

# Our society is a prisoner of empty promises

In a recent newsletter, Walter McLean - the MP for Waterloo and one of the few MPs who seem to have the use of his mind - refers to a survey conducted by the University of Lethbridge which suggests that people have lost faith in our institutions.

According to this survey people have not only lost faith in the key institutions of our society - religious, educational and governmental - they are positively outraged about some of them. The findings of the University of Lethbridge are hardly surprising: the scepticism of the public versus the institutions is almost touchable in everyday life.

The question to be answered is why have our institutions fallen into disrepute and what can be done to remedy the situation. I would like to look at a non-political reason for the credibility crisis we are in.

Basically we have lost faith in our institutions because they are no longer capable of delivering and they raise unfulfillable expectations.

One example. Government has provided all kinds of programs to protect and support the needy. The idea is good, the results tragically wrong.

Take a 20-year-old, single mother. In the name of human rights, individual freedom, the girl has been encouraged to have her child, to have her own place. Welfare provides her with some, not much, money.

The trouble is that a young, jobless lady who had a child is basically an irresponsible person. Often an abused one. And to put it simply not one of the brightest.

Instead of helping her to avoid the situation she is in (once the role of the family and church) she



**Another View**  
by  
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was "encouraged" to leave her family and given some money for shelter and food by a thoughtful government. She lost the support of her family, and struck-out on her own.

She had a job, which she lost - no fault of hers. A part time job she was offered she declined because the money was less than

what she gets from welfare. She is in arrears with her rent, but thanks to government protection she is not forced to leave. Her landlady becomes her unwilling supporter. The government keeps her there, the bill is paid by somebody else!

The sting comes in the tail. She is basically a good, if not too bright girl. Some people would like to help her with a, badly paid job and some very inexpensive accommodation. You know what? They have been told to keep away from the girl as, once she becomes their tenant, they will have no way of controlling the use of the premises and even to collect the nominal rent, should she choose to default.

Conclusion? A basically good person has been, in the name of all kind of "rights", been destroyed. Her youth will be spent in near poverty, her adult

life? Probaby in menial jobs, abuse by some jock, possibly drugs. She was not educated, she did not receive a simple, clear set of values. We failed her. Worse, we basically encouraged her in her way to self-destruction.

The above is just one of a thousand examples. By concentrating on the "rights" of the individual and ignoring the "duties" we have created a world in which whims become essential needs, escape from reality encouraged and even rewarded.

Naturally, the many programs we have in place fail to deliver the happiness they promise and both users and onlookers become disenchanted. We have become a society prisoner of many empty promises, with no values.

Not surprisingly, we are not happy with our institutions, that is, we are not happy with ourselves.

## Political Forum Ottawa Report

# Turner defends operation of Canada Post

A set of mail boxes in Alton may be installed in the wrong place, and my office gets a barrage of phone calls.

A long-time rural route contractor in Terra Cotta does not win his tender from Canada Post, and my office receives a long petition while I take several angry phone calls.

Hours of operation at several small post offices are changed to allow a lunch-time break, and the results of a public mail-in campaign pour onto my desk in Ottawa.

Canada Post starts packaging stamps in colorful booklets, and I get letters decrying "government waste".

In just about all of these cases, people have come to me - as the Member of Parliament - because they want me to do something. They want me to interfere in the decisions and operations of the post office. Some of them believe that an MP has influence over Canada Post - like in the old days,

when the outfit was losing over \$500 million a year.

Others think by applying pressure on me, that I will in turn put the squeeze on some postal official. And there are several special interest groups around who tell people that only by bugging and cajoling MPs will Canada Post stop doing things like replacing some post offices with retail postal outlets.

Well, this column is a response to these people. The post office is a free-standing crown corporation that operates as an independent business and no more answers to individual Members of Parliament than does Petro-Canada or Canadian National.

And it is also my personal belief that it's inappropriate meddling for an MP - or any other elected official - to try to influence the inner business workings of that corporation. Is it right, for example, for me to tell Canada Post how to tender a con-



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tract? Or to whom?

I don't think so. The post office didn't turn into an efficient operation that helps pay down the deficit with its profits by doing political favors for elected officials.

But while it is not my role to interfere, it is very much my job to make sure Canada Post knows -

and responds to - community sentiment. That's why I arranged for postal officials to meet people in Alton. It's why I am now making sure the many voices from Terra Cotta are being heard at postal headquarters in Ottawa.

And it's why I've spelled out exactly what I expect out of this corporation:

- Move the mail efficiently.
- Don't lessen any existing levels of service.
- Treat people fairly.
- Respond to public sentiment.
- Don't be a burden on the taxpayers.

For the most part, those conditions are being met. There have been a few lapses, such as the loss of postal service in Limehouse. And I have had to send some steamy letters on the behalf of postal users.

But, frankly, Canada Post is a far better institution than the old post office used to be. It no longer costs taxpayers money to run, and it's hatched a new line of pro-

ducts and services.

Still, things could be better.

The report on Canada Post produced by the Parliamentary committee I chaired recommended two major changes. First, Canada Post - like Air Canada and Petro-Canada - should be privatized by selling shares to its employees and individual Canadian investors.

Second, Canada Post should be regulated by a watchdog agency with the power to order the corporation around. That would give individuals, communities and groups an opportunity to appeal Canada Post decisions. Right now, there is no real accountability - and I think that can lead to abuse or, perhaps, insensitivity to local needs and concerns.

The government did not accept these recommendations - at least, not yet. I will keep on bringing them up.

