

Comment

The Mississauga Times
South Sheridan Way, Mississauga.

Published by Metrospan Community Newspapers, a division of Metrospan Printing & Publishing Ltd.
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The Mississauga Times is one of the Metrospan Community Newspapers, a division of Metrospan Printing & Publishing Ltd., which includes The Oakville Journal Record, The Halton Consumer, The Etobicoke Advertiser/Guardian, The Etobicoke Consumer, The Bolton Enterprise, The Woodbridge & Vaughan News, The Richmond Hill/Toronto Liberal, The Aurora/Newmarket Banner, The North York Mirror, The North York Consumer, The Scarborough Mirror, The Scarborough Consumer.

Racism

When you're up to your eyeballs in alligators it's difficult to remember that the initial objective was to drain the swamp.

So it goes with the Mississauga Task Force on Human Relations. Already the task force is a centre of controversy among its members, the ethnic groups it is supposed to listen to, the minorities it is supposed to help and the media charged with the responsibility of reporting its deliberations.

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But level heads must prevail. The objective of all interest groups embroiled in the sensitive and emotionally charged issue of racism is the same — to ensure that all people in Mississauga can

Strange

We have to admire a man like Frank Leavers, city councillor for the Port Credit area. He doesn't let little things like ratepayers groups disrupt his style of political representation.

He wants to give one of the two car dealerships in Port Credit room to expand its business against the wishes of area residents, who are represented by the Port Credit Residents Association. He says the association doesn't represent many residents, really, and besides, the "majority of people who don't come forward and express their opinions" should be heeded.

Throughout history messages have been delivered in strange ways. Some people hear voices. Some are visited in dreams. Moses got the message on a stone tablet.

Frank Leavers listens to nothing.

City hall jobs

City Councillor Mary Helen Spence is understandably upset to discover that the top-paying jobs at city hall are dominated by men. A report prepared by Personnel Director David Bray says more than 80 percent of the men employed are in the highest-paying brackets, while only less than 12 percent of the women are in the same pay categories.

Spence is correct in pointing out that men have traditionally carried the burden of responsibility in the civil service and have the most to gain by an increase in the number of women taking top jobs.

Spence is also on track in her analysis that women have been taught to be satisfied with lower achievement in their careers. It follows, as Spence points out, that special consideration could be given to offset that miseducation process.

But before Spence can be really "shocked" at the figures, considerable analysis should be undertaken to discover if sexism is indeed rampant at city hall. The figures alone don't say there is, although her suspicions are justified.

What are the attitudes of city hall administrators who are in positions to hire and promote? Who has been hired and promoted recently — and who has been available? (The natural place to start that probe, of course, is with the administration's most recent acquisition, Personnel Director Bray.) And can Spence's suspicions be confirmed that over-qualified women are being hired into low-paying jobs as cheap labor?

If evidence can be found that discrimination occurs, some serious action has to be taken. But regardless of any new evidence, special preference should be given women when promotions and hiring are being considered.

The number-one priority is to run city hall, of course. But all other things equal, it will go a long way to improving human relations if women are given the job or promotion ahead of an equally qualified male applicant.

In the meantime we wish more power to city council's self-appointed, uh, watchbitch, who appears to be barking up the right tree.

live free of racial prejudice.

To say that the task force has its work cut out for it is an understatement, because in at least one corner of Mississauga racism is rampant.

Malton is seething with racial prejudice, according to a series of random interviews, with Malton residents published on Page D-3 of this week's Times.

According to people quoted in that report, there are fights among racial groups in the Westwood high school and the Westwood mall; racial prejudice of the lowest and most sophisticated kinds; serious mistrust of press reports on racism and indications that East Indian-Canadians are suffering such a barrage of racist behavior that they are leaning towards more aggressive reactions.

