

The Tribune
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Thirty years ago this week

Woman owes taxes
 Stouffville is a municipality without one dollar of unpaid taxes owing by its ratepayers. In fact there was just one item unpaid at the beginning of this year and this was settled last week, thus leaving the town with a clean slate.

During the depression several thousand dollars mounted up against the taxpayers who were unable to meet their obligations, but steadily the treasurer has been able to effect settlement of the very last dollar owing.

Acclamation
 An acclamation in every municipal department was the outcome of the annual nominations held in Stouffville on Friday evening.

Editorial
 Now in the insurance field women on the sales staffs are one of the most important developments in life insurance agency circles since the beginning of the war the Financial Post points out.

Editorials

Acclamations hurt democracy

Democracy is a precious thing, but most of us take it for granted. Democracy is also a delicate thing, resting on the balance between public participation and respect for government and institutions.

But our form of government with its delicate and careful balances does not run automatically. We all have to work at making it effective and responsive. Not just a few professional politicians, but every adult resident in Whitchurch-Stouffville must be prepared to do his part.

Unfortunately, local council activities appear to illicit hardly more than a yawn from most people. Special interest groups are vocal enough, but most people have a very superficial understanding of local government.

The fact that the mayor and three councillors have been put into office by acclamation is certainly nothing to be proud of. The right to contested elections is too precious to allow this to pass by unnoticed.

The region has a whole appears to be not much better. Out of nine municipalities in York Region, five mayors have been acclaimed. The acclamations come in Markham, Whitchurch-Stouffville, Vaughan, Newmarket and East Gwillimbury.

The one bright spot in Whitchurch-Stouffville is the public school trustee race. The voters have two good candidates to choose from. The entrance of Colin Barrett into the race to face John McMurray is a welcomed change from normally ho-hum school board elections.

There will be a good fight in Ward 2 where Jim Wong has retired, and Eldred King will have a fight on his hands in Ward 6, with Jim Sanders. June Button in Ward 5 is facing John Garbutt.

Where there is no race for the mayoralty, there is generally less interest in the elections by the voters. Turnout on election day is generally lower, and the democratic process suffers further erosion.

While we have no doubt that Mayor Gordon Ratcliff has done a good job as mayor, he has yet to face the electorate on his performance. Two years ago he was acclaimed in his first attempt at mayor. He is acclaimed this year.

But what do the voters think of his performance? No one knows for sure. Isn't that the essence of democracy? A man must justify his election by defending his actions. Acclamation removes that accountability.

There are still important posts to be filled. It is our hope that people will still accept their responsibility and cast their ballot, on Dec. 2. We must work at preserving our system, not sit idly by pretending nothing can be done.

Another plaza

A new plaza has been proposed for the west end of Stouffville, and we wonder where the foolishness is going to end. Up until only a few months ago, stores were going begging on Main St. Suddenly everybody and his uncle wants to build a plaza.

The developer of course loves to build a plaza. But the town will be stuck with the disastrous results of trying to build too many plazas in a urban area of 5,000 people.

There must be a balance. The downtown core must be protected. Yes, many factors come into play when planning a town or village. We hope that the council puts this west end proposal on ice.

A current plaza proposal for the east end has priority. Even that one should not be built until work is well advanced on the Dulverton subdivision, north of Stouffville.

A patchwork of small plazas can be blight. We hope the incoming council has the determination to stand firm against premature commercial development that could spell the ruin of the downtown core.

Price decrease deceptive

A story in last week's Tribune stated that the average house price in Whitchurch-Stouffville for the first six months of 1974 was \$57,142. That was the time when the market was red hot.

Things have cooled somewhat since then. However we are concerned that this levelling off of house prices does nothing to bring the cost down. In fact as things stand now, the small price decrease is more than made up for by an increase in interest rates.

The problem is only beginning. Whitchurch-Stouffville is not overly endowed with housing. Houses that are for sale are sitting for months with for sale signs, and no buyers.

There is hardly a house to be rented in town and few apartments. The situation has become rather desperate. Housing construction has slowed considerably and the new Thicketwood subdivision is progressing slowly. Originally it was to be close to completion by this time.

It is all part of the crisis that threatens to get even worse in the coming year. We are afraid that nothing substantial is being done

to ease the situation at either the local or provincial levels.

