

Halton Hills Outlook

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877-2202 877-2201
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Their Outlook

Need for justice - not softness or toughness

Attorney General Ian Scott, in his speech to the Criminal Justice Congress here, is just the latest to lament that we make things too tough for criminals in this country.

Yet, he doesn't really appear to understand why that sentiment exists. Scott suggested that: "Those who have studied the system... have all come to the general conclusion that we need to send fewer people to jail for shorter periods of time, rather than more people to jail for longer periods of time."

What about impaired drivers? Getting "tougher" on them, a Scott promise, is usually taken to mean giving them jail terms.

Scott also pointed out that when Parliament officially abolished capital punishment, it simultaneously introduced the mandatory 25-year prison sentence with the result that "convicted murderers are now spending considerably more time in jail than they were prior to 1976."

He then asked: "What is the justification for such extended jail terms? His clear implication is that they are far too long."

And he's right. Mandatory 25-year sentences were a sop a guilt-ridden Parliament gave to the public in exchange for allowing all murderers to achieve what their victims never could - a natural death.

Most Canadians want to see justice done when it comes to criminal acts. They believe the penalty should fit the crime.

Thus, the average citizen would be willing to return to the law as it existed prior to 1974, when a murderer could become eligible for parole in as early as 10 years - or, he could hang.

The abolition of capital punishment sent a message that no crime is too heinous to deserve death, that a Clifford Olson's life has intrinsic merit that must be protected regardless of social, psychic or monetary cost.

To force that view upon a disbelieving public, as the abolitionist establishment (of which Scott is a charter member) did, is to cast doubt upon the idea that the system as a whole is dedicated to justice.

One doesn't get a sense from Scott or other reformers that they believe punishment should reflect the crime, or even that punishment (as opposed to rehabilitation, for example) is the first concern of criminal justice system.

If the only reason for imprisoning someone is to make society "safe", then some murderers probably shouldn't go to jail at all - they were only dangerous to the one person they killed (many husband-wife murders are that way). And some thieves should never be released.

This is what Scott misses. What people want isn't "softness" or "toughness." They want justice.



Queen's Park

By Derek Nelson

This is because the "public vastly overestimates the amount of criminal activity in Canada and significantly underestimates the response of the criminal justice system to that activity."

They do so, in part, because the media "emphasizes violent crime and focuses on the leniency of sentences handed down by the courts."

The result is Canadians think it is too lenient when it is, in fact, too harsh.

He gave two specific examples, both of which illustrate why people in general are skeptical of the thrust of justice system reformers like Scott.