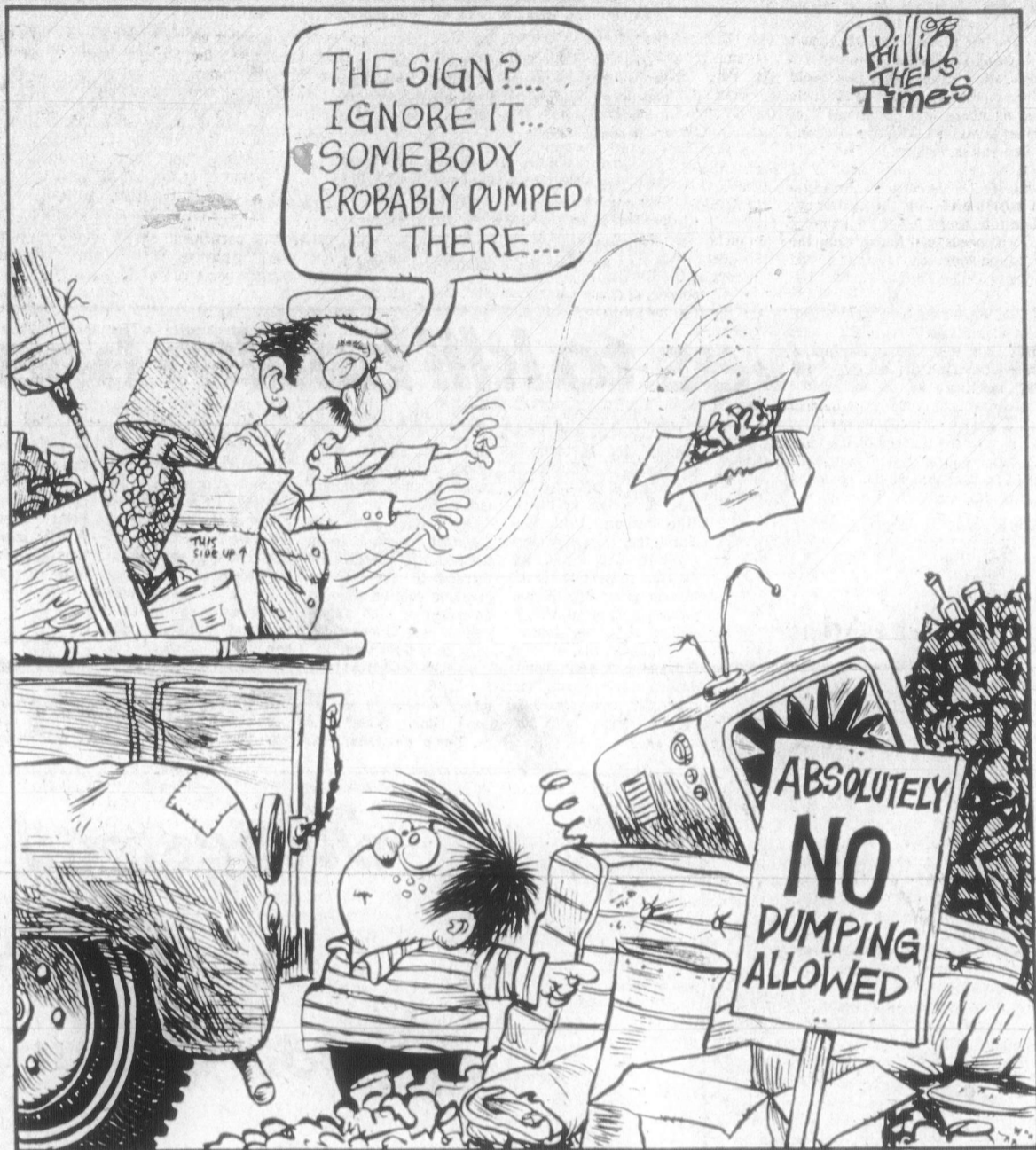
There is blind hate and martyrdom, compassion, hope and ignorance.

A Metro policeman who lives in Malton says the racism where he lives is worse than where he works. Most people say racism is obvious, but one deeply involved West Indian immigrant says he has never seen a sign of racism in Malton.

Two Westwood students say attitudes are less racist among older students. A senior police officer with years of experience dealing with racism, Inspector James Harding, says the situation is bad, but not as bad as a few years ago. As one member of the human relations task force, he is urging quick action to prevent serious trouble in the Malton area.

We are pulling for the task force, hoping it takes the time for a thorough examination of the problem and provides constructive, practical solutions.

"All we need is a little understanding," says Harding. And a bit of hard work, sixth sense, compassion, intolerance for insincerity, hard-nosed indignance, luck



From our readers



Mississauga Symphony intends to make Clarke Hall "focus for music" in the city.

It's 'home' for symphony

Your recent article on Clarke Hall and its preservation means a great deal to those of us connected with the Mississauga Symphony. It is our "home."

Through the co-operation and interested support of the City of Mississauga, the Mississauga Symphony calls Clarke Hall Symphony Centre.

During the two and a half years since the symphony opened a small upstairs office in Clarke Hall, rented from the city, the Symphony's facilities have expanded to include two upstairs teaching rooms for our rapidly-growing enrolment of String Institute students, and a large general office on the main floor which is the administration centre for the Mississauga Symphonic Association.

We are indeed grateful for the use of these historic premises in Port Credit, and intend to make it the focus for music in Mississauga, assuring that Clarke Hall is well worth preserving.