Some form of subsidized housing, is part of the answer. Possible use of row housing, as opposed to single-family dwellings, is also a possible partial solution.

Council should be looking at these things from a creative standpoint. Some kind of study into possible kinds of low-cost housing could be a start. An incentive plan for people to fix up older homes might also be helpful.

It would help if the town had guidelines for developers, which would state clearly what sorts of housing are permitted and desirable. If the guidelines include low-cost housing, then developers would have to think seriously about it.

There might be a situation where the town might buy the land and then sell the lots at a reduced rate.

Some of these possibilities should be looked at carefully, and a coherent policy established. It could benefit us all, but especially young families just starting out.



SUGAR AND SPICE

Troubles befall harried columnist

By BILL SMILEY

Let's see. Where am I? I know I was going to make a pointed, telling attack this week on one of the great evils of our society. But I can't remember what it was.

Maybe that's because I have three exams to set, eleveny-four essays to mark, my bricks are falling out, along with my fillings, and my wife, who has just given me a thrilling account of how she couldn't get the car started, is going to the hospital tomorrow.

Ah, well. C'est la vie, as the Chinese say. You can't have everything running like clockwork in a world in which the most sensible creatures seem to be cockroaches.

I also have forty-four letters to answer, six vital telephone calls to make, a speech to write, and a grandbaby to bring up.

Then there are about seven thousand pounds of oak leaves to rake and bag. I think I'll send them to Bangla-Desh. Surely somebody there knows how to make oak leaf and acorn soup. Don't think I'm being hard and cynical. There's a lot of protein in those acorns. And I have 28 squirrels, not counting children, in my attic to prove it.

Maybe you think this is just the whinnying of a middleaged man, who can't cope with life. Well, you're right.

My bricks are falling out. Or they are being sucked out, by the gentle vines of this old Georgian house, which are about as gentle as a giant squid. The roofer said, "Geez, Bill, your bricks are loose." It sounds sort of obscene, like, "You have rocks in your head."

But it's not. They're falling out. (Or being knocked out by the clumsy roofers and painters. Sh-h-h-h.)

And my fillings are falling out as fast as I can, or my dentist can, put them in. He's a nice guy, and the most painless dentist I have ever had, for which I will cling to him until teeth do us depart, but you can't build pine trees out of stumps.

And then there's my grandbaby. You'd think I would not worry about him when he's a hundred miles away. But I do.

How do I know those young sillies in the daycare centre are teaching him the right things. Do they know how to ride him on a jiggling foot to the tune of, "Did You Ever Go Into An Irishman's Shanty, Where Money Is Scarce and Whiskey Is Plenty?"

Do they know how to let him chew their thumb while at the same time whistling in his belly and waving his bare foot in the air to the tune of, "Knees Up, Mother Brown?"

Well, maybe the young sillies aren't doing too badly, as long as there are three of them to one of him. At least they're not trying to unteach him the good things he's learned from his gramps.

Had a call from his mother last Sunday. She made it from a phone booth, as Mother Bell has not smiled on them yet. Asked her where the baby was. She responded coolly that he was on her knee, tearing pages out of the telephone directory.

He loves tearing up books, especially those of sacred institutes, like the Bell. I started him off with the inane coloured sections of the Saturday papers. He seemed to thrive on it, ripping them apart with gusto, relish, and any ketchup that happened to be around.

I thought it wise to move him up to telephone books, police reports, politicians speeches, beer labels and such examples of Canadian culture. Turns out he's a boy after my own heart.

Go to it! Pokey. His real name is Nicov Chen, but I tacked Pokey on him and it has stuck. He pokes into everything that is moving, or still. If it's moving, he stops it; if it's still, he makes it move, grinning fiendishly all the time.

I tell you, it's a gay, mad whirl around here. Just now I was interrupted by two pretty girls at the front door, rakes in hand. I'd forgotten about them. They'd come to rake my leaves. For money, of course. Couldn't get any boys.

In the past week I have also dealt with sixteen students who are obvious flunkers, one irate parent, several disgruntled teachers, and one invitation to judge a beauty contest.

To top it off, in today's mail came an election flyer from Ray Argyle, who syndicates this column, announcing his run for school trustee. He must be out of his nut.

