



# The Tribune

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## Editorials

### Quiet in York-Peel Riding

The upcoming federal election has scarcely raised a ripple so far on the home front. While there is some quiet interest, little more than a shrug is visible, and most seem to feel that the campaign is much too long. "We're going to be sick of it by the time it's over," is a common comment.

Only a few people seem aware that our local riding has become York-Peel rather than York-Simcoe, and has taken in additional territory west of Yonge Street. The addition has been traditionally Liberal, and whether this will have a bearing on the usual outcome here, remains to be seen.

The riding has been held now for two terms by Conservative Sinclair Stevens, and in the last contest in July 1974, he polled ap-

proximately six thousand more votes than his nearest Liberal rival Mike Willinsky, and seventeen thousand in front of the third place NDP candidate Wally Gustar. Whitchurch-Stouffville gave Mr. Stevens a wide margin over the other contestants.

Financial restrictions on this year's election spending have tended to make the campaign less visible, and will force candidates in ridings such as ours to lean on more personal visits to make themselves familiar to the voters. This process of "main-streeting" is expected to be increased as the campaign nears the final weeks.

Few of the big issues being "pushed" by the leaders, cut too deeply in this riding, and familiarity with the candidate remains the big vote-getter.

### Bus rides to Sunday School

A tour of Stouffville on any Sunday morning will reveal one, maybe two buses parked outside several of the local churches in town.

The same in Markham and Unionville too.

What are they doing there? People have asked us this.

The honest truth is (and we should be ashamed to admit it), they're transporting our children to Sunday School.

What a sad commentary on the times in which we live that churches, at great expense, must go door-to-door and pick up our kids

because parents are too lazy, unconcerned and irresponsible to do it themselves.

It's not that these churches want to do it. They'd much rather have the mothers and dads bring the children and stay, or bring them and come back, depending on the church-school schedule. But this isn't the case. By not reaching out, dozens of boys and girls would be missing out; missing out on moral and religious instruction they badly need.

We commend churches for their concern.

We're appalled at parents' lack of the same ingredient.

### "The Child"-a town event

So 1979 has been proclaimed "International Year of the Child".

Fine, we all say (without the slightest idea what the proclamation's all about), then sit back on our collective hands and wait for something to happen.

To date, as far as we can see, little has happened. Why? Because the authority by which special days, weeks, months and years become "law", are so far removed from the "grass roots" of society, the hoped-for benefit is lost.

So we all raise our hands and say "amen" to the idea. Then we open our eyes and wonder what it all means.

Here in Whitchurch-Stouffville, more than just lip service will be paid to this event. Something visible is in the works that, with the co-operation of the entire community, will meet with success.

Our day is June 9. Selected locations are the Arena and Latham Hall. But the program, in its entirety, must go far beyond the boundaries of two buildings. It must touch every school, every church, every man, woman and child in this Town if a true understanding of the program is to be achieved.

And it will—if we let it.

#### Editorial

### We heartily agree

This commentary by Stephen Lewis was broadcast over radio station CKEY on April 19, 1979. We heartily agree with Mr. Lewis' comments and are proud to publish them.

The Publisher.

One of the most extraordinary news stories about a Canadian politician which I have read in a very long time appeared in today's Globe and Mail. The headline tells only a small part of it. "Drea Battling Alcoholism — Will Quit If Davis Asks Him To". Frank Drea, essential character, after a volcanic career as journalist, champion of the underdog, sometime Trade Union PR man, general roustabout and back-bench Tory MPP, is now Ontario's Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations.

He's been in the Legislature almost eight years, always combative, tempestuous, unpredictable, but with a kind of straight from the shoulder no nonsense candor that can leave the Opposition and on occasion his Government colleagues gasping.

He is deceptively bright, tough and open. A nice nose for coverage too; always walking that fine line between things which sound innovative and things which are patently outrageous. A hard hat wearing a Will Rogers jacket.

He also has a drinking problem. A serious one. It's been known around Queen's Park for years, sometimes darkly hinted at, sometimes openly referred to. But earlier this week, for a couple of days, he apparently fell off the wagon with a

reverberating thud. He attended a meeting of Condominium Representatives drunk, he cancelled a dinner speech at the last minute in the Premier's own riding because he was intoxicated, and he failed to appear before a Legislative Committee for the same reason. Well, clearly armed with this heady whiff of scandal, two Globe and Mail reporters confronted Frank Drea and he handled it in a fashion so uncharacteristic for many a politician that you just have to have a sneaking or explicit admiration.

