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Editorials

Politicians lose by default

Much has been made of the fact that government these days is run by civil servants, who are portrayed as unresponsive bureaucrats dictating policy to elected representatives. It is a common complaint at almost all levels of government.

But two recent events cast some doubt on the validity of that analysis. Recently, the York County Board of Education voted a budget that pushes education costs almost to the provincial ceilings. In another meeting, York Regional Council approved a draft budget, presented by its staff, almost without a wimper.

In both cases, the elected representatives had real opportunities to consider the budgets and make appropriate cuts. In both cases, the politicians merely rubber-stamped what the administrative staffs proposed.

In our opinion the elected representatives abdicated their responsibility in not considering the budgets more closely. The

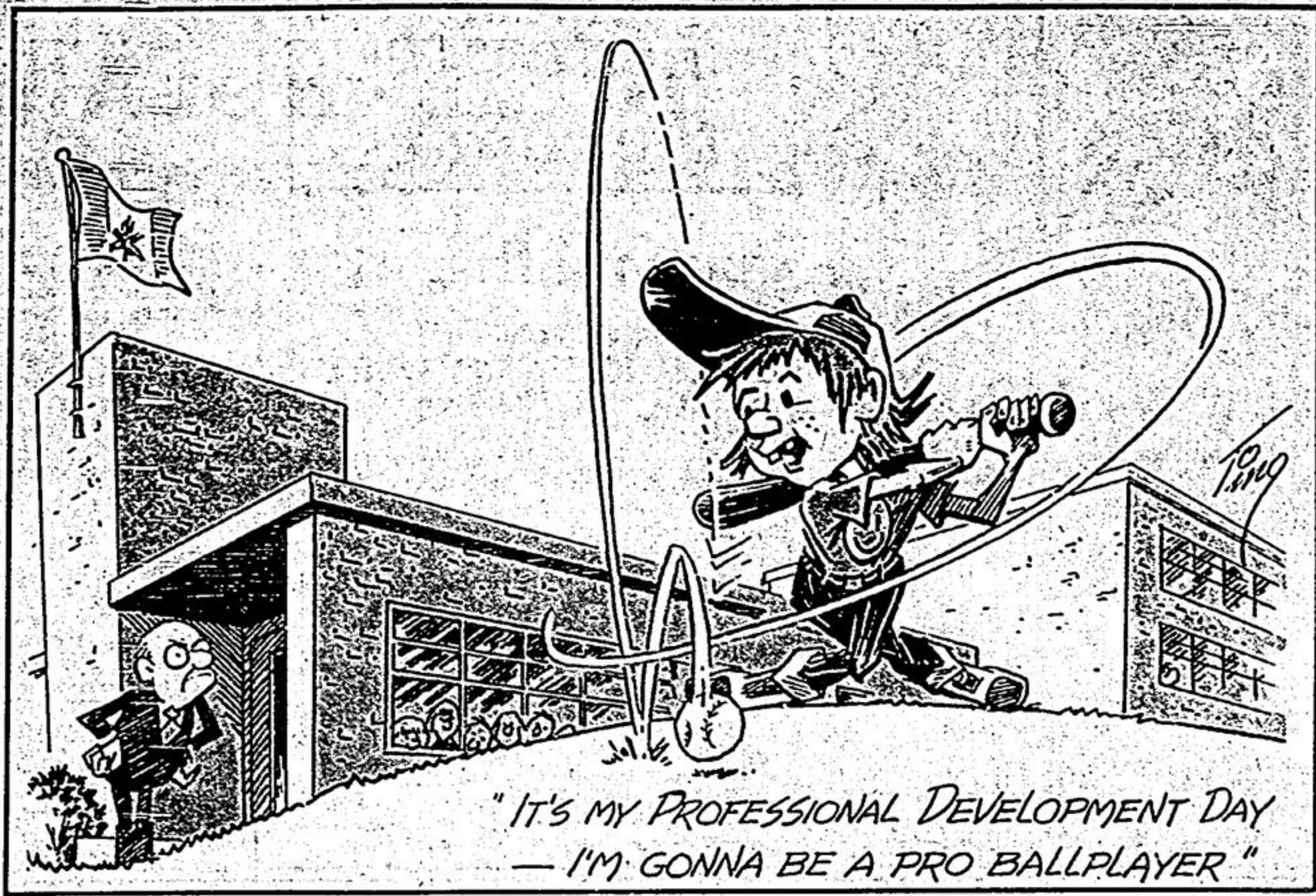
politicians merely threw up their hands and said, "let's pass it and get it over with."