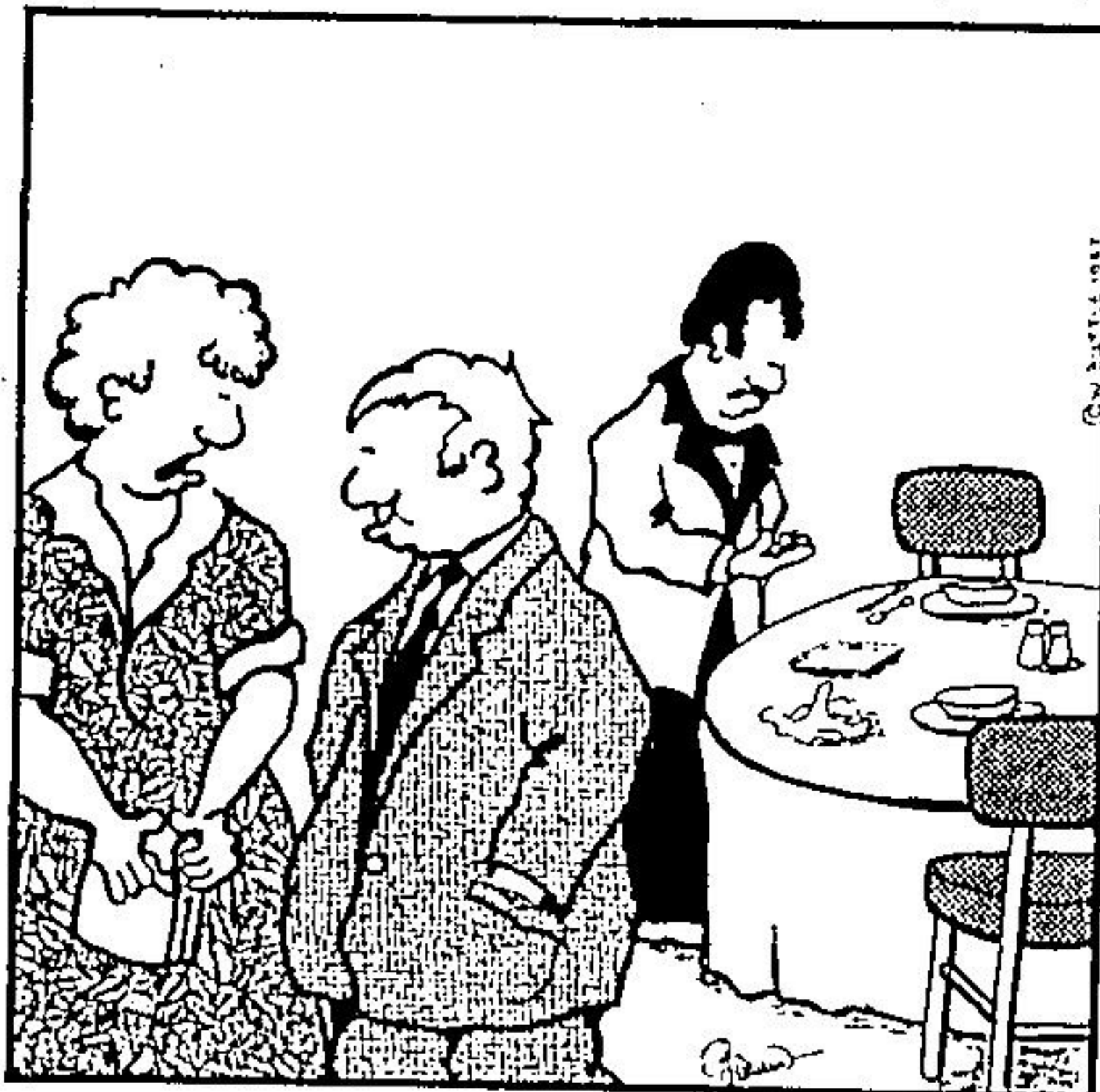
"If Canadians were made aware of the fact that well over 90 per cent of criminal offences do not involve violence or the threat of violence, I believe that public support for greater use of incarceration would, in all likelihood, decline," he said.

As usual when that figure is trotted out, however, he gave no examples of where incarceration is used too much.

Should white collar criminals, for example, always be able to avoid jail? (It is my impression that many of the people calling for leniency for break and enter artists insist on heavy penalties for white collar crime)

Two's a Crowd

By BILL BUTTLE



'I don't think he was offering to get rid of your gum wrapper!'
Piling across border for duty-free goods

Just think With free trade, you can drive down to the United States some weekend, pick up a cheap, rust-free used car, pile it up with duty-free American clothing, stereo or computer equipment and drive home again - without getting hassled at the border.

This freedom will come gradually. Canada's ban on used cars will be phased out over five years. Duties on clothing will be phased out over 10 years. Duties on computers, furs and whiskey will be wiped out in January, 1989.



Your Business

By DIANNE MALEY
 Business Analyst

The looser laws point to a part of trade deal that we should look at more carefully. Under free trade, we will pay less for American-made goods.

This is significant. Each time the Government protects businesses from international competition, we pay more. Yet competition improves the goods we buy and helps keep prices in line.

That's why Japanese cars now make up about a quarter of the North American market even though they are no longer cheap. Japanese automakers try to give us the good-quality cars we want.

The crisis in the auto industry drove home what a double-edged sword competition can be. Cars from the Far East were cheaper and better than our own. So we bought them, and thousands of people were laid off in North America.

