

## Opinion

# NDP government fails on incineration promise

For a government that espouses public accountability, Ontario's New Democratic Party (NDP) has failed, at least in the area of municipal garbage incineration.

Local environmental group Incineration Counteracts the Environment (ICE) showed this to be true after making repeated requests that the government state its position on the incineration issue.

During the election campaign the NDP stated emphatically it would ban municipal garbage incineration if elected. The government's now been in power for almost six months and incineration is permitted by the government.

The only condition is that an incineration plant can only be operated if approved under the

province's Environmental Assessment Act. In other words the government's stand on the issue is no different than that of the previous government.

In a letter signed by Premier Bob Rae and sent to ICE member Elsie Anderson in November, the government states it supports incineration as long as it is in the public interest. In another letter signed by Bob Rae and sent to an Orillia woman earlier this month, the Premier again states incineration is a viable option for municipal garbage.

Following the letter, Mr. Rae issued a public apology saying the original letter was sent out by mistake. In the second letter, the Premier writes "the correspondence you received was



**Ben's Banter**  
by Ben Dummett

drafted within the civil service by someone not sufficiently aware of our government's approach ... Through a series of oversights it was not seen by me or others in my office who would have caught the error and was sent out after

being signed by an auto pen machine."

According to Mr. Rae the letter should have indicated the government is still studying the viability of municipal garbage incineration.

How can the public take the apology seriously when the letter to Ms. Anderson states the government supported incineration? Why wasn't a similar apology issued at that time?

A Policy Director with the Premier's office, Chuck Rachliss, defends the government's inconsistency by saying while the NDP has taken no stance on incineration it will permit the practice until it has developed a policy. Asked why the government opposed in-

cineration before the election and then following the election told Ms. Anderson it will permit it, Mr. Rachliss said the switch results from not having as much information on incineration as it has now. The NDP only had one staff member working on environmental research before the election whereas now it has a ministry, he explained.

If that's true, the NDP shouldn't have committed itself to one position during the campaign. It's likely the NDP knew then that one person could never have the time to acquire the information a ministry could.

The NDP's indecisiveness shows the government to be either unprincipled or incredibly naive. Neither of which instills confidence.

# Mending Canada is a fast-growing industry

OTTAWA - It's never easy to admit failing to grasp the significance of a problem that everyone but you regards as obvious. And the longer the admission is delayed, the more difficult it becomes.

So, considering what we've gone through in the last, say, 30 years, it must seem absolutely ludicrous for anyone - in this case, me - to confess I don't know what's wrong with Canada.

I must stand alone in the confessional box. It's been years since I've heard anyone say there's nothing wrong with this country. There's scarcely been a day go by in the last 30 years in which we haven't heard or read another interpretation of what's needed in the way of a fix.

Now things have reached the point where mending Canada has become the fastest growing industry since the discovery of multiculturalism. There are so many commissions, task forces and study groups criss-crossing the country - ostensibly to listen to those elusive "average Cana-

dians" - that meeting halls have to be booked weeks in advance.

All the political leaders - and those who, for mysterious reasons, aspire to these high offices - are getting into the act, beginning with Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. So are the provincial premiers.

And what everyone seems to agree on is that Canada is in need of a fix. The present Canada, we're told ad nauseam, isn't working.

### MANY IDEAS

What Mr. Mulroney proposes is a renewed confederation, to replace the one that isn't working. But, again, we're left short on details.

What Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa seems to propose is a sort of sovereign Quebec within a Canadian framework - a framework that currently isn't working. What Parti Quebecois Leader Jacques Parizeau seems to suggest is a sovereign Quebec outside the troubled Canadian framework, but with some Canadian conveniences.

**Ottawa Bureau**  
by Stewart MacLeod  
Thomson News Service



The country must be more diversified, argue some. We must eliminate duplication, argue others. And as for which provinces are net losers or winners in economic or fiscal terms, well, there are statistics to support every view.

In one way or another, every argument seems to reinforce the premise that Canada doesn't work. This was clearly acknowledged by the prime minister when he talked of a

"new Canada emerging from the darkness of doubt and dismay of lost opportunity."

