

Orangeville Citizen

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Thursday, May 14, 2009

Subscription Rate: \$48.30 per year (\$46.00 plus GST) in advance

Member of: Ontario Community Newspaper Association
Canadian Community Newspaper Association
Ontario Press Council, 80 Gould St., Toronto
M5B 1E9 (416) 340-1981

Printed by McLaren Press, 1 Langford Drive., Gravenhurst, ON
PIP 1R1 (705) 687-6691

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The humblest Citizen of all the land, when clad in armour of a righteous cause, is stronger than all the hosts of Error. - WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

'Politics' may determine outcome of 3 bankruptcies

USUALLY, THE OUTCOME of a bankruptcy proceeding depends largely on the positions taken by debtors and the pros and cons of liquidation versus debt restructuring.

Normally, Chapter 11 proceedings in the United States or their Canadian equivalent, actions under the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act (CCAA), are launched as a vastly preferable alternative to liquidation of a firm's assets. They usually succeed when a restructuring plan looks viable, particularly if the public interest seems to favour the firm's survival.

That's what's almost certain to happen with the Chapter 11 proceeding sought by Chrysler, despite the unwillingness of some hedge-fund creditors to follow governments and unions in both the U.S. and Canada in converting their holdings into equity. And the same is true for the expected Chapter 11 filing by General Motors once the United Auto Workers and Canadian Auto Workers make enough fresh sacrifices to satisfy the Obama, Harper and McGuinty administrations.

Politics obviously will play a huge role in both proceedings because of the huge bailouts involved on both sides of the Canada-U.S. border and the enormity of the auto-industry job losses that would follow liquidations.

Politics of another kind are involved in a third high-profile Chapter 11 proceeding where, unlike their Chrysler and GM counterparts, the creditors are onside with the debtor company and there's a buyer who's willing and able to turn the outfit into a viable operation.

We refer, of course, to the National Hockey League's Phoenix Coyotes, the team that has consistently lost millions annually since moving to the

Arizona city from Winnipeg in the mid-1990s.

Even with Wayne Gretzky as player-turned-coach and a part owner of the team, the Coyotes have been in a hopeless state financially, partly because of a small fan base in that winterless part of North America and partly because its arena is in a suburb that's not easily reached by those living in most of the city that's currently the fifth largest in the U.S.

The would-be buyer is, of course, Ontario billionaire Jim Balsillie, who has agreed to pay \$212.5 million for the failing NHL franchise and wants to move the Coyotes to Hamilton's Copps Coliseum, where Southern Ontario hockey fans would surely fill every seat.

As much as this might be seen to be a winning situation for team majority owner Jerry Moyes, the other creditors and hockey generally, "politics" is likely to kill the deal.

The "politics" in this case is mainly in the NHL, where the top politician is its anti-Canadian commissioner, Gary Bettman, and his two main allies are the super-rich owners of the hapless Toronto Maple Leafs and the less wealthy owners of the Buffalo Sabres.

Mr. Bettman has asked the bankruptcy judge to throw out the Chapter 11 proceeding on grounds the league actually owns the team, having placed deputy commissioner Bill Daly in charge of the operation, while suggesting the league has another would-be buyer waiting in the wings in Jerry Reinsdorf, owner of the American League's Chicago White Sox and the National Basketball Association's Chicago Bulls.

As for the Leafs and Sabres, they have protection in the form of an anti-competition NHL rule barring a sec-

ond team locating within 50 miles (80 kilometres) of an existing franchise.

It seemingly matters not that there is no evidence that the Hamilton-based Coyotes would pose any financial risks to the Leafs or Sabres, and plenty to suggest that the new rivalries would stimulate fan interest.

Nor is there really any need to prevent Phoenix from having its own NHL team.

All that's really needed is a decision by the NHL governors to permit a minor expansion of the league to 32 teams from the present 30, with new franchises in Phoenix and Winnipeg that would keep a balance (16-16) between its Eastern and Western conferences, and permit the top half in each conference to enter the playoffs.

It would give hockey-rabid fans in Central Canada as many teams to cheer for as are to be found in the Southeastern U.S., where currently two in Florida and one each in Georgia and North Carolina are all struggling financially.

