.

It is a deplorable state of affairs when students entering university have no knowledge of English grammar.

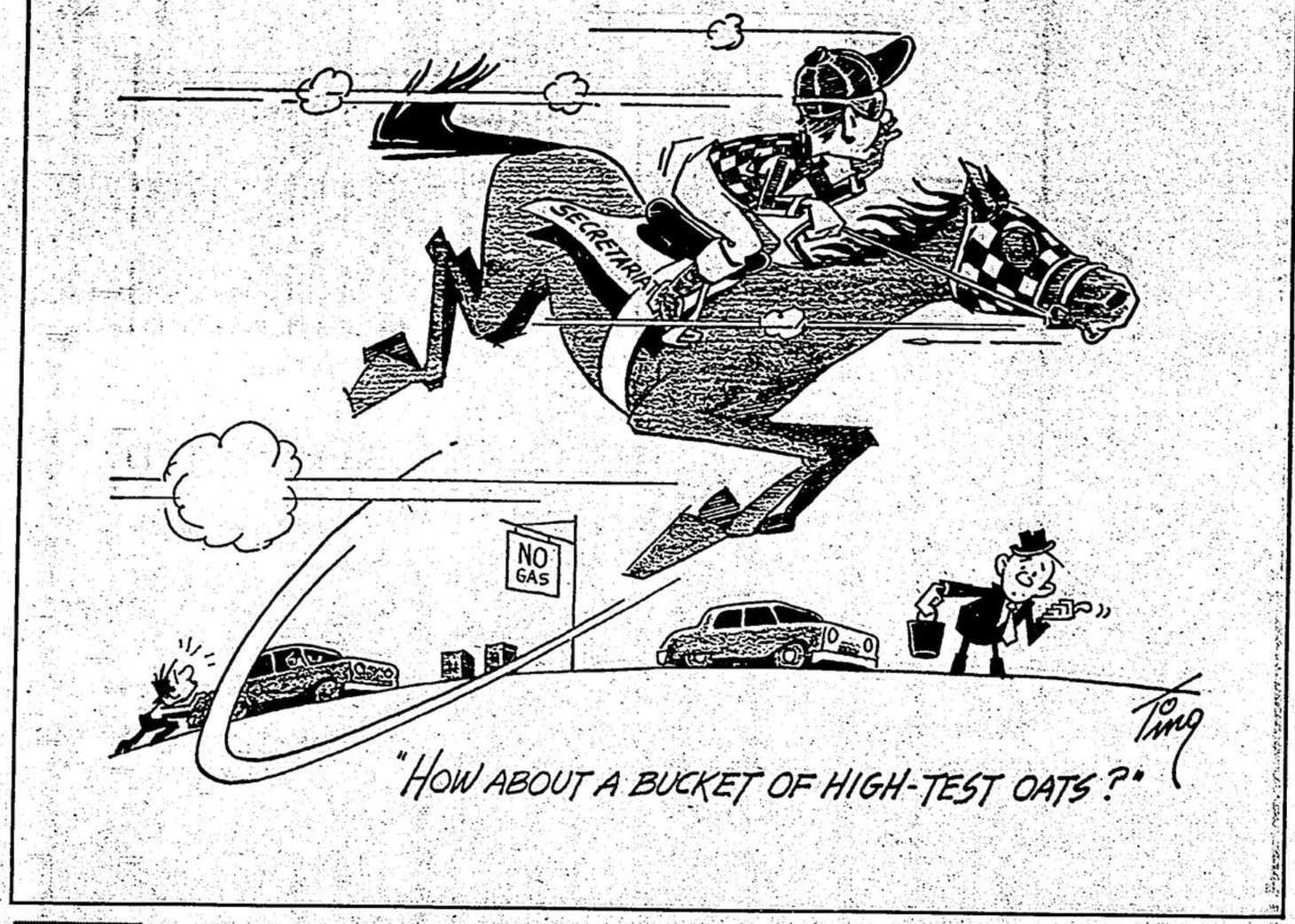
As a result of the Dept. of Education's recent decision to abolish compulsory courses in high schools, it is now possible to graduate without having studied English past Grade 8.

