

Orangeville Citizen

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ALAN M. CLARIDGE Publisher
THOMAS M. CLARIDGE Editor

10 First Street, ORANGEVILLE, Ontario L9W 2C4
E-mail: mail@citizen.on.ca Web Page: <http://www.citizen.on.ca>



Claridge

Community Newspapers Ltd.

THOMAS M. CLARIDGE
President

ALAN M. CLARIDGE
General Manager

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

William Bothwell

STAFF REPORTERS

Dan Pelton

SPORTS

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Sandra Jovic

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

Carolyn Dennis

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DISPLAY ADVERTISING

Rosemarie Elsdon
Kathey Stanton

PRODUCTION

Fran Cunningham
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Telephone: (519) 941-2230 Fax: (519) 941-9361

E-mail: mail@citizen.on.ca



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

Climate changes we'd like to see

THE WEEK BEFORE Christmas 2009 was dominated on the international stage by the fractious Copenhagen conference on climate change and in Canada by the torch relay heralding the 2010 Vancouver Olympics.

Reflecting on these two phenomena got us to thinking not just about the challenged they present but also about the fact we're in an era when there is a need for some forms of climate change.

As the Copenhagen conference so amply demonstrated, there's a desperate need for change in political climate.

Whatever might be said about the scientific facts that have made the problem of global warming obvious to all but the Sarah Palins of the world who see it as a natural phenomenon unaffected by man-made greenhouse gases, no one is an admitted champion of pollution.

The problem is that in a world currently experiencing a global recession politicians are all too often willing and able to prefer vote-getting to problem-solving. Nowhere is this better demonstrated than in the seemingly endless debate in the United States over health-care reform, in which the critics ignore the plight of some 47 million without health insurance.

As for the Canadian political climate, there's surely far too much factiousness on Parliament Hill and at Queen's Park at a time when we need more consensus.

At a time when our governments are appropriately running massive deficits, no one seems prepared to

offer a credible means of returning to an era of budget-balancing, much less to the Keynesian concept of budget surpluses in good economic times.

Instead, last week's news had both the Harper Conservatives at Ottawa and the McGuinty Liberals in Queen's Park eying sell-offs of Crown corporations, the candidates including Atomic Energy of Canada's nuclear power division and the Liquor Control Board of Ontario.

Although similar moves have been successful in past with such entities as Air Canada, Canadian National Railways and Petro-Canada, we've also witnessed some horror stories, the worst of all being the Harris government's sale of Highway 407 to a consortium that has turned it into a cash cow charging outrageous tolls while exposing motorists to loss of their licences if they dispute a toll bill.

This holiday season, our greatest wish is for a climate of harmoniousness.

One of the true blessings of Christmas has been the gift of seasonal music, be it traditional carols, Bing Crosby's White Christmas or the modern choral anthems.

As for the latter, our favourite is English composer John Rutter's What Sweeter Music, inspired by lyrics written nearly 400 years ago by Robert Herrick, who wrote them as "A Christmas Carol, Sung to the King in the Presence at White-Hall," to music that likely bore no resemblance to the Rutter

masterpiece.

The words are mystical:
*What sweeter music can we bring
Than a carol, for to sing
The birth of this our heavenly King?
Awake the voice! Awake the string!*

*Dark and dull night, fly hence away,
And give the honour to this day
That sees December turned to May.*

*Why does the chilling winter's morn
Smile, like a field beset with corn?
Or smell like a meadow newly shorn
Thus on the sudden? Come and see
The cause, why things thus fragrant be:*

*'Tis he is born, whose quickening
birth
Gives life and lustre, public mirth,
To heaven and the under-earth.*

*We see him come, and know him
ours,
Who, with his sunshine and his
showers,
Turns all the patient ground to flow-
ers.*

*The darling of the world is come,
And fit it is, we find a room
To welcome him, to welcome him.*

*The nobler part of all the house here,
is the heart.
Which we will give him: and
bequeath
This holly, and this ivy wreath.
To do him honour, who's our King,
And Lord of all this revelling.*

May you, one and all, enjoy a Merry Christmas and a harmonious New Year!