We congratulate the city on its foresight in establishing what we in the symphonic association call the "home" of our symphony in the interest of music, adding immeasurably

to the cultural scene in Mississauga. All great cities can boast a symphony orchestra and a university. So once again, Mississauga rates top!

Barbara Fear,
Mississauga Symphony

MAMR home under fire

This letter is in reference to a proposed group home which was purchased by the Mississauga Association for the Mentally Retarded at 1043 Haig Blvd. — a move the Ontario cabinet decided was permissible in the fall of 1977. This use had been twice turned down by Sam Spiegel of the Ontario Municipal Board, as a result of Haig residents appealing the Mississauga committee of adjustment decision.

One of the promises that the MAMR made in its application (for the home) was that the property would be upgraded by paving the driveway, replacing dilapidated fencing and refinishing the stucco exterior. This was to bring the property up to the standards of the well-kept homes on the street.

The MAMR rented the home out just prior to the OMB decision on July 20, 1977. (It had stood empty since their purchase early in 1976.) I feel that since the tenants do not cut the grass nor in any way tidy the exterior of the property that it is the responsibility of the MAMR to do so.

The property has been absolutely neglected. Last year the MAMR periodically sent a crew to cut the grass, but they have not done so at all this year.

One day last week a young boy went over the middle of the property with a mower, very carelessly, and it just looks terrible. The dandelions are plentiful and have gone to seed. Last winter a snowplow shoved the snow on the front lawn to one side. In doing so, the earth and grass were scraped deeply and as a result there are large bare patches and holes and heaps of earth and grass at the side of the lawn. There is much overgrowth of weeds against the house.

I think it is a disgrace for a government-supported organization to neglect their responsibilities like this.

We neighbors take pride in our property. I have purchased expensive weed and feed to keep my lawn attractive, and there are all those objectionable weeds going to seed next door. I have also spent money on love-

ly flowers to make the exterior of my property pleasant to look at. Most of my neighbors also take pride in the appearance of their homes.

I have attempted to speak to Mr. Kennedy, who is in charge of the MAMR residential services, but he has not returned my call.

It cost me, personally, a lot of money and a lot of time to appeal the placement of this group home. The MAMR won their case, now I think they should keep their word.

Gwen Oakes,
Mississauga

Sellout on farm goals

At a meeting of Peel regional council in Bramalea this month the planners' preliminary report A Strategy for Agriculture, was considered.

The goal and objectives — to retain a "productive and environmentally sound agricultural industry within the Region of Peel" — were finally amended and watered down as to make them almost meaningless.

Unfortunately, for our children and grandchildren, most councillors prefer to promote development, than to preserve land for food.

However, we are fortunate to have some politicians and planners who care about proper land use. Some of

them showed an interest in conservation, and in our hungry-bellies of the future. The councillors to thank are Frank McKechnie, Hazel McCallion, Mary-Helen Spence and Larry Taylor.

Helen Hansen,
Norval

Sightings questioned

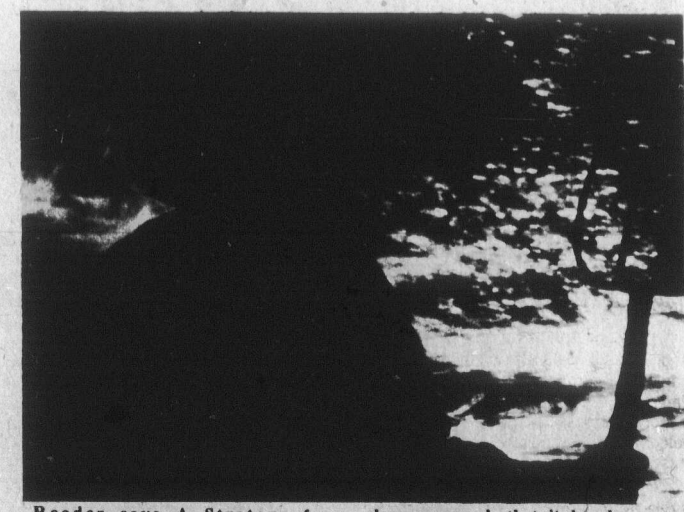
In response to your article on an Unidentified Flying Object sighting in Mississauga, I would like to make comment that such sightings are highly questionable.

One of the persons involved is a graphic artist and I would not be surprised that this sighting is an extension of the creativity that she uses in her daily job.

Perhaps I should not be so sceptical, yet it amazes me how we have no tangible or empirical evidence.

Many persons, I would suggest, see supposed objects or beings simply as a suggestion of their unconscious thought. I think that our time could be more profitably spent while examining and studying other relevant and important issues.

Daniel Strong,
Mississauga



Reader says A Strategy for Agriculture in Peel has been watered down so much that it has become "meaningless."