Jeanne Valentin,
Trent University.

Dear Sir:

Your editorial enthusiasm for the Parkway Belt is hard to understand. Why should we be expected to get excited over a corridor a few hundred feet in width that will contain trunk Hydro lines, local utility lines, the spine of a sewerage system, Highway 407, the main C.N. freight line, and a Malton—Pickering Airport transit system - if that misguided airport were ever to be built? Must we cheer every time Bill Davis plans to pave a little more of Ontario? The Toronto Centreal Regional Plan of 1970 did propose a real green belt several miles wide that might have done Toronto and us some good. That went out of the window with the Pickering Airport proposal. This "parkway" belt will no more provide seperation of Metro and the municipalities to the north than Highway 401 provides seperation of Agincourt and Scarborough. Nor will it have any recreational or open—space value. It will be a fume—filled, noisy tunnel, recreationally suitable only for the reading of such development—crazy publications as The Tribune.

Andrew J. G. Patenall
R.R.I, Stouffville.



SUGAR AND SPICE

Spelling down the drain

By BILL SMILEY

My views on education don't seem to upset the Minister one whit. He just goes around with his eyes shut droning that hypnotic chant, "The standards of education are not declining the standards of education are not declining the stan . . ."

However, my views do seem to strike a cord or a nerve or an open wound among a good many other people.

A recent column on education has attracted more mail than anything I've written since I churned out, "Sex and the Editor." That was when I was a weekly editor, and it was a hot number, I can tell you. There were no leftover papers that week.

I know. You want me to reprint it. Sorry, I'm a school teacher now, and as everyone knows, except a lot of teachers, school teachers must maintain the highest standards of morality, sobriety and taste. Besides, it was harmless. Just a device to sell papers when circulation was slumping a bit.

Where was I? Oh, yes, letters about education. Following are some excerpts from letters received from ordinary readers, if there are such creatures. I've never yet met a person who considered himself ordinary. And why shhould I? We're an extraordinary lot. If you don't believe me, take a good look at yourself, then at your neighbors, then at our "leaders". They may be a lot of riffraff, but there's not one who is ordinary.

From a merchant: "You have stated publicly what a great many of us think, but our means of communication is not as wide as yours. The Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck courses they have in high schools and so—called colleges now would be a big joke if they were not doing harm to our young people and were not so costly . . . It would appear from the reports of the meetings that all is beautiful :n education land and seldom is heard a discouraging word. In our local brain factory, thhe students seem to be running the sideshow."

From a mother: "We have seen the system deteriorate rapidly. We have a son in last year law and one daughter in her last year universitiy who managed to be outstanding students who could read, write and spell and didn't have wise and wonderful sex education in the school. What has that brought us? An epidemic of v.d. and related social problems."

She goes on: "Another problem is too many working mothers. Women's Lib will hate me! One of our finest teachers told me he could tell in a week which children had mothers in the home, and which ones had working mothers."

From an ex—teacher: "I am one who was educated in the old way and used to love grammar class . . . My daughter, who is a grade 2 teacher, says what terrible English the children use . . . I'm sure that the high school students of today who are dropping their language courses are doing it because they don't have the basic English grammar."

From a minister: "Let me put in a word for poor spellers . . . Teachers insist that spelling laws are like the laws of the Medes and the Persians - unchanging, unchangeable, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be . . . So generation after generation we persist in foisting (or is it foysting) the spelling quirks of the middle ages unto our children." It's foisting, but I agree.

From a teacher: "I do not wishh to needlessly send your blood pressure up another point, but sorrow likes company and your May 24th article was welcomed in ou;r school as a most timely and healthy counterbalance to the . . . irresponsible articles from the Bland County Board of Education . . our board likes to be very avantgarde in the rush towards doomsday." Hey, teach, there's a split infinitive in your opening sentence.