If merely justice and fairness were to prevail, instead of protectionist politics, all Mr. Balsillie should have to do is agree to compensate the Leafs and Sabres for any loss of revenues that an arbitrator finds is caused by the added competition the Hamilton team produced.

Another thing we'd like to see is the restoration of hockey in Quebec City, where despite good fan support the Nordiques had to become the Colorado Rockies.

But that isn't going to happen, if only because the NHL wants to have the same number of teams in its two conferences, and Detroit, a 10-hour drive from the Atlantic seaboard, is already located within the NHL's "west".



Explosives haul route needs attention

SETTING ASIDE SITE CONCERNS, it is a mystery to us why a succession of operators has been allowed to transport explosives across a narrow, deteriorating concrete bridge for the past 15 years.

The problem came to public light when a Burnside engineering report said there is concern "with the narrow width of the structure and the potential for a truck to go off-road at this location."

An Orca truck running off the road, even over the steep embankments at this bridge on 21-22 Sideroad of East Luther Grand Valley, might not be of serious concern in the normal course of events.

But the concern in this case is with trucks carrying ammonium nitrate and explosives. And the bridge spans a waterway that flows into the Grand River.

The disaster following spillage of the nitrate into such a stream requires little or no comment. There is a second peril associated with the risk.

Barely 10 years ago, a truck carrying dynamite hit a rock cut on Highway 17, caught fire, exploded and left a crater reported as 30 metres long and 4 metres deep in roadway. There were no deaths or injuries but a similar incident in Mexico killed up to 32 onlookers.

If the Orca facility is to get the permanent zoning it craves, it should have to bring access roads up to proper standards for the nature of their cargo.

CITIZEN MAILBOX

Dreams have been replaced with worry

I have a dream! A future where our children are able to enjoy the sounds of nature, birds singing, crickets chirping, frogs croaking and the sound of wind in the swaying tree branches. The night-time fireflies blinking and the heavens display of twinkling stars.

Yes, I live in the country, and these simple pleasures bring joy and harmony to my soul. With Toronto, Barrie, Brampton and London within a two hours drive, our farmland supplies both local markets and cities with food and water.

But within the last three years my dreams have been replaced with worry. Wind tower industrialization is compacting our croplands due to vibration and reducing water conductivity and fertility in our soils. Also, 40 ready-mix trucks of reinforced concrete per turbine base, crack bedrock and divert water flow.

There are many reasons I don't like wind turbine industrialization on our rural croplands. I don't like the fact they blink red all night long and take away people's enjoyment of viewing the stars. I don't like how homes near wind farms are depreciating 20% to 25% in value, and some won't sell at all. (Sun Times April 9, 2009)

I don't like the fact that people are getting sick from the low frequency vibration, and

experiencing sleepless nights, tinnitus, and all the other medical problems as revealed by Dr. Nina Pierpoint and Dr. McMurtry.

I don't like the annoying swishing sound that results every time the blade passes the tower. Barbara Ashbee explained the fact she will "never hear natural wind again, it is always this mechanical noise, whatever the wind conditions-low wind, medium wind or high wind"

I don't like how people's safety is being jeopardized. The turbines only shut down after ice is thrown. The flicker effect of the blades cutting the sun's rays along with their movement pose a driving hazard, since people are distracted while driving.

I don't like the fact farmers have more rights than the small property owner, rights given to them by wind turbine developers. First, they get to decide if they want turbines or not. Second, they get to decide where on their property they want the turbines placed. Thirdly, they usually put them on the edge of their farm fields, which infringes on the peaceful enjoyment of neighbors. Fourth, they receive money from the developer. Fifth, the adjoining neighbour gets no rights or input.

I don't like the fact the set-

backs are wrong. They are supposed to be two kilometres away from people's homes, but instead they are 350 to 450 metres to people's back doors (not their property line).

I don't like that Energy Minister Smitherman has a closed-door policy to anyone who objects. Unless you have an invitation from the wind turbine developer you are not welcome at ribbon cutting ceremonies and photo opportunities for completed wind developments.

