

Politics and editorials: each a responsibility

To the editor of The Herald:

To be in public life is to be visibly involved in important issues and therefore in controversy.

Fair enough. After all, the only way to avoid criticism is to do nothing.

Your elected representatives all understand, and accept this as part of their job. As true as it is in general, how much more so it is for members of government who must take positions on all issues, and most of all for the leader of the country.

Debate is welcome and healthy. However, for it to be meaningful and productive, both sides need to feel that their integrity and motives are well regarded. Facts are more

useful than emotional or partisan reactions, while judgments and interpretations are sometimes misleading.

A special responsibility exists for the news media with its power to communicate widely and influence the public. Sometimes the thin line between hard news and editorial comment seems blurred in times such as these. There seems to be a tendency to criticize more than praise. It is widely known as the scapegoat theory. Everyone gets it in turn, business, labour, the professions, governments, even the media itself.

Nor is the leader of the country, our Prime Minister, spared. He is the symbol of all that happens, of all that is good

and bad. He is only one man but he is fair game. His very appearance and statement are critical.

In our parliamentary system the national leader must appear often, in the House of Commons and in the media, and he does. Recently Prime Minister Trudeau appeared on TV for his year-end interview. His two main subjects, national unity, the economy, and how they are related. Public reaction appeared favorable, however some editorial comment was interesting and deserves a reply, even at the risk of being branded an apologist. Let us call it a difference of interpretation.

It is said that the PM "should be a conciliator as well as a leader, must listen as well as

lead". As a hardworking MP my judgement is that our PM spends most of his time listening to Parliament in question period, to provincial premiers, to citizens groups, to caucus, to cabinet ministers, to party leaders, to civil servants, to his own advisers, to the public, to foreign officials, to consultants probably to his wife and children, certainly more openly than a President. He listens well and remembers. He both seeks and offers answers. When all that is done, he does what any leader should do, he makes the best decision he can and goes on to test it out in practice.

Scarcely a bill or action goes through Parliament without hearings that stretch the limited time available, and without modifications and amendments in response to the democratic process. Our system would permit nothing less. However there comes a time to wrap up one piece of business and get on with another.

On national unity, Mr. Trudeau's position has always been clear. No separatism, no two nations, no special status. On that he has the full backing of The Liberal Party. Beyond that, a great deal is negotiable, such as the major changes in financial arrangements con-

cluded with the provinces recently. I saw no mention of that in some editorials. There are many other examples.

Too often it is forgotten that the federal government must take a strong position on behalf of the weaker provinces and regions, while the stronger ones prefer to go their own merry way. Too often it is forgotten that Canadian people move from one province to another and expect the same standards in each, a form of national unity for which the federal government must assume some responsibility.

These too are issues of unity and national importance, and he has taken a clear stand on them as every party leader should. These are reasons why there must be a strong central government. Decentralization and balkanization of this huge country can only serve to weaken it, as some would do either deliberately or unwittingly.

Other key issues he has spelled out consistently for national unity are equal economic opportunity (for both individuals and regions) and bilingualism (so that all Canadians can address their national government in the official language of their choice). None of the opposition parties

oppose their objectives. None seems to have any better alternatives. Surely that is proper leadership.

Some people tend to call arrogance what other people call strength. Some leaders are not called arrogant, neither are they considered strong. Arrogant is a term tossed around loosely these days for either emotional or partisan reasons, even by people who have not checked its meaning in the dictionary. If it is to be applied to people who have strong sincere stand on something, in the face of strong opposition, then it should be applied to many strong-minded people in our society, including editors.

As for debate on important issues, there is as much as time and common-sense allow in one of the federal societies in the world. As for votes and elections, the majority of Canadians do not seem to want them prematurely when they have produced a clear-cut majority government democratically. Let us simply hope that when the next election comes along in due course, all parties and their leaders will have as clear and firm positions on the issues as the Prime Minister is accused of having. As for polls, even people like Premier Williams Davis admit that elections are the only real polls.

For now, the Trudeau government's mandate to govern is clear as of July 8, 1974. For those who would continue raising the issue of wage and price controls in this connection the

answers are clear. The government resisted controls longer than any other party, then brought them in temporarily only in the face of worsening inflation and the reluctance of Canadians to accept voluntary restraints. Controls are now succeeding dramatically with the support of most Canadians and provincial governments. Any other course would have been considered rigid by the same editorial critics. Let that issue be put to rest.