No cover up, no excuses, no guile, no inaccessibility, just straight confessional politics. In fact, Drea used language to recount and recant his behavior which leaps from the page in its honesty "If you want it straight, about 6 p.m. I got skunked."

He knows what he did to the groups involved. He admits to letting down the Premier, and he says he will offer Mr. Davis his resignation if the Premier wants it. Well, Bill Davis won't want it. He'll be enormously concerned, as he had every right to be. You can't countenance that kind of thing from a cabinet minister for very long, but Frank Drea is fighting a courageous battle with alcoholism. He is deeply involved with Alcoholics Anonymous and he is hiding nothing. It is one of the most wrenching and painful of personal struggles.

I have never understood Frank Drea very well, but he is a talented and able politician. He deserves time and support, and he'll get it.



Practice night

— April 5



Opening night

— April 26



MUSIC MANIA '79

### Sugar and Spice

## April's the bottom side of winter

By Bill Smiley



"April is the cruellest month." So said T.S. Eliot, a transplanted American who spent most of his adult life working in a bank and writing poetry in England.

As far as England goes, he was full of baloney. April in England is delightful. It rains only every second day, and the countryside is green with grass and as colorful as a patchwork quilt with flowers.

Now, if he'd been writing about Canada, I'd agree. April is no bargain-in these parts. It's one of those nothing months, like November.

You have staggered through the last of the March blizzards. Barely. And suddenly, in theory, it's spring. In reality, it's the dirty bottom end of winter, and the weakest possible whisper of a hope for summer.

April is mud, treacherous, piercing winds that give you that racking cough you avoided all winter, rusted fenders, changing snow tires, and surveying your property and all the detritus deposited on it and around it by the recent winter.

Just checked mine today. On the side lawn there is a dirty brown hump that resembles something from the paleolithic age, eyeless, shapeless, but somehow menacing. It is made up of one part ice, two parts sand, and one part salt, all courtesy of the snowplowing department. This lump will have melted entirely by the fourth of July and will leave a 30 square foot patch of pure Sahara.

Scattered about the back porch are bits and pieces and whole shingles, removed without charge, from the roof when the man was knocking off the ice at the end of January. Mingling with the shingles are portions of

brick, knocked out of the wall by the man who removed some of the shingles while he was removing the ice.

Lying on the back porch itself is a pile of glass, shattered from a storm window that didn't quite get put on last November, and was leaned carefully against the house to wait for a nice day for installation. A December wind caught that one.

Leaning limply is the storm door, which will no longer close because the ice got in around it, and it was forced shut so many times it lost its shape and all desire to keep out the weather, and the mosquitoes, a month from now, when it becomes a screen door.

Lying in the back yard, leaning on one elbow, is one of the great old cedar chairs, looking as though it had just been mugged in a back alley by a particularly vicious gang of punks. Beside it stands the picnic table, practically sway-backed from the load of snow and ice it carried all winter.

But all is not drab. There's a nice touch of color here and there. A green wine bottle tossed over the fence by some passing contributor. Here, frozen into the ice, a newspaper wrapped in yellow cellophane. Over there, another paper, wrapped in blue, emerges from its winter retreat. Both bear December dates.

There's a frisky grey squirrel, scuttling up the dead vines on the house, looking for a soft spot to gnaw through and deposit her kits in the attic. Chasing her is a dog, probably the same one who left his calling cards all over the back yard during the winter, which are now melding nicely with the mud and the stench of dead earth coming back to life.

And the clothes-line is sagging like an ancient stripper. The back stoop is just that. Stoopied from the ice falling off the roof onto it.

All this is normal enough, a typical April scene, and I'm not complaining. But wouldn't it be nice if you got through one April without your tail-pipe and muffler suddenly starting to sound like a bull breaking wind?

It's enough to break a man, were he not a sturdy Canadian, who has been through the same performance in the same arena year after year.

But this April is going to be the one that broke many a man stronger than I. On top of all the usual crud of April, will be piled the even cruddier crud of an election campaign.

It won't be so bad for the kids, who don't mind April at all, as it gives them a chance to get soaked to the knees and covered in mud with some excuse. They don't care about politicians.