Now North American cars are better. Employment is growing, although not in the auto industry. People lost jobs in one industry and found new ones in another.

Which would you prefer, jobs or lower prices? That's what the opponents of free trade are asking.

This is not the question. Most of us have lost a job at one time or another. Yet we are working today.

Prime Minister Brian Mulroney has promised cash settlements and retraining for people who are laid off because of free trade. With the co-operation of government and industry, we can make the transition.

The prospect of lower prices for American goods is important because we make so few of the products we use in Canada. The same is true of the food we eat. We can't grow oranges, bananas or pineapples in Canada, yet we like to eat them year round.

When we shop in the United States, our Canadian dollar is only worth about 78 cents. Even with this big currency difference, many things are cheaper south of the border. The trick is to get them across without paying duty, a problem that has made smugglers of thousands of otherwise law-abiding citizens.

If the goods you are bringing in are over your allowable duty-free limit, you could be hit with tariffs of up to 25 per cent.

With free trade, you won't have to cross the border to take advantage of lower prices. Fruit, wine and other foodstuffs will be on the shelves at your local grocery or liquor store at new, low prices.

Many of these will be products that were not sold in Canada before because the price, after adding tariffs, would have been too high. Ontario, for example, marks up foreign wine prices as much as 66 per cent. Under free trade, this will change.

But not all the cost-savings will find their way to consumers. With tariffs gone, the sellers may see an opportunity to mark up their prices and fatten their profit margins. This will happen where they have no competition, or where Canadian goods are more expensive.

Which leads us to another effect of free trade. The inflow of low-priced American goods will put pressure on Canadian companies to lower their prices. This will depress profit margins in Canada, at least until Canadians become more efficient.

Against the odds PAT WOODE

Last spring Sheridan College formed a Committee that would give suggestions regarding a questionnaire to be circulated to disabled persons within the regions of Halton and Peel.

Two local residents, Andrew Tutty of Georgetown and Ken Chappel of Acton, sat on that committee as representatives of the Physically Handicapped Citizens Affiliation. With the combined efforts of this group and the co-operation of those who completed the questionnaire, sufficient need was determined to introduce a new program this fall that is designed for physically disabled adults who are capable of employment.

"Breaking Barriers," has been set up to assist one to explore career options, determine appropriate education and employment plans and prepare for entry into a training program or employment. Career explorations includes academic testing, interest testing, confidence building, setting career goals, adapting to the educational and employment setting and job search techniques. Keyboarding, as well as, math and English are geared to individual levels.

The participants will be physically disabled adults who are in receipt of social assistance. All applicants must have an interview, be able to provide their own personal care, be able to cope with a full time three-month program and be motivated to seek further education and/or employment. All fees are paid and course materials and supplies provided for eligible participants.

This 12-week course begins on Monday, Nov. 16 and will run Monday to Friday 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Queen Elizabeth Campus, Oakville or Brampton Campus at McLaughlin and Steeles. For further details or an application form, call 845-9430 or 823-9730 extension 151. A certificate is issued on completion of the course.

On Oct. 21 at the Halton Hills Library Board will be holding a regular board meeting at the Georgetown Library and Cultural Centre. One of the main items on the agenda will be a presentation by the consultants who are studying the issue of providing access to the Acton Library for handicapped residents. Any wishing to attend, should contact the library at 877-2681.

Correction: Last weeks column regarding Assistive Devices program indicated that "medical glasses" would be covered. "Glasses" should have been "gasses".