It's not necessary to go on quoting our current leaders to establish the fact that, in conventional wisdom, the country is in trouble. In other words, Canada doesn't work. If it did, we wouldn't have everyone tripping over each other to suggest improvements.

This is where I would like to back up a few decades and start over again. Someone has to explain slowly, and precisely, just why Canada doesn't work.

### SEEMS OKAY

Had I not spent the last 30 years being convinced the country is breaking down, falling apart or whatever, I would be hard pressed to explain what's wrong with the place.

In fact, if it wasn't for the embarrassment of having to ask at this late date, I would be begging for explanations right now. And I don't mean those worn-out clichés about "greater

autonomy" or "modernized confederation," "masters of our own destiny," or all those nonsense words about provinces, states, nations, principalities or, the latest, "parties" to a country.

Governments, particularly in Quebec, talk about the need for wider jurisdiction to preserve their culture. But, I've yet to hear one example of present jurisdictions interfering with any cultural, or even practical, initiative.

In fact, when is the last time you heard of any wished-for initiative, either federal or provincial, being hijacked by the Constitution. For that matter, when did you last hear of any Canadian being inhibited from doing anything because of nationality.

We live in one of the most open, most prosperous countries on the face of the earth - three-quarters of the world's population would give anything to live here - and yet, apparently, it doesn't work.

Before it's too late, I wish someone would tell me why.

# Mainstream Christian clergy morally bankrupt

How predictable that one of the most verbal groups against a war with Iraq is the mainstream Christian clergy of North America.

Or, more accurately, its politicized leadership.

And how illustrative of its moral bankruptcy.

The Canadian Council of Churches is on record against using war to expel Iraqi troops from Kuwait.

Archbishop Daniel Pilarczyk, the president of the U.S. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, said it would "violate moral principles."

The 32 heads of the U.S. National Council of Churches declared military action is "out of proportion to any possible gain."

Some mainstream church leaders, such as Canadian Anglican Primate Michael Peers, have gone so far as to declare any such war "unjust."

This conclusion is more than technical rhetoric, since a war must be "just" in order for a Christian to support it.

### CRITERIA

Toronto's Rev. A.J. Macdougall, in a column agonizing over war in the gulf, listed the criteria for a just war as: "that it be undertaken only as a last resort; must have legitimate authority to declare it; be motivated by the right intention, and be proportionate to the announced objective."

Clearly, much of North America's religious leadership believes the Gulf War fails that test. (It is thus hard to see how

they could find any war "just.")

It also brings into sharper focus a recent letter from 31 Protestant signatories to Charter 77, that banner of freedom for Czechoslovakia's intellectual and religious dissidents in the years of Communist rule. They addressed their letter to the "Protestants of the United States," but it could apply just as well in Canada.

Accepting as understandable the qualms of the church establishment about war, they then asked: "Do (you) fear with the same intensity that the aggressor could retain a part of his spoils and of his imperial prestige, and start a war that would be much worse...?"

They then noted the history of the World Council of Churches (WCC), to which most mainstream denominations belong.

"For ... years, evidence of Communist crimes in the socialist states ... has been accumulating. The representatives of your churches, however, remained indifferent to this evidence.

"Your church representatives have underestimated the criminal nature of the Marxist regimes. Now they underestimate the criminal nature of the regime of (Iraqi President) Saddam Hussein.

"They defend peace in their speeches, but in reality they help prepare a terrible war in the same way as Chamberlain and Daladier prepared (at Munich for war) in 1938 in the foolish belief

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by Derek Nelson  
Thomson News Service



they were saving peace." The despair of the Czechoslovaks, who paid the price for 1938's appeasement, is a cry from the heart.

The U.S. magazine National Review brought it to the intellectual level in a recent editorial.

### IRRELEVANCE

"For five months, Americans debated the rights and wrongs of military action. Among the remarkable aspects of the debate was the almost complete irrelevance of our institutions of putative moral leadership.

