

FROM THE PUBLISHER'S DESK

Over the past couple of weeks the RNC has come in for criticism about its handling of two cases.

The first had to do with the arrest of an autistic youth in Mount Pearl and the second had to do with a mentally challenged youth who was playing with a toy gun in the east end of St John's.

In the first instance the police officers and the lockup attendants deserved to be criticized for their lack of judgement and just plain lack of common sense.

In the latter case, I feel the officer responded properly and were it not for his judgement the incident could have ended in tragedy.

In this instance a report came in that a man was walking around in public with a gun. The police officer responded and controlled the situation although he did draw his gun as a precaution. As it turned out the "man" was a mentally challenged 18-year-old youth who was playing with a toy gun. The police officer did not know this when he responded and he followed his training and did what had to be done.

In this instance if any blame is to be attached, it should be to the youth's parents who would permit him to be involved in such a situation.

As a police spokesman pointed out, the police force is responding more frequently to situations where guns are reported, and they have to be vigilant about their safety.

I never supported the idea of having the RNC carry sidearms but it is an unfortunate fact of life that they now need to be armed to do their job properly and to protect themselves.

The Provincial Government and the Provincial School Board's Association have decided to hold school board elections at a different time from the municipal elections. They feel this will give the school board elections a higher profile and will lead to a higher turnout of volunteers and a higher turnout of voters.

I have my doubts.

The last time school board elections were held they were done so in conjunction with the scheduled municipal elections. The voter turnout was abysmal because the potential trustees did not campaign and the various boards did very little to promote the elections.

This time around they plan to do more promotion and will encourage trustees to do the same. However by changing the election date they have effectively reduced the number of people who will go to the polls to select school trustees.

It would have been better if the trustees campaigned for their positions alongside those people seeking municipal positions. That would have led to heightened interest in both sets of elections and voters would only have to make one trip to the polls. That is the way it is done in many other parts of Canada and particularly in the United States. It seems to work there.

I am encouraged to see another attempt in Conception Bay Centre to establish a group that will work to enhance the viability of the various rivers which flow through the communities.

Several years ago Michael Tubrett, who was a Holyrood Councillor at the time, spearheaded a group to protect and improve North Arm River. His efforts met with some success and there appeared to be a small increase in the number of salmon and fish entering the river.

That effort eventually faded away after Mr Tubrett left council but now there is a group that wants to take a wider view and deal with all of the rivers in the Conception Bay Central area.

They are to be commended,

These rivers, and a number in CBS, have always had a healthy population of salmon and sea trout. Each Spring it is usual to see individuals trying their luck at the mouths of these streams in search of sea trout.

Might I suggest the CBC group expand their horizons and include the rivers in CBS. I am sure they will attract a lot of supporters and workers and with a wider mandate they might find it easier to attract funding from the various levels of Government and private organizations.

That's 30 for now.

Letters to the Editor

Not happy with coverage

Dear Editor,

In response to the comments published in Mr. Morgan's Fact, Fiction, and Contradiction" column on April 25th, 2009 pertaining to Queen Elizabeth Regional High School and the fact The Shoreline is not informed about the 'goings-on' at the school. I would like to begin by acknowledging the service this newspaper provides to our rather large town comprised of many communities each with its own history and accomplishments and of course the myriad of issues and concerns that are brought to the public eye each week via the community paper.

Mr. Morgan has, I think unfairly, compared one high school with another within the same town by comparing the media savvy of one principal ("This gentleman knows how to keep the media informed-he's a pro!") against the apparent shortcomings of another by stating that the Shoreline is not being informed of school events and that's why "accomplishments of children are not often seen in the Shoreline."

On many occasions we have invited representatives from the Shoreline to attend our special functions such as our annual Awards & Scholarship Evening only to have no one show up. The same held true last year when we hosted the Provincial Students Against Drunk Driving Conference. An invite was offered but once again, no one showed up. Mr. Morgan states that "It's not possible for us to cover everything, but with today's technology, you can take a picture yourself, supply the relevant information and pop us off an email."

True, but it is very frustrating to have teachers and other school staff and volunteers compose articles complete with pictures, send them to "The Shoreline" and to hear nothing in response nor to see the articles published. I have several examples of good news stories that were e-mailed in April and May of last year (as Mr. Morgan suggests is the recommended method of delivery) and one that was hand delivered that did not see the light of day in the Shoreline. One article congratulated a Career Education Class for raising \$3600 for the Children's Wish Foundation. Another congratulated our Senior Boys Baseball team for capturing a silver medal. Another congratulated a student for winning Gold at Skills Canada and another for capturing silver. Yet another highlighted the accomplishments of a student for directing a play at the MUN Reid Theatre and yet another congratulated a teacher and her students for collaborating with the College in Seal Cove for providing art work to be hung in the halls of this well known institution (along with five photos from which the newspaper could choose).