Youth campaign

Dear Sir:

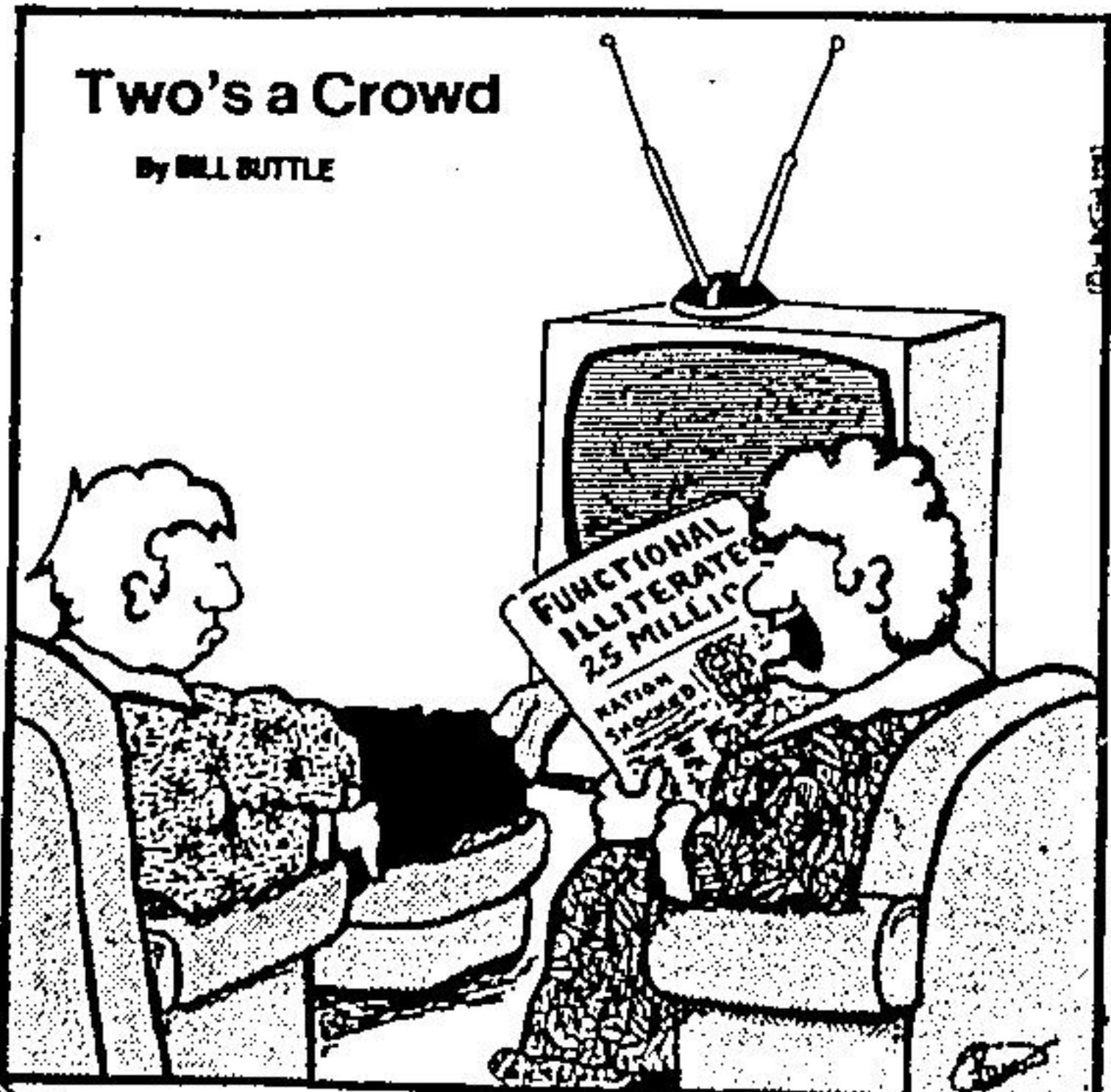
We are writing to you to ask for your help in publicizing our 1987 recruitment campaign.

Canada World Youth offers 17 to 20 year old Canadians the chance to learn about development in a cross cultural programme through voluntary work projects in communities in Canada and in a developing nation in Africa, Asia or Latin America.

All costs of the programme are covered by Canada World Youth, as an attempt to make this programme available to all young people. This year, we will be selecting about 125 participants from Ontario.

Yours sincerely,
 Carole Belgiojoso

Programme Officer
 Ontario Regional Office
 (416) 922-0776



'You've got some catching up to do... all these guys are at least functional!'