"This is not to say the churches were silent. Far from it. But in their eagerness to be relevant to policy, where they have neither authority nor competence, the churches made themselves irrelevant in moral deliberation."

A minister from the Maritimes, the Rev. Paul Brown, recently explained the results of this propensity by "clergy bureaucrats" for "naive, knee-jerk closet pacifism" and other "leftist rhetoric."

They substitute "a socio-political agenda for the Gospel,

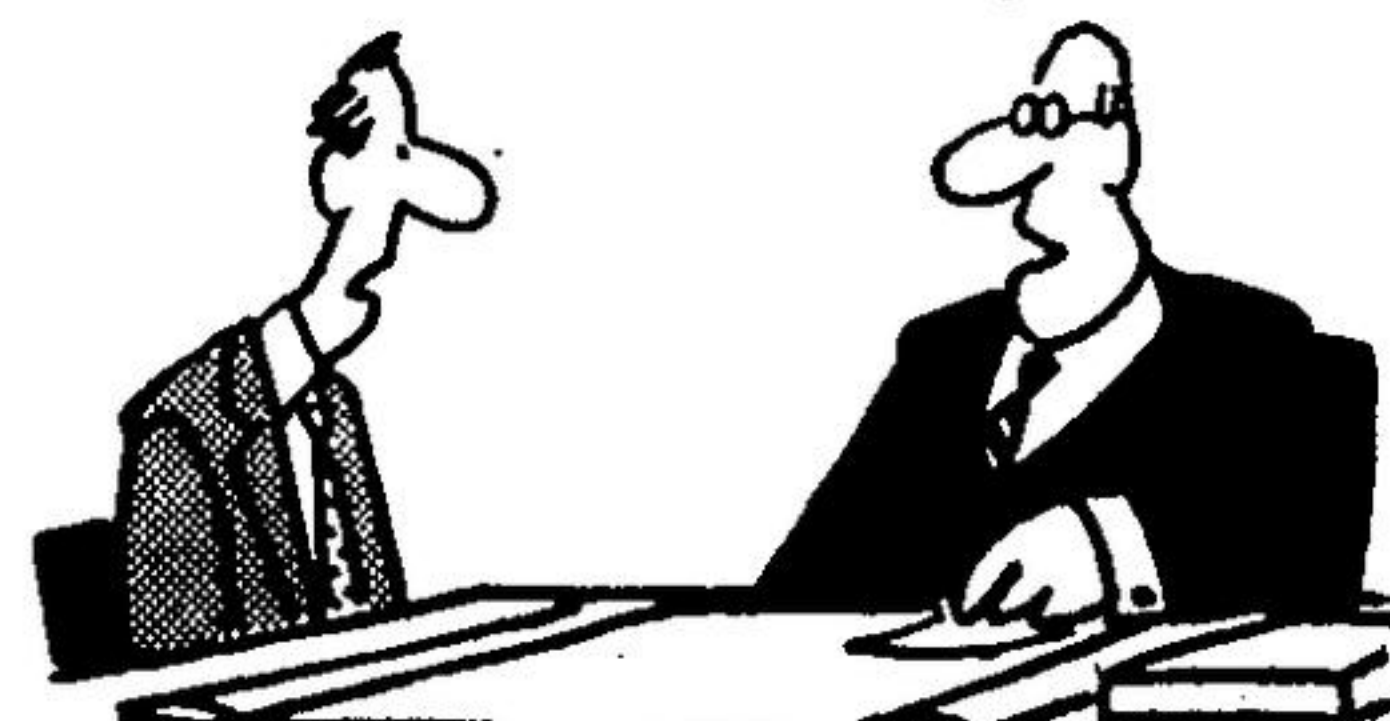
which has socio-political implications, and they spend most of their time promoting their narrow, simplistic views in the name

of others - clergy and laity alike - who have a more balanced faith." Verily.

## Berry's World

ARE YOU TELLING ME I'M FIRED?

I SAID WE ARE OFFERING YOU A CAREER-CHANGE OPPORTUNITY.



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