

Sometimes it doesn't pay to be too honest

This week's offering will be somewhat ruminative in context for various reasons.

I don't like what's happening in Canada and I feel little, if anything, is being done to address the concerns of Canadians—the ones you meet on the street, in the grocery stores, at the hockey rinks or at the ball diamonds, at the beer store or wherever. And I write what I feel.

I write this way, because this is where I live, this is where I have lived and this is where I want to live and these are the people I want to live with—the so-called 'ordinary' Canadians.

Apparently, a number of people objected to the column I wrote last week lambasting the (boring) further discussions that have been suggested concerning the 'new proposed' constitution. That is their prerogative. Even more so, their right.

Two points: I hate to tell you guys this, but we have a Constitution and if it is so imperfect, why did the powers-that-be, attempt to ram it down the collective throats of Canadians in the first place!

Similarly, the column appeared on the Opinion Page, not the Editorial Page.

The Editorial Page involves the opinions of the newspaper; the

"As I See It"

by
Colin Gibson



Opinion Page should be self-explanatory.

I'm a Scot by birth, but Canadian by choice.

I grew up in Northern Ontario and most of my buddies were french; no, not hyphenated governmental-imposed French-Canadians, just french guys who were proud to be Canadians and also, I might add, damn good friends.

One of my best friends was Chinese, and I didn't need any governmental decree to tell me he was different. But I loved him as a friend.

The minor fastball team I played on went to two All-Ontario finals and three of our players were native Indians. I used to sleep over at their places, as a youngster, and they were always welcome at the Gibson house.

My father was a professional soldier with the British army for 17 years and also spent three years in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp. He is the author of two books and a number of my views on life, and people, come from him.

Be true to yourself and your beliefs, he would tell me. Admit your mistakes and allow other people their mistakes—but only if they will admit them.

I make no apologies for what I write. I am putting my feelings and my beliefs on the line.

I always felt that honesty was the best policy. Perhaps I was wrong.

As I see it, anyway.

Do we have to hold your hand on election issues?

Is the Herald providing sufficient coverage of the ongoing municipal election campaign?

That's the question a concerned Georgetown resident posed to me last Friday. My response was yes, however, the person remained unconvinced.

He pointed to the Oct. 2 edition of the Herald as proof that this newspaper could be doing more concerning its local election coverage. In the Oct. 2 edition of the Herald there was only one election-related story and that dealt with the declaration of incumbent Hydro Commissioner Bill Smith.

The concerned resident said the inclusion of only one election-related story in this issue when the election is approximately a month away is insufficient. He believes there should be more stories, and they should be more in-depth.

To justify his position the person points out the Nov. 12 election is crucial to the Town's future. The newly-elected council will have the power to determine how expected new growth will be accommodated, said the gentleman.

I agree this election is crucial, but unlike the gentleman, I think the Herald's coverage reflects the upcoming election's importance.

The Herald's approach to the November election is as follows: Tri-weekly calls are made to the Town's Clerk Department to find out the most recent declarations. Those who have declared are then interviewed concerning several issues including such topics as development, the environment and taxes.

It's through the publication of these interviews the public is introduced to the candidates and



Ben's Banter

by
Ben Dummett

where they stand on the issues. People should note weekly election stories have appeared in the Herald for more than a month.

Election-related stories first started appearing in the Herald as early as this past summer.

The question now is could the newspaper provide more in-depth coverage?

In my opinion the extent of in-depth coverage done by the local media depends on the public and the candidates themselves.

As a reporter I am not going to telephone declared candidates on a weekly basis to hear them rehash what they have already said in an initial interview.

The election issues have been laid out but none of the candidates have contacted this newspaper to provide up-to-date information on any solutions they have to benefit the Town.

I've learned there is no comparison between a municipal and a provincial election.

During last year's provincial election campaign the local candidates released press releases on

the issues almost daily allowing for more in-depth coverage on a range of topics.

There has been no similar action taken by the local municipal candidates during this election campaign.

In an attempt early on in the municipal election campaign to start a debate the Herald ran a feature entitled "Yes I Care." Through the feature the public was invited to ask incumbents and new candidates any question. The responses were to be published in the Herald.

However, the paper has only received four "Yes I Care" forms to date from the public.

While local newspapers are responsible for publishing the positions of candidates, the general public and candidates are responsible for initiating the debate.

How really valid are our government policies?

The recent strikes and the high unemployment rate raise the question of the validity of our policies.

But policies can only be judged within a conceptual framework or a set of values. Both seem to be conspicuously absent in Canada.

In general terms, it is totally unacceptable for a developed country to have 10 per cent of its labor force out of work. The economic and human costs are much too high. We should assume that all factors of our public life would agree that to keep unemployment to the lowest possible level is a priority.