However, a very important principle is at stake here. Elected representatives in both cases had the chance to shape their respective budgets. When the test came, they simply refused to take full responsibility. They did what the staffs wanted.

Who can blame Education Director Sam Chapman for being the strong-man at the board? The elected trustees as a group are unwilling to do it. Mr. Chapman, a very able administrator, simply has to make these decisions. The trustees simply won't.

At the region, there is very weak political leadership. The main reason the budget was not dealt with in detail involved previous commitments by various members of council. In other words, they could not be bothered. Instead they just approved it.

The politicians were unwilling, perhaps even unable to take charge. The civil servants have taken over by default.



Thirty years ago this week

Excerpts from The Tribune from June 7, 1945.

Conservatives poll

Largest vote in history
 Despite the fact that Liberal Stouffville chalked up the largest Conservative vote in its more than 70 years, there wasn't a ripple of commotion, and for the most part everybody accepted the result in the best of spirit. Leslie, the Conservative ran a close second to Sanders, Liberal.

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VIEWPOINT

In spring a young man's fancy...

By DON BERNARD

In spring a young man's fancy may turn to thoughts of love, but for those of us who are a little past that stage, spring and warm weather mean something different. It's garden time again.

Yes, this year, I have embarked upon that harrowing endeavor. Visions of a freezer stocked with vegetables from our own garden has spurred us on to plant this year. It is the first time, so don't laugh.

When we moved into our house last fall, the back part of the lot was ploughed up, seemingly ready for a garden this spring. We talked all winter (my wife and I) of what we were going to do.

When spring came, twitch grass started to poke its way to the surface. There was in fact so much of that nasty weed, that the garden was beginning to look like an extension of the back lawn.

I admit that the twitch grass worried me. It appeared to be quite hardy and could prove to be a real threat to my garden. Early in the spring a local store was offering seeds at a reduced price. Thus for less than \$4 I bought enough to do my whole garden, or at least as much as I cared to plant.

During the colder months, before the warm May weather came upon us, I would occasionally take the seeds out of the cupboard and fondly dream about the freezer full of garden-fresh produce.

The first trick was to prepare the ground for planting. A young man, who does roto-tilling after school and on weekends, agreed to

come and turn it over. Because it had been ploughed, the garden had huge furrows.

If I had used a hand tiller, the job would have taken a week. Luckily, the young man had a roto-tiller attachment on a garden tractor. After about 90 minutes, he had succeeded in tilling it into respectable shape.

The next day, with the help of my wife, and Ted and Charity Wilcox, we started to prepare the garden for planting. The main problem involved trying to eliminate as much of the dead twitch grass as possible from the soil. With rakes, the four of us worked most of an afternoon and managed to clean up approximately half the garden.

The other half was left in a rough state. The dead grass proved to be more than we expected. It made a huge pile in one corner of the backyard, and managed to completely obscure the compost heap I was trying to get started.

Finally the area was cleaned up enough. The seeds were planted in short order. All that was left to do was wait. After a few days, my greatest fears were realized. The twitch grass started to revive, without even a sign of any of the vegetables.

After about a week, the beets and lettuce started to come up. At that point, I felt somewhat better. That was about three weeks ago. Things are looking not too bad now. The beets are starting to look like beets. The potatoes and beans have been planted. No sign of those yet, however.