Last year a student was awarded the Youth Volunteer of the Year for Conception Bay South and despite the fact that the student was from Queen Elizabeth, was nominated by the school, and the article and the photo prepared by the school, no mention of the school's name appeared in the Shoreline. Last year, one of our students who placed in the Speak Off was incorrectly identified as being a student from Holy Spirit.

Given the lack of support we received for the last number of years, it was painfully obvious that our news stories would not receive the community recognition they deserved so we opted to channel our energies into other means of promoting our school.

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Politics 101

By Alvin Hewlett

On a bright and warm May 5th, I heard Ryan Cleary sign off the afternoon radio call-in show. He indicated that it had been a lively program with the phones lit up like a Christmas tree, but he was surprised that there had been no calls about the European Union's passage of its seal products ban. As I said, it was a beautiful day and the grass on the lawn was turning green. I had been building a fence and planting trees and shrubs. Like thirty million other Canadians, the seal hunt was the furthest thing from my mind. There - I said it. I, who was born on an ice-bound island off the northeast coast of Newfoundland (whose first trip to hospital was by dog sled) was not doing my patriotic duty and pounding my chest about the seal hunt.

The politicians, both federal and provincial, have been saying the right things and going through the motions, but it's all for show. The vote in the European Parliament was not a close thing - the seal products ban passed by an overwhelming majority, despite lobbying from the governments of Norway, Canada and Newfoundland & Labrador. Nobody over there can stop us from hunting seals, but they can prevent us from making any money from a commercial hunt in Europe. Nobody can stop a fisherman on the northeast coast from hunting a few seals for the table, but don't expect to see their skins make a coat for a fashion show in Brussels. Most Europeans, like most North Americans, view the seal hunt as a barbaric anachronism.

On the night of May 5th, the House of Commons held an emergency debate on the European seal products ban. I suppose it's always useful to discuss the open barn door and speculate how long the horse (or the seal) has been gone. In terms of official Ottawa, such a debate is an afterthought, a way of giving a few MPs whose constituents have an interest in the seal hunt a chance to register their objections. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister is off to Prague to discuss a multi-billion dollar free trade deal with the European Union. As a Province, I gather we don't want to be a part of this effort, even though we have other issues of importance on the table, like ship-building, EU shrimp tariffs and ongoing EU overfishing. I think we need to be realistic in our expectations on such matters as the seal hunt. A dispute over the hunt is not going to derail trade talks worth tens of billions to hundreds of millions of people. Sure, we can talk the talk, but this is a matter where it is going to be very difficult, if not impossible, to walk the walk.

The foregoing is hard to accept, because the seal hunt is a part of our history and culture. It was always a ready source of spring cash (and adventure) for fishermen wanting to gear up for a summer's fishing. In its heyday, the hunt was a larger-than-life spectacle, involving dozens of ships and thousands of men. That was then and this is now. The problem with the seal hunt in these days of instant communications comes from the shock value of red blood on white ice. People actually get to witness the killing and the skinning. Most people these days don't get to witness the butchering of the millions of animals that end up on white styrofoam platters in our supermarket coolers. Would business at local Mary Brown's and KFC stores drop off if all the chickens had to be slaughtered and processed in an open field near the Outer Ring Road? In the modern industrialized world, the vast majority of people are totally isolated from the harsh realities involved in putting animal products on our dinner tables, on our feet and on our backs.

Politics is supposed to be the art of the possible, but somehow the seal hunt brings out the politicians anyway. We are never going to win the hearts and minds of North Americans and Europeans on the issue of the seal hunt, but heaven knows we keep passing resolutions and sending delegations. We can't win because this has nothing to do with humane animal husbandry - it is strictly an emotional issue. When the contest is between big-eyed baby seals and the big bad hunters, who do you think wins?

Nevertheless, we should be at the table for the free trade talks with Europe. Luckily for us, shrimp are not cute and we should be there, urging the Government of Canada to bargain constructively for reductions in shrimp tariffs. On the seal hunt, however, we've been fighting a rear-guard action since I was in short pants and we are still losing ground. We live on a small island in a big ocean on a large planet. We would do well to pick the goals and fights that we have a chance of winning. The seal hunt, I fear, is not one of them.

WRITE TO US

Letters to the editor should be brief and to the point. The name, address and phone number of the writer must be included for verification. Because of space limitations. Public interest and good taste, letters may be edited, condensed or rejected. Care is taken not to misinterpret the writer's point. Letters may be published over a nom-de-plume if the writer wishes. Personal attacks or defamatory remarks will not be published.

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