This occurred for both the Melancthon One and Two projects and the Enbridge ribbon cutting ceremony near Kincardine. People were threatened with trespassing charges, if they entered onto the private wind turbine property.

I don't think that wind turbines should be classed with other environmentally friendly energy sources like solar and biomass. These other forms of green energy don't have all the negatives associated with them. Wind power is an entity unto itself.

I don't like the fact turbines require almost three barrels of synthetic turbine oil that is hazardous to water and is changed twice per year.

I don't like the fact air-dromes were not mentioned in our ESR in Melancthon, yet they now were three or four. They now receive no protection.

Wind turbines are not reducing carbon levels. Disrupting peat by laying underground cables increases the release of carbon. We have only to look at Denmark for the truth.

"The Green Energy Act is draconian and severely flawed. Despite decades of experience and 60,000 wind turbines worldwide, there is no scientific evidence that indicates wind power has any significant impact on the reduction of greenhouse gases.

Denmark, with more than 6,000 turbines generating 19% of its electricity, has yet to close a single fossil-fuel plant. It requires 50% more coal-generated electricity to cover wind's unpredictability. Carbon dioxide emissions have risen (by 36% in 2006 alone). The head of Denmark's largest energy utility tells us that "wind turbines do not reduce carbon dioxide emissions." Der Spiegel reports that "Germany's CO2 emissions haven't been reduced by even a single gram." Globally, wind energy contributes less than 1% to the reduction of greenhouse gasses."

I don't like the fact Melancthon One and Two turbines failed the noise level tests. They are only supposed to be 40 dBA at night while people are sleeping, yet they are coming back with results of 60 dBA in daytime. The night noise is louder due to increased winds at hub height. The MOE models are wrong and they are doing nothing but approving wind developments through their signature on Certificates of Approval.

I don't like the fact citizens are not being listened to. At

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Islam, feminists targeted

Before he arrives at the real point - that the nasty Human Rights Commission is out to martyr all Christians - Ron Bosman takes a few potshots at Islam. The Koran "treats women as sex objects", while Mohammed said "that women are genetically and legally inferior to men."

By way of contrast, Mr. B. cites the Bible on the same topic: "The wife has not power of her own body but the husband and likewise also the husband hath no power over his own body but his wife." If this demonstrates that the Bible is more enlightened than the Koran, it is not apparent from the quote, which defies interpretation.

Skipping blithely over to Afghanistan - how did we get there? - Mr. Bosman writes that there is now a law that allows

men to insist on their, ahem, conjugal rights whenever it pleases them. Bosman solemnly remarks that "the feminists do not like that."

Geoff, might it be that even a non-feminist wife might bristle at a law that cedes total control over her feelings and desires to the man?

It's clear that Mr. B. does not like feminists.

Ron Bosman's fundamentalism, his grim belief that we are all born hopeless sinners, that our lives are nothing but one long, apparently endless attempt to climb out of a deep, oil-slicked hole filled to the brim with the other six billion sinners, is not a vision I subscribe to. It's too dark for me and it does not fit the real world I see around me.

Geoff, Rytell
Toronto

In praise of an aunt

My mother's brother, my Uncle Dennis, joined the Canadian army early in the Second World War and was shipped out to Germany. He fell in love with the country/beer and, eventually, with a Germany lady, Ursula, who preferred to be called Ursel. She was tall and blond and buxom, a young man's dream come true.

She spoke some English, even so Uncle Dennis set about to learn German - no problem for him so long as he could talk to the beautiful Ursel. Their conversations taught him that she was also wise and kind and had a pleasingly old fashion attitude that a woman should care for her man. She was perfect. Best of all, she loved him too.

A soldier will travel and move home often throughout his career and, except for those short-term or military-only times, he takes his family with him. While Uncle Dennis was perfectly content to remain in Europe, there were stints of his being based in Canada. It was during those times that I had the chance to get to know my Aunt Ursel in the first place.

My uncle and I were talking about it the other day: I have a really clear memory of the first time I saw her, coming off the platform at Union Station with my uncle, both of them pushing trolleys loaded with tremendous suitcases. I could only have been 5 or 6 years old on that day, but her face rings through as clear as a bell.

