

Ducks pay price for our savage development

Despite efforts to restore their habitat, there hasn't been any significant sign that duck populations in North America are recovering. Losses are mainly due to the destruction of habitat where ducks feed, court and breed.

Swamps, those awful damp places where insects breed, are essential to ducks, waterfowl and countless other species of birds, mammals and fish. They may even be essential to man, yet we continue to destroy them at a startling pace. Even the wetlands' most vocal ally, Ducks Unlimited, just built its new headquarters in a duck pond.

Government data estimates 80 per cent or more of wetlands along the shores of the St. Lawrence and Great Lakes have been lost, as have 40 per cent of prairie wetlands. Here in the Eastern Townships, swamps are being filled in every day to make room for golf courses and housing developments. Farming is another concern as farmers plough under swamps to make room for more crops.

While governments pay lip service to wildlife conservation, they are some of the worst offenders. Just think how many thousands of acres of wetlands Quebec destroyed to create James Bay. How many more will be bulldozed as Hydro continues its obscene expansion just to sell more power to the U.S.?

One and a half billion dollars have been spent in an effort to restore wetlands across North America. Just think of all the money, not to mention wildlife habitats, we could save if we didn't destroy them in the first place.

Stricter environmental laws would be a step in the right direction, but just enforcing present rules would be an important start.

The filling in of the swamp at Bacon's Bay, the lungs of Lake Massawippi, has continued for years, yet the municipality can do nothing to stop it. Provincial laws and court injunctions aren't enough to stop greedy developers. Our environmental laws have no teeth when we expect cash-poor municipalities to not only be the environmental watchdogs but also to shoulder the costs of prosecuting offenders.

Ducks have other problems too. Weak regulations in wintering areas in the southern United States, Central American and the Caribbean and poison in their food chain are also killing off flocks of ducks, not to mention other birds, wildlife and vegetation.

As wetlands disappear and endangered duck species drop off like flies, the real loser is the human species. Not only are we losing important chunks of our environmental and wildlife heritage, the same problems causing the extinction of animals may someday be our own downfall. When will we realize that we cannot continue destroying the environment without suffering the consequences?

Right now ducks are paying for our insatiable need for savage development. Tomorrow, who knows who'll be paying the price?

RITA LEGAULT

Obnoxious GST has to go

Excerpts from a letter by Harold Ealden of Nanoose Bay, B.C., to the Battleford Telegraph, a twice-weekly newspaper in Saskatchewan:

When I see those little old ladies down the road enjoying a coffee and doughnut in the corner cafe, I ask myself, how can 200 grown-up, educated persons tax the dear old souls' only extravagance in life, whilst above them a business tycoon could be throwing a banquet of lobster, Dover sole, caviar and champagne and could reclaim the whole caboose as a tax deduction? It defies belief that any human being could tax food in the first place.

But here is the real mindbender — those very 200 have above-average salaries, extremely above-average pensions and perks ...

This same 200 will be touring Canada seeking love? and affection? for themselves and Canada. We all remember the pride and elation shown by the shameful 200 Tories and Tory senators as they defeated the opinions of the Canadians and their plea for compassion. They went on hell-bent to tax the doughnut of the little old lady down the road — shame, what shame.

Being a Christian nation, we will wish them well in retirement — we know full well they will not suffer the hardship "enforced" on the little old lady down the road who has to pay the obnoxious GST on her doughnut.

This inhuman tax has to go — sooner (rather) than later.

—From What Canada Thinks, a regular feature of The Canadian Press.

Did you know that...

BULLION SALE

Canada's first gold bullion coin, the Maple Leaf, went on sale in September 1979.

LAST VOYAGE

Portuguese navigator Ferdinand Magellan reached the Philippines in March 1521, where he was killed by natives the following month.

Letters

Option Canada in this area

Dear Mr. Editor,
Option Canada organizational meeting:

A small meeting of workers for Option Canada in this area was held on Sunday 18th at Lawrence Moreau's house in East Farnham. The meeting discussed the future organization for the party in the riding of Brome Missisquoi.

It was decided that a general meeting should be held in the near future at which an executive committee, covering the riding, should be elected. The announcement of the meeting will be accompanied by a party bulletin written by Greg Gogan — the founder of Option Canada — telling of accomplishments to date, and of targets, and the meeting will be open to all wishing to join

the party, and so members are encouraged to bring their friends. Greg Gogan will address the meeting.

The bulletin will also be sent to all other members of Option Canada.

At the meeting a vote on members of the committee will be taken — about half a dozen prospective members will be named from Sunday's meeting, and it is hoped that a similar number — at least — will be nominated from the floor, however all proceedings will be outlined in Lawrence Moreau's letter, and he will act as chairman, pro-tem. Lawrence unfortunately will be unable to act further in an official capacity owing to family sickness.

G.A. HANK ROTHERHAM
Knowlton

Animals must be euthanized

Dear Editor,

Many thanks to Rita Legault on her editorial dated August 16. She brought home a serious problem in our society — animal abandonment.

Why not drop in sometime to the local animal shelter? Ask the staff how many strays they received today. Then ask them how many unwanted animals must be euthanized. The answers will surprise and disgust you.

