

Editorial

Help needed

Halton Hills trustee Arlene Bruce is trying to sound an alarm.

School-age children face difficult problems in today's society and the result is that almost one student in five has significant psychological and social problems, she says.

Ms. Bruce is in favor of a proposal being considered before the Halton Board of Education which could bring qualified social workers into the elementary schools.

At least seven children in Halton's schools have attempted suicide, she says.

The problems stem from society's refusal to acknowledge that there are some serious problems, according to Ms. Bruce. Several years ago, a child mental health study was turned down by the board of education because many people thought the facts had been exaggerated.

We hope today's trustees are more in touch with children attending Halton's schools.

Putting social workers in Halton's schools would help discover and fight the feeling of children's isolation before it manifests itself in antagonistic behavior, she says.

Anything that helps children cope with the pressure of today's changing society, which includes more serious problems at home than ever, is welcomed.

The Halton Board of Education has been chastised recently for increasing budgets.

The move to put social workers in schools would be money well spent.

Heavy hands

Brian MacLeod
Editor's Notebook



I write these words with heavy hands. It's shortly after noon Monday and I have just arrived from the depth of my apartment after having groaned my way through the second half of the soccer match between my native land Scotland, and some tiny strip of land in Central America named Costa Rica. As most of you might have realized by now, the heavily-favored Scots lost 1-0.

That's why there's no hooliganism in Scottish soccer, you know. Most of the hooligans are still sitting in front of their television sets simply repeating to themselves, "What? What? What... over and over again."

The television announcer said the defeat would be treated as a death in the family, back in Scotland.

My own laments don't carry quite that far.

No matter about Costa Rica, bring on Brazil. Just give the Scots a little time first. Like another four years.

The Meech Lake accord. Wasn't that a thrilling week? (please detect the sarcasm).

The most amusing moment I had during the entire week was when I

picked up a Toronto daily newspaper, flipped through it and stopped at the editorial cartoon. A man depicted in stark surroundings stood staring at his television set crying out, "Make a @#%& decision."

Cutting through all the egos and attempts to save face must have been the hardest part. Brian Mulroney, Ontario Premier David Peterson and Newfoundland Premier Clyde Wells are being hailed as heroes in the newspaper.

Heroes? Hardly.

They're the ones who got us into this mess in the first place. I don't know why there was such a rush to get Quebec into the constitution. They showed us what they think of it when they invoked the "notwithstanding" clause to make sure English Quebecers feel they are in a foreign land.

Are you one of those people who lay down a few bucks every week to take your chances on a lottery?

In Ontario, gamblers bet over \$1 billion last year, bringing in a profit of \$484 million.

Since it was formed 14 years ago, the Ontario Lottery Corporation has brought in \$3.5 billion in profits.

Cash prizes were given away to the tune of \$608 million last year. (Anyone out there know someone who won a good-sized chunk of this?)

The money raised went towards the promotion and development of physical fitness, sports, cultural and recreational activities, and province-wide social service agencies. A bill passed in 1989 allows the use of profits for hospitals, and plans are in the works to allow lottery profits to be used for protection of the environment.

Why can't NDP do better?

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TORONTO - Why can't Ontario New Democrats do better?

The party is the official opposition, which gives it a higher profile than the third-place Conservatives.

Leader Bob Rae is well known, unlike new Tory leader Mike Harris. The NDP isn't sunk in debt like the PCs.

It also claims credit for all the wonderful things the Liberal government has brought us in the past five years because, after all, it propelled the Grits into power in the first place by supporting the Liberals after the 1985 election instead of the then long-ruling Tories.

Yet, it continues to stagger along virtually neck-and-neck with the PCs, the two of them tied as a distant second to Premier David Peterson's dominant Liberals.

And yet the NDP is, in its own

eyes, the only legitimate voice of the people, the others being mere shells for horrid capitalism.

So why can't it sell better? Why is it a real possibility the party might be relegated to third place in the provincial election expected later this summer?

There are two obvious explanations.