Well, that's just a sampling of the letters. I don't agree with everything they say, but I'm pleased there is evident concern about the quality of education.

And I don't plan to keep hacking away at the subject. There's nothing duller than a farmer who can talk about nothing but farming, an editor who can talk about nothing but newspapers, or a teacher who whines all the time about education.

It's near the end of June and I'm too hot and tired to get excited about much of anything.

I've just crawled out from under an avalanche of 255 essays and short stories which I marked in my "spare time" and I have almost ceased to care how anybody spells anything.

And I must say that there's a trmendous interest in education during that last week or so. Guys and dolls who have spent approximately as much time this year on their school work as I have spent being a millionaire have suddently lost all their apathy. They come up to their teachers with the most appealing, wistful smiles and wonder whether they are going to be recommended, or whether they'll have to write the exams.

They're pitiful and pathetic, but they'll see that old Smiley has a heart of solid steel. Or butter.

Town salutes its Sr. Citizens

June 17 to 24 is Sr. Citizens Week in Whitchurch-Stouffville, and across Ontario. A program of events, under the theme, 'Living is Ageless', concludes with a service of worship in Parkview Home, Sunday. Here, Pam Smusiak, of the Stouffville Nursing Home staff, takes Martha Basnett for a stroll along shady O'Brien Avenue.

Jim Thomas

ROAMING AROUND

It's in the book

By Jim Thomas

It was late Saturday afternoon, and I had just returned to the Office to pack the camera away.

Due to the hour, I expected no business, so left the front door unlocked.

But I was wrong, for right behind me came a potential customer. He indentified himself as a restaurant owner and explained that he wished to insert an advertisement in the 'Help Wanted' section of the paper.

I want to hire a waitress, he said, full or part-time.

Sorry, I answered, but you can't specify 'a waitress': it must read "waiter-waitress".

But I don't want a waiter, the gentleman protested, I want a waitress, you know, a girl a woman, a lady, not a man.

Sorry, I repeated, but a change in the Human Rights Code says ----.

I don't care what it says, the man interrupted impatiently, it's my restaurant, and I know what I need—a waitress—a girl, to wait on tables.

Sorry, I said again, but we're not allowed to discriminate. We'd be in serious trouble if we did, and so would you.

You never mind, I'll look after me, the gentleman replied, growing hotter by the minute.

But who'll look after us? I enquired, moving a step back from the counter.

Okay, Okay, you win, concluded the customer, but I'll tell you one thing, our patrons are sure going to be shocked.

Shocked—what at? I bravely enquired.

Being served by a waiter in a mini-skirt he answered, walking out.

You know, the guy had a point. He knew what he wanted, and for what purpose, but yet he couldn't say it, at least not in print. So, in fact, the Act is doing the very thing it attempts to stop others from doing—discriminating.

Of course, there are exemptions, but to qualify, an employer must apply to the Commission. That, at the snail's pace of government motility, would take maybe six months, not to mention a couple of on-site inspections by the Women's Liberation League of Ontario. (They're interested in men too, you know, although none would ever admit it).

And where pray tell, does an employer draw the line: Do girls drive coal trucks? I've never seen one, but I suppose they could. Can they operate bulldozers? Perhaps. Is there such a thing as a lumber (jill)? Maybe.

However, while laws are stringently enforced in this regard, they're being flouted in other areas every day.

For example, I 'pack' five kids into a V8 Ford. The annual licence fee (for the car that is), is $40.

My neighbor has two children and owns a Pinto. His licence costs only $25.

That's discrimination.

I own a 5-bedroom, split-level house on a standard-size lot. The taxes are $495.

My neighbor's house is a bungalow with 3 bedrooms. His taxes are $465.

That too is discrimination.

There 'oughta' be a law.