As for the rise of separatism in recent years, the facts should be obvious. It is supported only by a determined minority. The vast majority of Canadians, both of French and English want to keep Canada united. The P.Q. were finally elected only on a mandate of better government, not of sep-

aratism. In a country as big and complex as Canada, regional differences always exist and should not be exploited for partisan or personal reasons. There is no evidence that Canada is any less united than before, in fact the optimists would say more united by its challenges.

Facts are one thing, interpretations another. Dr. Frank A. Philbrook Member of Parliament Halton

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Woman questions decision to hold by-election for post

To Electorate of Halton Hills:

As a citizen of Halton Hills and having participated actively in the past election in an effort to seek a seat on our local council, I believe in our democratic process of municipal government. I believe enough to want to be a part of it—enough to want to contribute to it.

However, my faith has been somewhat shaken in relation to some of the men who are the pillars of our society—the leaders of our community—the law-makers of our town.

I feel I have been discriminated against: perhaps because my qualifications were in doubt; perhaps because I am a woman; perhaps because of my lack of influence with council.

Why must I be forced to enter a second election in less

than four months in an effort to gain a vacant seat on council in Ward 4?

If the answer is: "Our democratic process of government!" Then I definitely agree; however, in this case, I disagree.

Because council did appoint a member of our local council to the regional council without considering any other qualified applicant, I feel that it discriminated directly against me by ignoring my right to gain the vacant Ward 4 chair; I lost by a mere 120 votes.

During the past three years, when a vacant seat has appeared, there has been no doubt in the action taken by council. The person next in line—the runner-up in the last election was appointed. What changed the minds of council this time?

Perhaps in the past council

was wrong; fine, let it now rectify its mistake. However, council should be consistent in its approach and act in a democratic way when considering "both vacancies."

As much as the regional post should be filled immediately, a "stand in" could be used until all the parties interested and qualified for the position were considered, and then the appointment made.

Consequently, council could decide if there were a vacant seat in Ward 4, and then call an election.

I feel that a clearly stated by-law regarding similar situations should be adopted. Would a second election have been called if I had been an influential experienced man?

sincerely
Marilyn Serjeantson

More than wish needed for waste

To the editor of The Herald:

It seems to me that an elected representative should be doing more than wishing for solutions to the garbage or hydro problems. ("Hydro, Garbage solutions on M.P.P.'s list of wishes") ("Town Herald")

I realise it is difficult being heard when an M.P.P. is not a member of the Official Opposition.

The Bradley-Georgetown Hydro Line is a disgusting example of Ontario Toryism. The route was signed, and sealed in May of 1974 by the Davis Cabinet.

The garbage problem, long term (20 years) garbage dumping at Site "F" is utterly unbelievable in this day and age, and wishing for a solution will not change the minds of those who are proposing this environmental disaster. Regardless of hydrogeological tests, which are subject to question (the tests were made by the people recommending

the site) long term landfilling is not in our best interests or in our childrens best interest. Our elected representative should be working towards legislation outlawing garbage sites of over five years duration. He should be telling the people in the area of Site "F" that if and when the bulldozers come, that he will be standing hand in hand with them in opposition. Had I been elected that would have been my stand, and if I am elected in the future that will be my stand. Civil disobedience is a serious matter, but the protection of our heritage calls for extreme measures. This is no election gimmick on my part, my name is high on the list supporting the People or Planes in the Pickering area, and I have stood up and been counted in many communities across this Province. I support the old adage "If wishes were horses, beggars would ride."

William A. Johnson

Issue not stealing kids, but why cults attract them

To the editor of The Herald:

In response to the editorial on deprogramming.

I don't believe that attacking the "moonies" or "hare krishna" is the issue at stake here. I have no association with these groups nor do I wish any but I feel they only represent a problem we have within our own society. These groups are not "hippie" cults but heavily disciplined religious organizations with rigid moral codes

strictly enforced. The issue is not "look at them stealing our children" but rather "why are our children leaving their homes to join these religious groups?" These groups are obviously filling a need for these children that we can't.

What is that need? It would be better for us to ask why the children go than be involved in "stealing" the children back from these groups. After all these children left their homes

and joined these groups of their own free will. Maybe we say these children are being "brainwashed" by these groups because we're afraid. Who is brainwashing ourselves into believing these groups are evil because we're afraid to face the fact that these groups supply an answer to our children that fills needs that we can't fill? I put it to you. You decide.

Bill Clint

Reader election observations

To the Editor of The Herald:

In reference to the Dec. 76 municipal elections:

Since a municipal election of that nature will no doubt be more than a week away, I see no reason for being refused this privilege of a private campaign (via the press) at this time.