At last, a little common sense

IT TOOK A LONG WHILE, but Ontario's Assessment Review Board (ARB) has injected a little common sense into the chaotic world of municipal assessment.

The board last week overturned a decision of the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) to designate Ken Filsinger's Sign Needs plant on Orangeville's Centennial Road as an industrial, rather than commercial, operation, at an annual cost to the business of more than \$4,000.

At a hearing last June, the ARB was told that not only had Sign Needs enjoyed a commercial designation at its previous site, but all its competitors enjoyed the same designation.

Mr. Filsinger estimates that he would have needed an extra \$100,000 in added annual sales to cover the unexpected tax increase.

He observed — correctly, in our view — that the industrial classification was "wrong from the start ... meant for large factories, not a father/son operation like this."

If nothing else, the successful challenge illustrates the need to replace the current assessment system with something far less judgmental — ideally, with a taxation system based simply on the quantity of land and

occupancy space owned.

Clearly, some signs are manufactured and some sign companies are huge, perhaps even multi-national, while others may be even smaller than Sign Needs.

But it makes no sense to be basing a municipality's revenues either on someone's suspicion as to the market value of a given property or as to whether the business enterprise is primarily manufacturing rather than marketing.

And it strikes us as particularly strange that in the midst of the worst economic downturn since the 1930s any small business should be penalized for doing its own manufacturing.

If MPAC exercises its right to appeal and (heaven forbid) is successful, Sign Needs and all other similarly situated businesses will be rewarded with lower property/business taxes if they stop making their own signs and have the work performed elsewhere. (That's what happened when drug manufacturer Pfizer briefly stopped production at its Orangeville plant.)

We're sure there are sign makers in New York State or Michigan who would love the business.

CITIZEN MAILBOX

Fantino defends OPP enforcement

Re: "Comments said 'disturbing' (W. Graham, Orangeville - December 10/09)

I thank the editor of the Orangeville Citizen/Shelburne Free Press for publishing my open letter to editors regarding Section 172 (December 3, 2009) and the success of the OPP's Provincial Traffic Safety Program (PTSP).

A year-over-year fatality reduction of 29 percent or 131 lives saved is testament to the efforts of our dedicated officers and highly-visible vehicles.

I find it necessary to answer W. Graham's concerns (December 10, 2009) regarding

charges under Section 172 of the Highway Traffic Act (HTA) and comments regarding the OPP's use of unmarked vehicles.

The writer is quite correct...the OPP is not 'the law'. I remind all readers and motorists the OPP is mandated to enforce the law as written by those who develop and implement legislation. It is important to note that the recent court decisions apply only to those specific cases and are not binding. There is no declaration or order by the court of invalidity in relation to Section 172.

Thus the OPP will continue to enforce the laws made available

to us to save lives, including Section 172. This includes removing reckless drivers and their vehicles from the road immediately — as we do with impaired drivers — to preserve the safety of responsible drivers and their families.

The OPP remains convinced that the presence of highly-visible, engaged traffic officers is one of the most effective methods of mitigating high-risk driving behaviour.

The deployment of unmarked cruisers is another tool with which to enforce the law. I can assure you that, as a percentage of the OPP's fleet of vehicles,

the number of unmarked vehicles in service actually decreased slightly over the last few years.

During that period, we have deployed silhouette decaled cruisers with standard light bars and whose markings are visible at night to, again, enhance public and officer safety.

I would advise the best way to avoid the scrutiny of our officers - in marked or unmarked vehicles - and the potential penalties is to obey the law and adjust your driving practices accordingly.

Julian Fantino
Commissioner — Ontario
Provincial Police

Two letters concerned with climate change

More than 500 university faculty members from universities all over Canada have signed a letter to the Canadian Government calling for immediate and drastic reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

The letter points out that the time frame of reductions is critical, dictated by earth's physical environment and not by political or short-term economic considerations. The scale is global: climate knows no boundaries; Canada's emissions harm people everywhere.