Everybody seems to be going a bit mad these days, but I'll lay odds that I get there before the rest of you.



VIEWPOINT

What is Christmas about, really?

By DON BERNARD

It's not my style to do columns that deal in more than one topic, but this week seems to be an exception to that rule. The reason is that sometimes there is a topic that seems worthy of comment, but could not possibly fill up a whole column space.

So much for the explanation. Christmas does not seem like a very topical subject, since it is more than a month away, but you would not know that by the stores, especially the large departments stores. If you go by their displays and advertising, Christmas is just around the corner.

Every year the Christmas season comes earlier and earlier. The reason for making Christmas bigger and better, is to make more money. That one goal is paramount in the minds of merchants at Christmas time. If you can start it early, then people will buy more for Christmas and profits will soar.

But Christmas has always been a pagan celebration. This is a fact that most people probably don't (or won't) realize. It dates back to the time when Christianity became recognized as the main religion throughout the Roman Empire.

The Romans had a pagan celebration around the time of the Winter Solstice (Dec. 21, the shortest day of the year). This pagan ritual was kind of an all-out revel before the onslaught of winter.

The church could not stamp it out and thus made it a religious holiday, one that celebrated the birth of Jesus. The actual birthdate of Jesus is clouded in mystery. Some say it was in the Spring and others say the early Fall. Most scholars agree that Jesus was not born on Dec. 25 or anywhere near that date.

The year of his birth is even doubtful. We take his birth as the start of our reckoning in years. It seems that Jesus was born about 4 B.C., according to scholars.

Well, so much for that. It just illustrates that Christmas is not a religious observance and in its inception has never been. Throughout the so-called Christian world it has had this status, but never far away was the paganism of its real roots.

Aside from the spiritual connotation, I am offended that merchants and advertisers (and yes even newspapers) drag out the Christmas season. It seems that we are hardly through the summer before the onslaught comes. By the way, Christmas is a favorite time of year for me. I just hate to see it made all slick and polished by merchants and advertising people.

It is a season of goodwill. A time to be with one's family. Christmas is the opportunity to give a presents to someone that shows your respect for and appreciation to them. Yes there is nothing wrong or bad about it. Just don't pretend it is a Christian Festival. Accept it for what it is, a nice holiday.

To change the subject dramatically, I have been going to do a piece on the mail that comes across my desk. You see, over half the mail that comes across the desk of an editor is junk of one kind or another.

For instance recently I received such varied documents as a letter from a prospective columnist asking if we want to buy his column; a newsletter on activities at Queen's University in Kingston; press release from the Canadian Toy Manufacturers Association stating that: "Christmas Lights Given Green Light."

That one is interesting. It states that Christmas lights will not be restricted this year and quotes Federal Energy Minister, Donald MacDonald as saying, "there is no reason to single out Christmas lights as a special target for energy conservation efforts during the coming heating season." So go ahead ladies, put up the lights.

A newsletter entitled "Teamwork in Industry", put out by the Canadian Department of Labor could be interesting reading for somebody, and then there is a booklet from the Ontario Government entitled "Corporation Growth in Ontario, 1973-74" or "Everything you wanted to know about corporations, but were afraid to ask."