They always stayed with my grandparents who lived in a charming cottage in Clarkson backing onto a well wooded lot of several acres. Their house was small, but it was so welcoming that it seemed large.

Part of what took up space in the tremendous suitcases were the "feather beds" Aunt Ursel always took with them wherever they went. These marvels of comfort put our "duvets" to shame as being mere bed coverings. These were like giant pillows, with no stitching except around the edges, full of feathers and down. Aunt Ursel would fluff them up on the bed and then toss me into the middle of them. I have never otherwise seen one over here although I expect they can still be purchased in Germany.

She adored my grandmother immediately. My grandmother was a nurse, a practical person who doted on her husband, her two children - my mother and uncle - her only grandchild (me) and Aunt Ursel. They loved to gossip, to complain about their men and to cook.

Luckily enough, I was too small and was most willing to be considered incompetent and probably beyond teaching while that kitchen was filled with the talents that my mother, my aunt and my grandmother brought to it. By George, I was more than ready to sit on the couch beside my uncle while the winter weather did whatever it liked in the woods outside, while those great ladies talked happily together and produced some of the finest meals I have ever had anywhere.

And, as a bonus, I was not even allowed into their presence when it was time to clean up! I remember one year, after Christmas Lunch, Uncle Dennis took his life in his hands and went into the kitchen to see if he could score the neck for him and me to share.

The howls of: "What do you want?"

"Who said you could come in here?"

were like thunder clouds. Brave soldier that he was, he took it, blaming me, naturally, with: "I've got a starving little girl in there. How's she going to finish her book with nothing to eat?"

"Oh, Den," this was Aunt Ursel, "you've just had lunch!" Steady to the end, he remonstrated: "Just!! That was all an hour ago, at least."

He came away with the neck, held it out to me to grab a portion and we resumed our labours of loafing in great spirits.

Those were good days - I guess those were some of my "good old days"! My aunt and uncle came less to Canada as the years went by but before too long, I was travelling to Europe and, indeed, living in Europe. So, we were together there quite often.

It was very instructive to live, even for short spells of a couple of weeks, with them in Germany. You will always learn more about a place by living with people who live there than you will as a simple visitor. My aunt was a great one for explaining things; she was a happy browser, frugal without stinginess. A clever balance.

And she was bossy and still convinced that I was not ever going to be really competent at domestic affairs. I loved it and the kid in me who sat contentedly on the couch while the ladies did the dishes was still content when Aunt Ursel took a chore away from me because she was so sure I wouldn't do it right - and she cared so much that everything be done right.

She was very excited about Patricia's birth and they came to England soon after to meet her and visit there for a while. They had never had children, which was certainly a source of sadness, for Aunt Ursel especially. She made a great fuss of Patricia and spoiled her at every opportunity while instructing me not to - of course.

As Patricia grew up, we taught her our favourite card games so that she could make a fourth.

Once we were visiting with Colin shortly after we were married and I had lost a button off a sweater. He asked Aunt Ursel for a needle and thread and shocked her to her bones by sewing that button on for me. The next day at breakfast, when I had not yet poured Colin his coffee, she said to me: "Well, Constance, won't you serve your man coffee?"

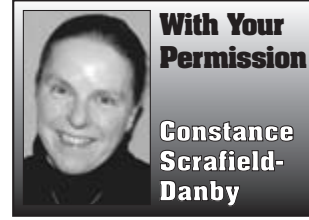
We still laugh about it: I pour his coffee but he pours the wine.

Well, my aunt and uncle will be married 50 years this year, but her health is failing her now. I have not seen them for some years as we have not been overseas for quite a while.

Nevertheless, she has been an important part of my life, a completely generous person with her affection. Her days in Canada were her best memories and we were her favourite people.

She and Uncle Dennis have loved and cared for each other all those 50 years. They loved to dance; they laughed easily together; they battled superficially, remaining dear friends all the way.

You can't say better than that, can you?



With Your Permission

Constance Scrafield-Danby