As Ms. Legault mentioned, if you have neither the time nor the interest to care for a pet, for heaven's sake don't get one! Spend your money on a magazine subscription — it's a lot easier to throw them away when you don't want them anymore. If you have an animal and can no longer keep it, please take it to the local animal

shelter. Don't dump it off on the side of the road. Strays get caught in traps, run over by cars, or starve to death. Animals are living, breathing, feeling creatures which deserve our compassion and respect. Let's try a little kindness.!

Animal abandonment is a criminal offence under article 446 of the Criminal Code. If you are a witness to such an act, please call the Eastern Townships SPA.

Sincerely yours,
EVELINA SMITH
Stoke

A jolly good newspaper

Kind Attn: Mr. Charles Bury — The Editor, Mrs. Helen Evans — Poetry Editor.

Dear Friends:

Thank you again for your many considerations and for the printing of my poems. Sadly, little Georgie who has brought so much joy and laughter into my life, was killed; he has always stayed in our own little compound, but something must have induced him to become more adventuresome and he attempted to cross the road. So "An Appreciation" which you have just printed, will be Georgie's Memoriam. Thank you so very much.

Mid-August and we are still blessed with such beautiful sunny days. Who could help but be inspired? It is a long time since we have had such a summer. And in addition to this blessing, more encouraging "news" in more than one direction.

Thank you again for all considerations and for the Record in general — a jolly good newspaper which keeps so many of us in touch and also keeps us up to date with world-wide news and all of the local news of interest.

Warmest regards to all concerned.

Sincerely,
MARJORIE P. FERRIS
Rougemont

My day of masculine pride

Dear Sir:

For 15 years I have been a faithful reader of the Record and a strong supporter and I am hurt that in your August 8 issue of the Brome County News you should refer to me in the way your correspondent Sharon McCully did (page B5, col.3, top). After all I did have my day of masculine pride and it wasn't always the size of my thumb!

H. GORDON GREEN
"Radio's Old Cynic"
Ormstown, Que.



Rape: "The boys have won again"

WINNIPEG (CP) — The horror never ends, the memories never fade, says Tracey Walsh as she recounts how she was brutally raped 12 years ago.

"I can still feel how cold the ground was," she says.

"I can still feel the wire around my neck, choking me."

She has never told her story publicly before, but says she decided to step forward because of a Supreme Court of Canada decision last week that struck down the "rape shield" law.

The decision will allow defence lawyers to delve into the sexual conduct of alleged victims if a judge deems it is critical to a defence.

But Walsh says she is tired of watching victims treated with less respect than rapists.

"I am not a nameless, faceless statistic. I am a human being who was sexually assaulted and survived."

But only barely.

Walsh was 15 years old when she and a friend accepted a ride from a stranger instead of waiting for a bus.

After driving them out of the city, the man ordered the girls at gunpoint to take their clothes off, cut off their bras with a knife and tied them up with wire and raped them several times.

Walsh's friend was thrown in a bush and left.

"I asked him if he killed her," she says. "Later, he said girls like me didn't deserve to live."

Walsh was raped once more. A wire was wrapped around her hands and then around her neck so tight she felt her eyes bulge. She was left in a ditch after being hit on the jaw with a hammer.

Her attacker was eventually caught but was deemed unfit to stand trial and remains in a Saskatchewan psychiatric institute.

"I hear he can leave his room because it's not always locked," says Walsh, now 27.

"Well, I can't. I always lock my doors, day and night.

"I'm always afraid. I still wake up screaming at night because I've dreamed he's coming after me."

Walsh is not the only rape victim who says rapists receive too much protection from the courts.

Rose, a Winnipeg woman raped on a date almost 20 years ago, says she never told anyone about her ordeal until she read about the court ruling on the rape shield law.

"It's a disgusting piece of legislation," she says of the court ruling that said the law went too far and could result in wrongful convictions.

Its critics say it will guarantee many rapists go free.

"A whole lot of women won't say anything," says Rose, 46.

"They'll force themselves to live with it in silence like I did."

Rose was newly divorced and on her first date when she was raped in 1972.

She was assaulted in the man's bedroom at a party while other guests chatted in the next room.

"I was flirting with him that night," she says.

"I walked into his bedroom on my own. I didn't leave when I sensed I was in trouble."

HEYDAY IN COURT

"They'd have a heyday in court

with that now."

She says it took her years to realize that it was not her fault, that she had indeed been raped.

But even though she now understands the term date rape, she says she would never go to police if she thought she could be asked in court who she had slept with and what her motives were.

"This will certainly reduce the number of women willing to come forward," agrees Lorraine Parrington, of the Clinic community health centre in Winnipeg.

Last year, 1,500 people came to the centre for counselling after a sexual assault and another 3,000 phoned the rape crisis line.

But Winnipeg police handled fewer than 800 cases.

"Everyone calls the police for a break-in," says Pat Rentz, of the police department's victim services centre.

"But sexual assault is different."

The Supreme Court ruling means things aren't likely to change for the better soon, say Walsh and Rose.

"It seems to me that the boys have won again," says Rose.