

OUR COMMENT

Last week, in a lengthy editorial, the Charlottetown Guardian upheld its policy of incessantly repeating the names of accused persons in advance of conviction because of the important role that paper plays in upholding the Magna Carta and holding off Star Chamber proceedings in this Province. The Guardian did not explain how its practice of reprinting the court register achieves this marvellous effect in our behalf so we will just have to accept their word for it.

One can't help suspecting that the present policy of the Thompson ownership and its local mandarins were less motivated by lofty principles than by attracting readership to its afternoon Patriot, which first began the practice shortly after Thompson took it over. When the gossipy value of the court column caught on, the Guardian simply repeated it for morning readers. In short, this dubious journalistic practice had nothing to do with principle in the beginning, and the lengthy citation of an irrelevant speech in the editorial did nothing whatever to answer the letter from the Public Defender which brought the issue into the open once again.

There is no argument which will persuade the Guardian to discontinue its present practice, because of the readership the court report admittedly attracts. Principle has nothing whatever to do with it. Hence, rather than try to persuade the Guardian to change we would be better advised to ask for an improvement in its present practice.

For native Islanders, the simple printing of the names and addresses of offenders is information enough. From that sparse information, Islanders generally know the family background, politics, and religion of accused persons, and quite often their trades or occupations. The address may indicate social caste, and from the nature of the charge we may even be able to identify some deviation from previous family ventures into crime. (His father may have been a drunk, but he was never a thief!)

Obviously, the court reporting practices of the Guardian represent a subtle form of discrimination against PFA* which denies them equal access to vital social information, which they need even more than native Islanders. What we propose is that the Guardian also determine the religion, politics, and employment record of accused persons and append this information to the court record in future. While this would mean a certain amount of investigative reporting, this should not prove difficult for Guardian reporters once they get the hang of it and learn their way around the countryside.

This additional information would enable all the public to be sure that the lofty principles of the Magna Carta are truly being followed by law enforcement agencies, and that Liberals, for example, get their turn in court along with Tories and Socialists, and Garden Party representatives. In addition, Islanders can now tell which of our many Churches are most effective in keeping their adherents out of court. How do the PFA's know which of the Churches is the most likely saviour of their good name? They don't, and may make some unfortunate guesses as a result.

Not only are there many, many practical

LETTERS

Dear Editor,

Last Wednesday night, Nov. 9, with midterms being over, there were numerous activities that involved the students of U.P.E.I. and helped them to unwind from the sweating and worries

that existed for a couple of weeks prior.

--The Panthers opened their season with good student support, for throughout the forum there was plenty of noise for sure! Afterward lots of students

applications to our proposal (think of the research possibilities alone!) but it also contains considerations of equity, and both civil and human rights applications. We would urge that the Guardian give it the serious consideration it deserves. Either that, or restrain itself in repeatedly printing in its court reports the names of innocent persons, to the prejudice of their good names and the acute embarrassment of their families, particularly their young children. It is only after conviction that the Guardian knows who is innocent or guilty, which somehow also relates to the Magna Carta, and even the most curious of our local gossips could well be expected to wait until that has been determined before the Guardian can be expected to inform them about the social aberrations of their neighbours.

*Ed.'s note: PFA is the acronym for People From AWAY.

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the upei sun

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participated in the pub at the Barn. Also Wednesday night Holland College held a dance with music provided by the Good Brothers. I know for sure anyone who went down to dance was not disappointed.

That band plays some mighty fine home-grown music! As for other things to do like going to clubs and parties, there were a fair number of them.

--One event that took place Wed. night at the

cont'd on page 5.