Although the danger has been recognized for decades, governments' reaction has been inadequate. Dr. Chandler Davis, an emeritus professor of mathematics, points out that the uncertainties in the scientists' predictions were no excuse for inaction. As it turned out, emissions have been increasing rather than decreasing, and the effects of climate change exceed the worst-case predictions of a few years ago. Societies now face threats of unprecedented severity due to climate change, as detailed in the letter: unprecedented droughts, melting of mountain glaciers vital to major rivers, rising sea levels that threaten island nations and the deltas in Bangladesh and Egypt, and much more. Climate change and other contributing human activities are now causing species extinction at about a thousand times the natural rate.

The letter reviews recent data showing an added imminent danger of a qualitative alteration of climate. Higher than expected warming of the

Arctic now leads to melting of the ice cap whose reflectivity cuts Earth's absorption of solar radiation, and to melting of permafrost that risks venting significant amounts of the potent greenhouse gas methane. These changes would aggravate the greenhouse warming seriously and are not reversible in human time scale. The letter reviews paleoclimate results to calibrate the task. The last time the world was 10C warmer than pre-industrial levels for an extended period, sea level was likely five meters higher than today. Expert opinion is cited for the view that, to be safe from such a catastrophe, atmospheric CO2 must be held to 350 parts per million — a level which has already been surpassed!

The statement therefore calls for a precise timetable taking Canada to zero fossil fuel emissions in the near future. This means setting a time-profile of maximum allowable emissions, falling quickly to zero. The limits need to be absolute and not subject to trade-offs of any kind. This will inevitably mean winding down the tar sands project, and sizeable reductions of the military. It will require deep readjustment of society. Canada has shown in the past that it is capable of quick response to emergencies, and this is an emergency.

The full text of the Open Letter with all the signatories is available at Sources <http://www.sources.com/Releases/NR695.htm> and on the Science for Peace website at <http://www.scienceforpeace.ca/open-letter-on-climate-change-to-the-government-of>

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Dr. Helmut Burkhardt,
Professor of Physics
Emeritus, Ryerson University,
Science for Peace Board
member
Dr. Chandler Davis,
Professor Emeritus,
University of Toronto,
Treasurer of Science for
Peace
www.scienceforpeace.ca

The gabfest in Copenhagen is winding down and billions of much needed currency is being promised to the emerging industrial nations. But no oversight mechanism has been agreed to by either the givers or the takers.

If this round of give-away

Debating article clarified

As captain of the Centre Dufferin District High School debating team I am very grateful for the acknowledgement of our sport by your newspaper. However, I have some problems with the article as well.

As for, "credit for the accomplishment is due almost entirely to a single teacher..." I have some trouble with this because, although Mr. Orford remains the inspiration behind the team, we first of all, have two coaches (which include Mrs. Murray). Secondly, all our meetings are run by senior members of the team and the driving force behind the team is, frankly, its team members. Mr. Orford even states as you have mentioned in your article, "they came to me to start the team, not the other way round."

The debate we held on Monday went off without a hitch, mainly because of the

billions to the emerging nations actually occurs we had best remember where the money provided in the past disappeared to and who the culprits were who diverted it to Swiss accounts.

How the USA can offer to fund these emerging nations when she herself is in one hell of a financial mess and unemployment is at a staggering level. Surely it would be wise to get her affairs in some semblance of order before funding others.

This gathering of privilege seekers were expected to resolve the climate change issue driven, to a degree, by

• Please turn to page B2

organization of ALL members. The judges that were present, aside from the teaching staff, were members of the community who had been invited mainly by the members of the team.

As for the article's comment that there would probably be no team if it weren't for Orford, that may be true, however, I am not a firm believer of that fact. He is an inspirational teacher and coach, but because this sport is mainly driven by the students on the team, I highly doubt it is all to the credit of Mr. Orford.

With all this said, we do owe a large amount of credit to both our coaches. I am incredibly proud of all the accomplishments our team members have made and I sincerely hope the debating tradition will continue at Centre Dufferin.