COLD

One centres on Rae himself. In the era of personality politics, he projects a television image that is cold, youthful, professional - that totally lacks the kind of warm attractiveness that Ontario premiers have traditionally shown. He looks like the guy you'd want teaching your children at school, not running the province.

Some people put distance from the Ontario culture to having been mainly raised outside its boundaries. Perhaps. The obvious contrast is between Rae and his former leadership opponent, Richard Johnston, who has, in spades, whatever this peculiar "Ontarioism" quality may be. Johnston, who retires in August, grew up here.

But there is a second theory, which a news colleague (Wayne Roberts of the leftist NOW magazine) has somewhat made his own.

Its adherents snarl at the NDP for the party's attempt to be all things to all men, to campaign from the so-called political centre,

to try during election campaigns to make self-interest and pork-barrel politics ("cheap auto insurance") replace the great dreams of the classless society, to refuse (for a while) to call itself the socialist party that it would be if it were really standing for principle.

There is some truth to that criticism. The NDP (like the PCs for that matter), rarely sounds much different from the Liberal government. They all start from the same premises favoring Big Government and egalitarian legislation, and orient their political lives around the agenda of the 15-second television clip. They let the media set the agenda.

But is isn't totally fair. Take this excerpt from a speech by Rae:

"Politics is above all about two things: values and power. We must define our values ... and do all we can to move others to share them with us."

"Politics is not just about the power of governments. It is about all power relationships at work in society, and how those relationships are imposed and justified..."

MEDDLING

This is an agenda for meddling with people's lives on a grand scale, of attempting to make people "share" NDP values even if those values are absurd - like the NDP's re-definition of the "family" to include homosexual and unmarried heterosexual liaisons, for instance.



Simplifying tax is complex

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OTTAWA - "Simplicity is the operative word with GST administration and I will continue to work closely with the business community, particularly small business, to further simplify the GST wherever possible," Revenue Minister Otto Jelinek.

"There's nothing more complex than tax simplification," John Bulloch, president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

Take your pick of which of the above remarks scores higher on the credibility scale. Normally, I'd choose Bulloch's observation.

One only need recall, for instance, what happened with last year's reform of personal income taxes. Growing numbers of taxpayers are throwing up their hands and turning to outside help during the painful annual exercise.

come up with some tax collection and remission alternatives that will truly ease the burden on small business? Most experts believe the new so-called "quick method" for smaller firms, based on total sales during filing periods rather than on individual transactions, will help.

This doesn't mean small business is falling to its knees in gratitude. Bulloch's federation says the change is only a partial victory.

PREFERS ONE TAX

Notably, one of the CFIB's biggest problems with the proposed goods and services tax (GST) remains. With the exception of Alberta, separate federal and provincial sales taxes will still have to be applied. That complicates life for small business, which prefers one unified tax.

Jelinek's "simplicity" statement came as he slipped the wraps off his plan to ease the anticipated hardships for small business.

Along with his announcement, the minister gave an example of the workings of the quick method.

In the case provided - a hardware store with three-month sales of \$40,000, GST included - the tax owed by the business on sales averages three per cent, or \$1,200. But the example says the store would receive a credit of seven-per-cent GST paid on such purchases as a \$3,000 computer. This \$210 in GST paid by the owner can

be subtracted from tax owed for a net payment of \$990.

Using the "regular" method, still an option for those who prefer it, the owner would have to keep track of each transaction for the taxman. Although the total tax of \$990 is the same, owners would have much more paperwork to handle.

Some small-business proprietors say they faced the prospect, with the regular system, of paying out thousands of dollars each year to ensure their books are properly kept and audited.

Even though small businesses will likely benefit from the quick method and streamlined accounting, skeptical representatives suggest Jelinek was doing himself a giant favor rather than adjusting to needs of the private sector.

"Our information is that Revenue Canada can't cope with the previous system," says Catherine Swift, vice-president of research for the CFIB. "He's solving his own administrative problem."

Initially, the government announced it would need 4,000 new bureaucrats to handle the mind-boggling paperwork of the new GST. The CFIB feels the number of administrators was grossly underestimated, and the real figure was close to 10,000 employees.

"We think this may keep the number to 6,000," Swift said in an interview.