

stouffville comment

Spirit of the season is alive, well

The spirit is alive and well in Stouffville. This week, this newspaper received a letter to the editor saying that the Christ had gone out of Christmas. This is not a new message, but the letter writer explained eloquently that he was being denied the right to celebrate the festive season at work for fear it may offend someone who chooses not to celebrate on Dec. 25. And he is not going to stand for it.

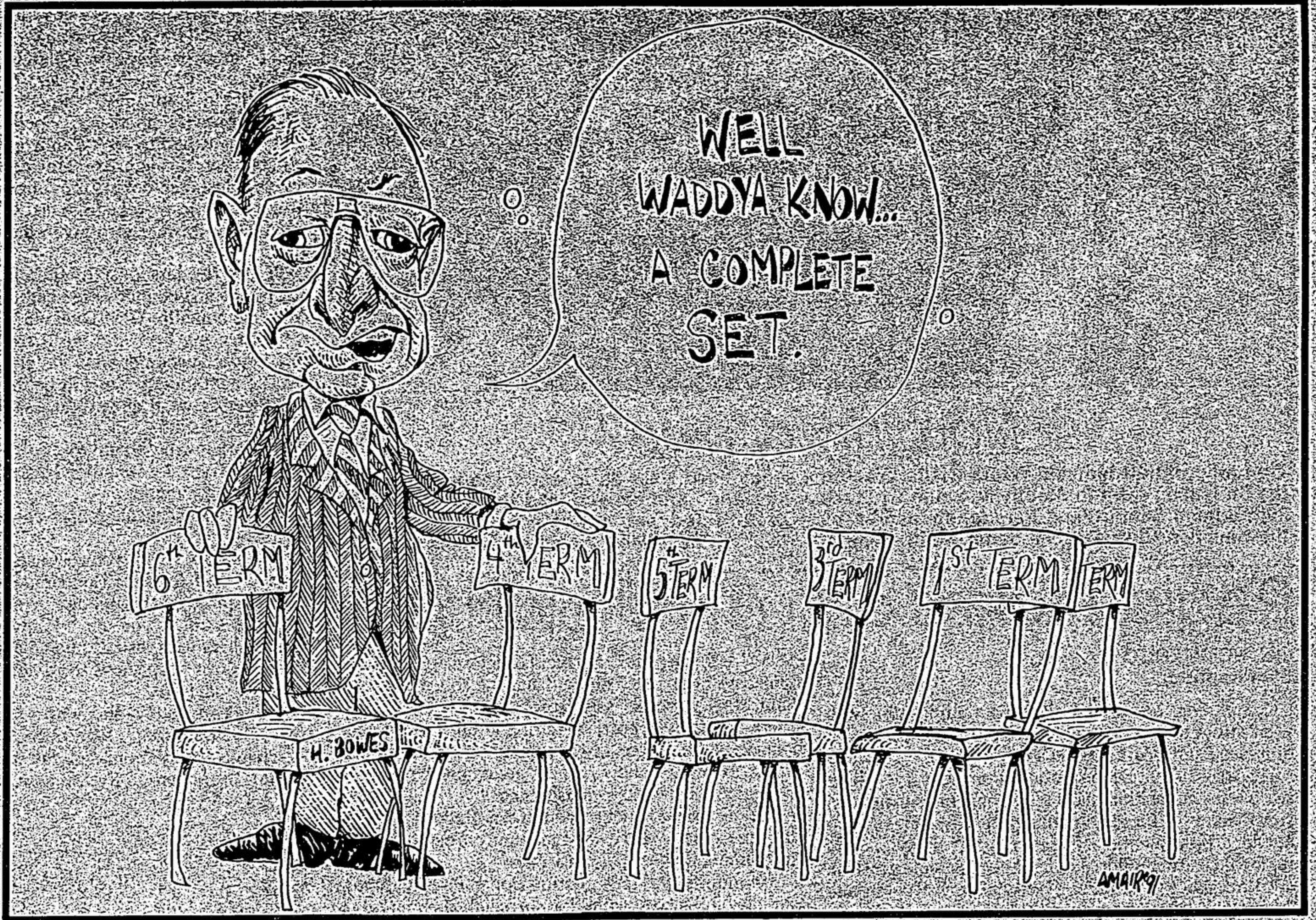
His seems to be the attitude that is pervading the town.

In the Santa Claus Parade, so marvelously executed by the Kinsmen this past Saturday, there were repeated calls in the messages on the floats for a return to the traditions of the season. In the festive shop windows on Main St., the true spirit of the season is shining through.