While many parents may have similar feelings, may I stress that I am still very capable of functioning on my own, and that this letter was compiled by none other—

Unfortunately, many of these issues should have been brought to light at the meeting just prior to the elections Dec. 76. However, the time element that night was the primary problem, and in retrospect, perhaps this route will reach more people. I should endeavour to stick to the issues and avoid attacking any individual - though my feelings of frustration at this point make it more difficult to compose myself. And since "attack" is the common language which is more easily understood by some, perhaps it should be considered.

We are all aware that involvement means work; there is much less exertion in "drifting with the tide."

There are issues which have never been resolved and never will be while we have people sitting in office who never cease to "pass the buck," or whose favorite phrase is "the budget won't allow it," or "that's not my problem."

Whose problem is it? It is frequently thrown to the parents, who in turn throw it back to the teachers. And while this goes on it may get halfway to Burlington by carrier pigeon— Then someone says, "Who is our Trustee?" And how do we get to talk to him? And when we do, how do we get him to represent us, and then see to it that our needs are met?

I recall at the meeting hearing a Trustee say he had 24-hour telephone service, and

in the next breath stated he had received only 5 calls in the past year. I receive more calls than that in one day (but then I am not on the job, 24 hours a day, and set up my priorities, and get the jobs done according to the greatest needs).

From my experience, after attempting to call the same person repeatedly, without success you re-direct your dialling finger (usually to the next level upward). Which brings me to the next issue - our board office in Burlington whom I tried to contact in late November 76, only to learn our direct line was no longer in service. Now, I can read the writing on the wall and it differs from the reason given for the service being discontinued.

"Don't call me, I'll call you; Thou shalt not disturb the comfortable few."

I wonder what tactics one must employ to engineer this inconvenience? It certainly would require time and effort. Just think, with all that time and effort on our hands, our bus problems could all be solved? If there have been no further complaints regarding the buses, then I say the mission was accomplished - the buck was passed with "it all takes time, your concern is being considered and we'll get back to you," and of course, "the budget!" (The taxes have been collected, long live the budget!!!) All perfect alibis to turn-off most people. I, for one, am still waiting for that call.

As the wife said to the husband when he lost his blankets on a chilly winter's night, "Fear not, the comforter cometh."

I'm afraid there are few parents and children who have had any comfort from the absurd bus service, much less some words of comfort from the people who are responsible for the service. However, I will share one remark made by a knowledgeable individual, "they stand on city buses, why not on school buses." A good relationship with a parent does not begin, nor grow, with a

flippant remark like that. And it is common knowledge that a good relationship with parents is vital.

We're not interested in casual remarks, lack of concern for our children, disregard for our needs. We are looking for someone who places value on our needs, gets the job done, and takes credit for it only when it is done. Many people have worked very hard to improve situations, and certainly it was an insult to the generous and dedicated group who did a fine job, only to hear someone else take the credit for it.

We do have a problem and in the final analysis, feel free to lay blame wherever you choose. If it's to the parents, I (the parent) plead ignorance. We go to school for every other profession and we must always provide proof of our qualifications before anyone will hire us. But the most profound profession - the parents, upon whose shoulders rests society - nobody even asks us to recite the A.B.C.

Somewhere, somewhere, must surely be saying, "Oh, I forgot."

A. Frazer

Group hopes council listens

To the editor of The Herald:

So the preliminary report is in on the suitability of Site F as a garbage dump. Isn't it strange - the result is exactly what I predicted it would be two months ago. Now the group that is pushing this dump has some real information to use. Of course it's too bad that the members of Regional Council have no such information on any of the other possible sites, which would permit them to make an intelligent, informed decision.

So now we know that Site F is suitable, cheap to use and accessible. So very accessible, with good roads into it, and a busy railway line along one side. Why, garbage could be brought in from anywhere, by rail, upon payment of a suitable fee. No wonder the consulting firm, from Toronto, could expect only "minimal nuisances" from the use of the site. It's a public works department's dream. Unfortunately, a dream such as this would soon become a 2,500-acre nightmare.

Mr. Rafits rightly states that Council must make some hard decisions soon on long-term plans for garbage disposal. Those decisions must be based on facts. All available facts, on all available methods of garbage disposal. Our group is working very hard to supply as much information as we can to members of Council, to augment the single line of facts provided by the group pushing Site F. We hope they are listening.


Eleanor Hadfield

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CALCULATING DROP OFF
The skills of calculation by Halton students drop off quickly when they use electronic calculators, says trustee Bill Priestner.
Calling for a report on the regulation of their use in schools Mr. Priestner said the devices are used in various classes and not just in math classes. It has been two years since the board threw out teaching by rote, he said.
And he added: "If the batteries wear out, we're in trouble."

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