Marin Mac Namara
CDDHS

A little truth and sincerity

If all the world's a stage and we must find our places upon it, how do we leave off play acting and find the moments of truth and of sincerity?

Crashing about, reacting to whatever comes our way, to a greater or lesser degree, sometimes feigning sadness or friendship — sometimes meaning it — sometimes not even knowing ourselves what we feel. About anything.

My cousin dislikes intensely the way her sister (also my cousin) celebrates Christmas. The mountains of gifts the family exchange, given insincerely in volumes where, in fact, nothing is needed, where people have everything and the whole business of Christmas becomes just that — an orgy of decorations, dripping in metallic paint — a gorge of eating far beyond comfort — a competition of spending. She thinks the point has been completely missed.

This year, she is taking off for B.C., where her two daughters live; she has not had the opportunity to spend Christmas with them for years. This is what makes sense of Christmas to her — not the stuff — the company.

Back to the basics. If there are too many trappings, can the essence be lost? What is Christmas all about?

Ah, yes, a little boy being born in a stable. Not in a four star hotel; not in a place with trappings but in as humble a spot as possible.

There have been a great many interviews and talks by people on the cusp of Christianity talking about Christmas and trying, I thought, to talk Christ out it, trying to claim it as a mainly human celebration.

Well, come Easter, there will be the annual debate about whether Christ was even born at all. At least, at Christmas, we are allowed to admit his birth, while others attempt to diminish its importance.

Actually, Christmas is about the miracle of the birth of a child who changed the world by declaring that we should lay down our swords and love our enemies. A tough lesson indeed. One that would pretty quickly knock us off the stage with the sincerity it demands. To love those who think badly of us. To turn the other cheek. To reward violence with the outstretched hand.

In a world of increasing violence, where Toronto the Good has become just another gun-ridden den; where countries that extol the virtues of western thought, with its democracy and freedom of speech, invade other countries without any truth in their motivation; where a man may hold the Nobel Peace Prize in one hand and a nation's artillery in the other — this is a world that badly needs to listen to the Christmas baby's challenge.

To rabbit on about the music, the lights, the length and cost of your child's wish list; to worry about whom to invite — or not to Christmas dinner — or for that matter, to worry at all about the volume and richness of the meal; to claim Christmas as a companion for other celebrations — all these are the pleasures — not the point of Christmas.

I am grateful that churches are stock houses of great art and profoundly beautiful architecture; I am so glad that the monks were around to keep writing history and books while the world went through its series of dark ages; but Christ never talked about using his Father's house for storage or keeping men restricted to barren cells for the sake of worship.

As long as we pacer up and down on the stage, we can bluster and dodge the essence, keep the basics buried. As long as only money really counts for everything, we can never really achieve anything.

The greatest virtue of the absentminded way in which we celebrate Christmas is that, so far, things mostly grind to a halt to give us pause to concern ourselves with others. We are reminded of the facts that exist all year, that there are people much worse off than ourselves and we are prompted to do something about it, if only to dash a donation into the proffered pot collecting change.

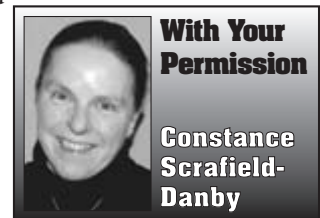
Scrooge marches across our screens reminding us that even the meanest curmudgeon can be reformed by the Spirit of Christmas. But does Scrooge learn to love his enemies? Perhaps, after his reformation, he did not have any.

It is, in any event, a blessed time of selflessness which is not generally sustainable all year long. Let others lay marginal claims to this kindly season if they will join in its generosity.

Let the cherubs sing in the towers and let the candles brighten the stained glass windows. Would the songs and the light could last all year. But while we continue to remember the birth, perhaps one day we will recall His mission and His message.

Whatever you do this Christmas do it with all truth and sincerity; let the basic best of yourself shine in the eyes of others; give yourself the gift of forgiving an offence and learning to (at least) like the offender.

And from this writer, Merry Christmas, with all sincerity.



With Your Permission

Constance Scrafield-Danby