The letter writer was indeed justified in his concerns.

If we allow any traditions to be homogenized or denied, we will be a bland society indeed, one devoid of the spirit of human kindness, whether spurred by Christian beliefs or some other means.

And that is something none of us can do without.



Panic time is drawing near once again

It is near-panic time. Christmas is but two weeks away, and I am still in summer mode. I haven't been near a gift shop. I haven't selected Christmas cards. I don't have as much as a stocking stuffer. Every year I do this, and every year, I resolve on New Year's Eve that I won't do it again.

But here it is, a fortnight from the big day, and I am wrap-less, gift-less, and cardless.

With muted anxiety, I will dash about Christmas Eve as the retailers are closing their doors, trying to snap up whatever is left on depleted shelves.

Thankfully, we are not the sort of family that opens gifts Christmas Eve, otherwise I would be in a good

deal of trouble. I invariably wrap my gifts until about 2 a.m. Christmas morning, I stuff stockings after the alarm goes off at 6 a.m. and I dash about frantically placing the gifts under the tree before anyone else is up.

It is not that I procrastinate when it comes to the holidays, it just seems the month of December should be another 30 days long.

And I know I am not alone in my slowness. I know this because when I do get around to shopping, the halls of the malls and aisles of the shops are clogged with bug-eyed, sweating shoppers. By the time I've checked my list against grandparents, parents, brothers, sisters, in-laws and various and sundry other



relatives to ensure there would be no duplication, and by the time I've checked on my chequing account, lined up my charge cards and had the car tuned up for the parking lot wars, I am not exactly filled with the spirit of giving. I am not a browser, and when I shop, I shop.

In and back out again, loaded with parcels, packages and bags, I can do

the whole shopping experience in a few hours. The system of getting in, shopping and getting out again has worked well, but last year, I ran into a snag.

On my Christmas Eve hunt for gifts, I ran into a friend of mine. We stopped and chatted. He was on a similar mission, but we elected to toast the holiday in traditional fashion at a pub before we carried on with the task of gift-gathering.

Several egg nogs later, we were joined by another friend, and chatted and laughed the time away. When I looked up, I had less than an hour to find and buy seven more gifts. My friends determined that Christmas

was indeed worthy of a final hoist of the wassail, and lingered behind while I blearily dashed through the stores.

When I saw the friend who had lured me into the land of nog after the holidays, I learned he had left the pub with 15 minutes left on the shopping clock.

Each member of his family received a set of socket wrenches under the tree. He felt so bad about the rush job, he did his all his shopping this year at the after-Christmas sales. He called me this past weekend to make a holiday tradition of our Christmas Eve toasts. I declined.

I have joined ranks of nit-pickers

I used to hate nit-pickers, now I am one.

On a recent Sunday afternoon, I dispatched my dearly beloved daughter to her friend's house to play. Sometime later, she called me. "Hi, mum," she said airily. "Guess what?"

"You're ready to come home?" I ventured. "No, try again," she replied with relish. After one or two attempts to humor her, I gave up. "I've got lice," she explained proudly, sounding as though she had just been awarded the Nobel prize for literature.

My response to her cheerfully delivered bomb was not encouraging. We'd been up until 2 a.m. two nights in a row (something which is not recommended for those of us past the first flush of youth) and this was the day I'd set aside for a quiet recovery.

A prolonged period of washing clothes, sheets, blankets, hats,



brushes and combs was certainly not on my agenda. Neither was an exhaustive exploration of my daughter's hair, delightful though her company is.

Articles I've read on the delicate subject of lice assure you that when your child gets them, it's not your fault and it's nothing to get upset about. I can only surmise that these words of wisdom were written by men, who are rarely to be encountered on the nit-picking front lines.

In my case, what I like to think of as my customary sense of humor totally deserted me for about two days following the diagnosis,

returning only when my daughter didn't, from school, the second time she attempted to re-enter the halls of academe.

You can call friends for sympathy when your child has flu, or the cat is sick, or your husband has suddenly decided to re-decorate the hall and has found out, too late, that there are 14 layers of wallpaper to remove. Sympathy for the lousy, alas, is harder to come by.

After all, anyone who's been through the exercise of examining her child's hair strand by strand, has little compassion left over for fellow sufferers. In England, it's a known fact in certain circles that only the lower echelons get lice.

So if you consider yourself a member of the nice, genteel middle classes, don't worry. Next time the school sends your darling home during a lice alert, just tell them politely that they've got the wrong socio-economic group.

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640-2100

640-5477 (fax)