Last week, I borrowed a roto-tiller and

had a go at the vacant part of the garden. It managed to unearth more twitch grass. I am hoping that a vigorous working of that area this summer will make it suitable for next year.

Meanwhile the most spectacular thing in my garden remains the twitch grass. It seems to be very determined. And the same things in the soil that make it good for vegetables also provide incentive for that horrid "twitch".

One aspect of gardening has thus far been avoided. The one thing that is most essential to having a good garden. It is something that I have been putting off because of the sheer magnitude of the task.

Weeding! That backbreaking work, which has been the undoing of many novice gardeners. With the threat of twitch grass taking over completely, the war is on. The garden will have to be weeded often and well.

If the young plants are to flourish, they must have room. The food in soil cannot go to the weeds, it must go to the vegetables. The greatest nightmare I have is the spectre of twitch grass taking over my garden.

My resolve must be firm, however, and there can be no turning back. The weeding must go on. It only takes the thought of those fresh vegetables to come and the prices of fresh produce in the stores, to convince me that the effort will be worth it.

It has occurred to me that gardening is a form of warfare. The strongest will win. That twitch grass just better watch out!

Private consultants best

The town has decided to use private consultants, instead of the Area Services Branch of York Region, for planning work. The matter, on the surface seems to be a minor one, but the change could be significant in a number of ways.

It is a plain fact that Area Services Branch has been unable to do the job. The turnover in staff has been unbelievable in the four years the branch has been operating.

Right now, there is one person on staff in a department that is supposed to have a complement of five. Service being rendered is nil, for all intents and purposes.

It seems to us that the town has no alternative but to use private consultants. The

cost may be higher (although that need not be the case) but service will be better.

The Township of Uxbridge uses consultants and is in the process of combining three official plans. This year, that Township has budgeted \$20,000 for planning work. The other \$15,000 to be spent on planning will be paid for by would-be developers who must pay the township's costs.

Whitchurch-Stouffville would be wise to adopt this system. By charging back specific costs to developers, the town can offset the high cost of using private consultants.

Area Services Branch is just not doing the job. This, it seems to us, is the only alternative.

Delays enough on airport

Now that the project has been delayed over two years to allow everyone interested, expert or layman, a chance to have his say; now that Ottawa has made some concession to the temporary economic slowdown the country is experiencing at present; all the silly ideas such as barrage balloons, sitting in front of the bulldozers, and the like, have all been well aired and publicized, it is essential that the construction get underway as soon as possible.

The decision, based on findings and overriding arguments and objections listened to many times over, a great many of them strictly personal, has been taken.

Thousands of jobs will begin to emerge as construction begins to move. Dozens of domestic moves await the beginning as well as dozens of new commercial projects. The growth pace in both Stouffville and Markham will quicken immensely once there is action. The government could find no objective reasons to prefer opponents much-reduced air

travel projections to their own transport ministry's figures. The potential for cheap mass air travel is only beginning to be realized with the charter companies leading the way.

Government is well aware that the roof can fall in on it very quickly when it does not adequately prepare for the future.

One cannot deny that rural peace is something to cherish, but to maintain such an environment almost within the confines of such a rapidly expanding city as Toronto, is an impossibility. In spite of all the rules, the regulations and bylaws that may be put on the books, the suburban area will expand, now and in the future.

There are many thousands who do not object to the hustle and bustle of urban living, others, while not in love with it, must remain for job reasons. Others must find their liking farther north. It's an individual decision, but the creeping north of a great city's growth with its attendant highways, buildings and airports is irreversible.



Response, 'radical' or necessary?

By TED WILCOX

News of women blocking bulldozers and people hoisting 16-foot barrage balloons strikes a strange chord in the hearts of most "law-abiding" Canadians. We could see writing a letter to our MP or attending a public meeting, but these other tactics sound downright, well, revolutionary to us.

For some People or Planes members, however, there are strong precedents in recent history for these moves intended to delay the Pickering airport project. In the "civil rights movement" in the U.S. people illegally sat at lunch counters, used banned

rest rooms, and water fountains, picketed, marched, made speeches and "sat-in", "taught-in" and "Laid-in".