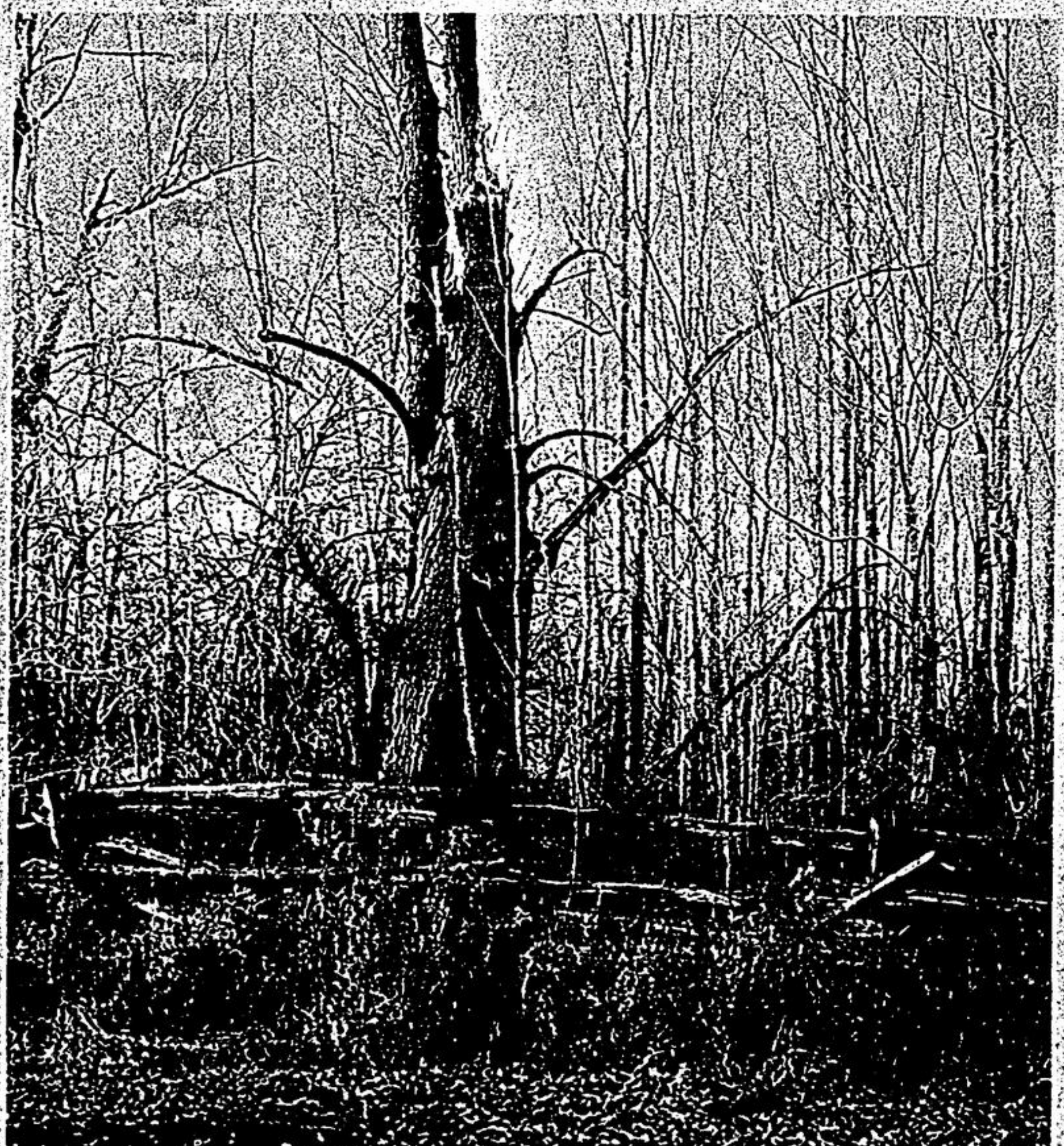
Next in the pile is a copy of Hansard for Tuesday, Nov. 12. Hansard is the name given transcripts of Parliamentary debates that are published on a regular basis by the Queen's Printer.

A glossy white booklet with orange and yellow markings on it is titled: 33rd Annual Report. In small print it turns out to be the annual report of the Unemployment Insurance Commission. It is full of interesting statistics of the UIC activities over the past year. It reveals that the UIC was in the red for a cool \$317,560,203.

The next tidbit is "The Lion" international magazine of Lions Clubs. It is brimming with news items and advertisements that concern Lions Clubs. Red Cross has some filler items on giving blood that are in the form of Christmas cartoons. The caption reads: Season's Greetings, be a blood donor.

Norm Cafik newsletters followed, then a copy of Hansard for Nov. 8 then more from Mr. Cafik. There is press release announcing that the Canada Council has bought \$630,000 worth of Canadian books. I didn't know that the total output of Canadian authors would come anywhere near that figure. Oh well, you learn something new every day.

By the way if you are a collector of trivia, as I am, then being an editor certainly provides opportunities for gathering it. Some of the most trivial trivia makes its way across my desk, a veritable gold mine for trivia-seekers.



Barren trees, devoid of their lush foliage are a sure sign that winter has arrived (even if the snow has not ravaged us yet). Time to get out the woollies and parkas once past the middle of November anything can happen.