Nor will it be too tough for the elderly, who greet April with a kind of jaunty, triumphant grin, because they've made it through another bone-buster of a winter. And they are perfectly aware that politicians are pernicious, whatever their outer coloring.

But for the honest, decent, middle-aged Canadian, who sees no more difference between the parties and their promises than he does between his left hand and his right, it's just too much.

April by itself is bad enough. But to go through 30 days of it huddling under a barrage of political poop is the utmost pits. I agree with the poet. This April will indeed be "the cruellest month."

### Window on Wildlife

## Striped 'pussycats' deserve respect

By Art Briggs-Jude



Of all the small mammals that inhabit the backyards and back forties of Ontario, none is more familiar than that black and white pussycat—the common skunk. It's a regular night-time visitor to many city streets and gardens, and a frequent resident of country barns and outbuildings. Along brushy hedgerows or wood-fringed meadows, it's equally at home, while rock piles and stream banks seem particularly attractive to this slow moving member of the weasel family. Actually it's this non-hurry attitude that often causes its downfall, especially when its nocturnal travels take it across the roadways of our busy society. For here we see it all too frequently in carcass form, its penetrating odor fouling up the surrounding area.

The fact that it has this obnoxious perfume, which it uses only in self defense, gives the animal a sense of security and little need for speed. Only the Great Horned owl, flying on hushed wings above, has mastered this potent defense. As for all the other potential enemies such as the dog, fox, and coyote, the skunk is a painful revolting experience, but never a meal. And unfortunately for many household pets, a lesson they never seem able to remember. I have known dogs that time after time would try to catch a skunk off guard, only to end up whimpering and rolling in the dirt.

One large fox terrier we had, almost succeeded. It happened early one Saturday morning as we made ready to go to the city market. The old Buick, with its back seats taken out, was loaded with eggs, fresh-killed chickens, fruit, and honey. I went ahead to

open up the barn doors for Mr. Campbell and was in the process of undoing the inside latch, when a commotion erupted a few feet away. The dog had somehow reached down between a space in the barn floor boards and grabbed a skunk by the back. For a moment it was a toss up as to who was the most surprised, the skunk or me. Then for another agonizing few moments it seemed as if the terrier had overcome the lethal defense. But alas, the skunk proved too heavy for the stalky dog's jaws, and as soon as its feet touched the boards it blasted off. Well; I ended up being sick under the apple tree, the dog disappeared for two days, Mr. Campbell lost his suit, and a neighbor took the salvaged produce to market.

Since that day, I've had an awful lot of respect for skunks, and fortunately haven't been sprayed since. I have seen others get the evil-smelling treatment though. Remember when the garbage men used open trucks? A man stood up on the load dumping the containers that were tossed up by his companion. Well this particular day, a can was thrown up and lo and behold out of the refuse scrambled one very mixed up skunk. And over the side of the truck went one very messed up man, and in somewhat of a hurry too.

But apart from this awful odor, skunks are interesting and useful creatures that, for the most part, benefit man. Their constant diet of grubs and other insects are a great help to the agriculturist, as is their appetite for mice and young rats around the neighborhood. Of course they do have a strong appetite for eggs, but included in these em-

bryos are those of the snapping turtle too. So while they often destroy a clutch of duck eggs, their presence in the same area keeps the snapping turtle population down. Thus the overall waterfowl survival rate is greatly enhanced.

Although skunks hibernate, they are active on the warmer days of winter, where their tracks may be noticed in a fall of fresh snow. These past few weeks, these striped pussies, have been busy foraging in the frostfree earth for white grubs and other such larvae. Recently, we noticed a large skunk near King City, busy rooting in the moist earth. Approaching it cautiously with the wind at my back I was able to get within good picture range. At first it moved away and I followed at a safe distance. Then it turned and came in my direction and I moved away. It seemed as if it was playing some kind of a game, until it stopped at the entrance to a large burrow. Here it turned and faced me in a curious manner, its ebony eyes glistening in the bright sunlight.

Its forward position reminded me of another curious skunk I had encountered a few years ago. This particular individual came sauntering up to the beam of my flashlight one night while I was on my hands and knees catching dew worms. I tried to retreat, but found my back end up against some rose bushes. Quickly I shut off the light and at the same time yelled at the skunk to get back. Fortunately it did and when I picked it up once more in the beam of light, it was heading across the lawn, with four striped youngsters trailing behind.