The system's a lot better than it used to be. But, like you, and me, it is not perfect. Well, at least me.

## Queen's Park Report

# Health care spending by NDP being scrutinized

Last week I was telling you about some of the activities undertaken during the past legislative session and I would like to mention a few more of them to you in this report.

Recognizing the massive amount of provincial dollars spent on health care, our government has been looking for ways to reduce those costs without sacrificing the quality of service that we deserve and expect.

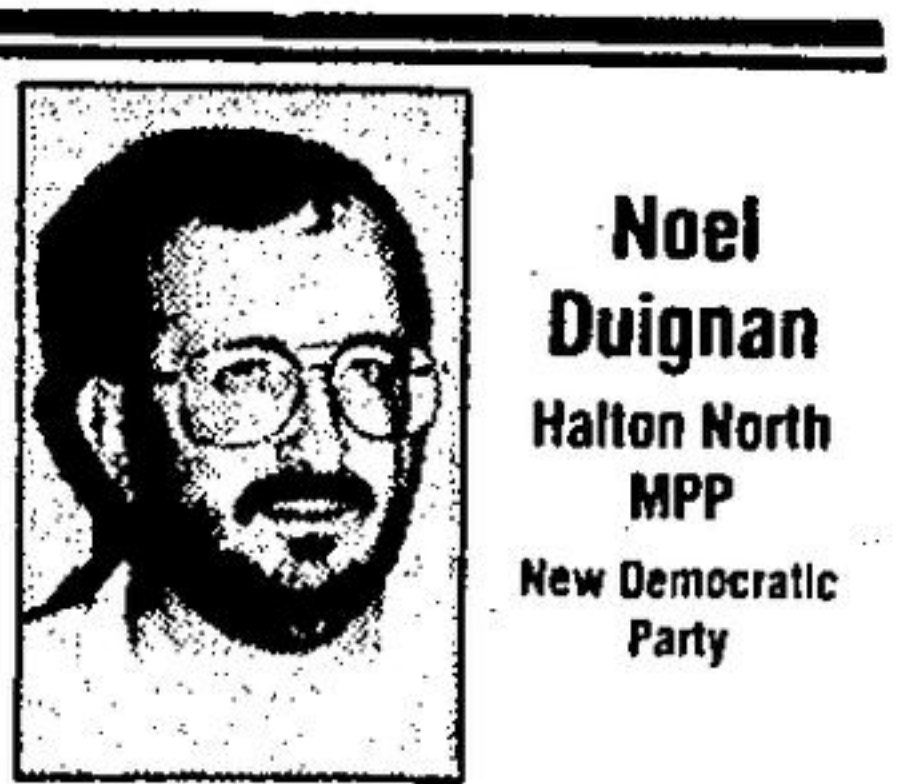
One of those ways was to implement controls on spending for out-of-province health care while still preserving access to such services where required. Many of you were horrified, for example, at the exorbitant costs associated with some drug treatment programs in the United States. We also managed to achieve a six-year agreement with physicians that, for the first time, will reduce and control the annual growth of health care spending and provide for joint government-physician management of our province's health care system. And we have tried to sort out the outdated and patchwork legislation associated with the various health care professions.

In April, I wrote about the in-

roduction of the Regulated Health Professions Act and companion legislation (Bills 44 - 64) and mentioned to you that public hearings would be scheduled to allow consumers and practitioners an opportunity to comment on the bills. Some of you are meeting with me this week to discuss the changes but I would also like to let those interested know that the Standing Committee on Social Development has set out its schedule for August. If you want to appear before the committee, you should contact the clerk, Lynn Mellor, at (416)325-3522.

I would also like to again outline our rent control legislation (Bill 121) which received second reading on June 26th. The

bill replaces the Residential Rent Regulation Act, 1986. Under the new system, annual rent increases will be based on an index that reflects the inflationary costs of running a rental property. Non-profit housing units financially supported by the federal and provincial governments are exempt from the controls and so are newly built residential complexes for five years. The responsibility for holding hearings on Bill 121 lies with the Standing



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Committee on General Government. Six legislative committees in all will be holding hearings to review various issues including Sunday shopping, the provincial budget, wage protection and the Constitution.

As you've heard, Bob Rae decided to make some changes to the cabinet on July 31st.

Karen Haslam, member for Perth and a former teacher and school trustee, was sworn in as Minister of Culture and Communications. Tony Silipo, a lawyer who represents the Toronto riding of Dovercourt, now chairs the Management Board of Cabinet. Will Ferguson, parliamentary assistant to municipal affairs and a former

Kitchener alderman, becomes Minister of Energy. We're pleased to see Evelyn Gigantes return to cabinet as Minister of Housing.

Dave Cooke retains his Municipal Affairs portfolio and takes on the role of Government House Leader. Shelley Martel stays on as Minister of Northern Development and also becomes the new Minister of Mines. Gilles Pouliot becomes Transportation Minister and retains his rep-

onsibility for Francophone Affairs. Ed Philip moves to Industry, Trade and Technology replacing Allan Pilkey who becomes Minister of Correctional Services and Solicitor General. And Health Minister Frances Lankin now also has responsibility for the anti-drug secretariat.

If you would like to write to any of the new Ministers please call my Milton office at 878-1729 Tuesday through Friday for more information.

## Write us a letter!

The Herald wants to hear from you. If you have an opinion you want to express or a comment to make, send us a letter or drop by the office. Our address is 45 Guelph Street, Georgetown, Ontario L7G 3Z6.

All letters must be signed. Please include your address and telephone number for verification.