Then, students, clergy and others took to the streets to protest what now has been conceded to be a gross waste of lives and resources — the Viet Nam War.

But the "politics of confrontation" also resulted in a variety of ugly incidents: rioting, parts of cities being burned, demonstrators being wounded or even killed and more recently, bombing and kidnapping by terrorists.

Given that background, today, in this part of Canada, we have a much smaller but substantial protest being launched. Convinced that neither the provincial or federal governments have anything more than crass political considerations in mind, POP is preparing to take part in several attention-grabbing activities to make their case.

There are essentially two ways these activities are being viewed. One side considers any means of protest beyond public meetings, the ballot box or letters to your MP or editor, to be inherently wrong.

The other side points out that having used all those means, they find the airport is going forward and is as monstrously evil and idiotic as ever. Besides, they argue, the Airport Inquiry Commission was all "show", since the issue finally was decided on the basis of short-ranged political goals anyway.

Personally, I find both of these viewpoints inadequate. First, to say that some forms of protest are legitimate, others are not, is much too easy an answer to a complex question.

How will we look on the Pickering airport decision 20 years hence? Will it be universally viewed as a sleazy political compromise, unwise in the extreme?

In fact, will oil supplies be so scarce, air travel so restricted and farmland so valuable, that it will be regarded as a decision bordering on lunacy?

And how will the last-ditch efforts of People or Planes be viewed? As the tactics of cheap revolutionaries or of the only people with any sense during the hazy mid-70's?

And if we have the latter view, what form of protest will be seen as proper and what will not?

Really, the whole matter brings up sticky questions. Civil disobedience: is it ever justified? Would it have been justified in Germany when Hitler was murdering millions?

What about in a less flagrant case, like to Pickering airport?

There are no easy answers to these questions, for one side or the other.

Instead of focusing entirely on the POP activities these days, perhaps each of us should pay closer attention to our own actions with regard to the airport decision.

Have we taken the time to fully examine the POP arguments? Is the airport really a monumental and foolish waste?

And have we made our opinions crystal clear to the men in Ottawa?

Furthermore, those with power in government, industry and "the media" also bear special responsibility for what POP is now doing. Have governments decided the issue on the basis of what is right and just, or on expediency? Has the media dug into the issue deeply or only reported surface headlines about it?

In short, is POP resorting to drastic action because government has failed to consider the airport project on the basis of its merits alone?

In my own mind, I think the airport, if built, would be an extravagant and gross mistake. Air Canada's opposition to the project; the low-noise planes being developed (which would alleviate future Malton problems); and the growing shortages of fuel, are compelling facts.

Beyond that, the whole venture typifies a blind belief in "progress" for its own sake. In fact, considering future world prospects, a team of economists decided overwhelmingly against the airport project.

And I feel it's clear that lasting happiness, for individuals or nations, won't come through more and better economic development alone. The airport project millions could be better spent in a hundred other ways.

But given that, I am just not sure what is or isn't right regarding POP's current strategy. The government has made a decision — as wrong as it can be: now what can or should we do about it?

Write more letters? Paint more signs?

Or, should we block the bulldozers from operating?

It's hard to say.

What I am sure about, however, is that responsibility for extreme actions by POP has to be borne not only by POP members, but also by any (including myself) who haven't fully exercised their citizenship over the issue.

And a special responsibility rests with those in the media and in government who still have power, at this late date, to cause the airport to be delayed or stopped.



Travels in Mexico have influenced the decor in the home of Mr. and Mrs. R. Rogerson in Cachet Country Club. It is one of the homes on the annual Markham and District Family Life Centre Tour of Homes June 12. Tickets are \$4 each with the tour underway at 1 p.m. This year, Markham and Unionville area homes will be viewed. A water fountain and garden in the stairwell prove to be interesting interior touches. — John Montgomery