Unfortunately, it does not look that way.

The surprising fact is that there is strong doctrinal body which provides reliable guidelines for the reduction of unemployment. A doctrinal body which is not challenged by any school of

economists and has proven correct through practice.

Simply stated, unemployment rises when inflation is high, and unemployment decreases in a low inflation environment. The argument is eminently technical and it equates "labour" to all other elements of an economy, eg.: capital, raw materials, etc.

High employment rates encourage wage increases which are inflationary. With high inflation we have high interest rates and the collapse of many businesses. With the bankruptcies and the related loss of competitiveness we have high unemployment.

To achieve maximum employment we have to keep wages low and allow for competition in the labor market. This means that unions fighting for "job security" are in fact impeding competition and while protecting, in the short



Another View

by
Carlo Testa

term, their members, are preparing the ground for high unemployment.

The proof is for everybody to be seen in our experience of the past five years.

The argument may sound callous, but unfortunately it has the strength of being valid.

There is no doubt we need unions. Without them capital and management would have unlimited power over labor. But the role of the union has to change, if they have to be factors of development and real protectors of their members.

It is just such a new policy which has been sadly lacking in the recent strikes, which have seen unions behaving in a narrow, parochial way, ignoring the reality of the nations economy.

It cannot be said enough that, in our times, job security is an empty dream. The unions should be fighting for "protected" job-mobility, instead of trying to maintain obsolete or unnecessary jobs. The objective of government, capital, management and labor are, after all, the same: full employment, high consumption, healthy economic activity. Do not forget that without a work force

with a fair amount of disposable income, capital or management are not faring too well! The conflict between the various actors is often artificially created and a lot of nonsense is produced for short-term political gain.

Strikes for higher wages, in a stagnant economy and 10 per cent unemployment, are not only absurd (inflation will eat away the benefit of the pay-raise in a couple of years), but obscene.

Unions should fight for more equitable ratios between salaries (a company chairman's salary of a million dollars per year is equally obscene), for better working conditions, for decision making, power-sharing, ... the list is long.

The union, by fighting unreal battles is not being progressive, it is in fact arch-conservative. Their leaders will probably vote Reform Party next time around!

People's Forum

Duignan responds to senior citizen concerns

To The Editor:

I am writing in response to the letter entitled Senior Citizen Questions NDP Policy Wisdom which appeared in the People's Forum section of the September 18th edition of your newspaper. The anonymous writer was replying to my Queen's Park Report of the previous week about the new Ministry of Health Policy for out-of-country hospital payments.

As of October 1st OHIP will pay \$400 per day for high-level care (such as surgery) and \$200 per day for less intense care. The writer questioned my suggestion that those travelling out of the country should purchase private coverage to cover any bills that exceed the new rates. He or she apparently has a pre-existing medical condition and claimed that all seniors with similar con-

ditions would now be doomed to "internment in Ontario." The writer also expressed concerns about the amount of money being spent to ship drug and alcohol abusers to the United States for treatment.

With respect to the costs of treating substance abusers, last year Ontario paid \$51.3 million for 3,700 residents to receive addiction treatment in the United States - about one quarter of the more than \$200 million paid to American health care institutions. In order to reduce the number of Ontarians seeking treatment away from Ontario for substance abuse, Health Minister Frances Lankin just recently announced measures to provide addiction treatment for about 3,200 more people in Ontario each year and to help thousands more in

crisis situations. At a cost of \$9.4 million, the expansion of services in our province will go a long way toward reducing the need for people to seek treatment elsewhere.

Regarding the writer's pre-existing medical condition, information acquired from an agent at Blue Cross indicates that the company does not refuse to sell insurance to those with pre-existing medical conditions. The company may, however, be reluctant to pay for medical treatment where the outcome may have been "adequately foreseen", as for example, when an individual chooses to travel against the advice of his or her doctor and then suffers a massive heart attack while in the United States. The Blue Cross representative also stated that premium costs are based upon the length of

the stay outside the province and not upon the age of the applicant.

Not knowing the specific medical history of the anonymous writer, I am not sure if the above information addresses his or her concerns about pre-existing medical conditions, but I do know that we can't afford to continue to subsidize the profits of U.S. hospitals if we want to preserve medicare and improve health care services in Ontario.

The writer also mentioned that he or she had written to me

earlier in the year about the issue and that I had not yet responded to the concerns outlined in the letter. I try to acknowledge correspondence within a reasonable length of time but occasionally letters are mislaid. I would like to suggest to the writer (or to any other constituent who thinks that a letter may have gone astray) that he or she follow up with a call to my office so that I can respond to the concern or inquiry.

Sincerely,
Noel Duignan, M.P.P.
Halton North.

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.

The Herald reserves the right to edit letters due to space limitations.