



OUR READERS WRITE

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

Note to our readers:

Over the last few weeks we have been deluged with letters regarding Bill 160. Given its imminent passage at press time, we reserved this page for final comments on the subject by readers.

Rob Kelly, editor

The following letter was sent to Halton North MPP Ted Chudleigh. A copy was filed with this newspaper.

Bill is garbage

Dear Editor:

Please take note that we totally oppose Bill 160, and urge you to vote against it. We regard Bill 160 as representing a centralization of power unacceptable to the people of Ontario and of Canada. We realize that for you to vote against your party will involve you in career choices that will give you pause; but we urge you to consider that if Bill 160 is passed, so too will surely pass the term of the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, very much after the fashion of your federal counterparts.

Please realize too that many of us are involved in quality initiatives in the course of our professional lives, and we are not deceived by your party's sham pretence. You want to take money out of education, reckless of the consequences, and certainly with the least possible regard to quality. Do the right thing now, or wait for the electorate to do the right thing next election day.

Please note also that though neither of us are teachers, we support them and their brave, selfless and historic stand against the worst excesses of political abuse propagated by your party, and will continue to do so until this appalling threat to our democratic rights and freedoms has been consigned to the garbage bin of history.

Bert Jenkins, P Eng
Mary Jenkins, RN
Milton

Urges Chudleigh to balk

Dear Editor:

I am writing to express my extreme concern over Bill 160, the quality of education bill currently before the Ontario legislature.

To this point I felt I had always carried out my civic duty by keeping abreast of political issues and have never failed to exercise my democratic right by voting in elections, whether municipal, provincial or federal. However, the recent actions of the Ontario Conservative government, especially in the content and enactment of Bill 160, cause me more concern than any political action in memory. This bill has made crystal clear to me how strongly ingrained are my beliefs in the democratic process.

A bill that sets any government officials above the law (section 257.45 (1)) - "The Minister has exclusive jurisdiction ... and that jurisdiction is not open to question or review in any proceeding or by any court" and which denies elected officials freedom of speech (section 257.45 (2)) - "The board (of education) and each of its members, officers and employees, shall comply with the orders, directions and decisions of the Minister in any matter related to the administration of the affairs of the board, and any such person who knowingly fails to comply with any such order, direction or decision, or who as a member of the board votes contrary to such order, direction or decision, is guilty of an offence" (257.45 (4)) "The Minister may dismiss from office any officer or employee of a board who fails to carry out any order, direction or decision of the Minister."

Can this really be happening in Canada? Even the president of the United States does not have such absolute power.

It seems ironic that Ted Chudleigh was quoted in The Champion as saying in reference to the referendum on chlorination that a 29 per cent minority in favour of chlorination must be listened to, yet a much larger ratio of discontent

about Bill 160 is being ignored as the Conservative government steamrolls this bill through.

I urge Mr. Chudleigh to voice his concern immediately in the legislature over this erosion of democratic principles. Let your constituents' voices be heard now! Do not leave it to the next election.

Ross Wood
Milton

Government is showing great courage with bill

Dear Editor:

Re: your excellent editorial on the teachers' strike — right on!

Living in England during the 1940s, 50s and 60s, I have seen first hand what the power of the unions, going unchecked for decades, can do. It brought England almost to its knees. What is happening in Ontario is *deja vu*.

I have some sympathy for the majority of teachers whom I suspect did not want to be out on the picket lines. Some teachers I have met felt they had not been properly informed by the unions, and had no say in the strike action. They were out there because they felt their careers would be jeopardized, or they would suffer a great backlash from their peer group.

The teachers, via the unions, want to preserve the status quo. I ask them who do they expect to pay for it? Their next door neighbour running a small business, the neighbour across the street who is trying to survive after having been 'down-sized', and over 60 per cent of whose property taxes presently go to the school system?

None of them have the security or perks that the teachers presently have. Most other sectors have been hurt by the 'new wave' economy — now it is the teachers turn to be brought into line with economic reality.

This is really a struggle between organized labour and the government as to who controls Ontario, and it is a struggle that the government must not lose or we all lose.

It took a Maggie Thatcher — hated by the masses — to bring England around. Thank goodness we have a government now willing to take the same steps.

Anne Taylor
Campbellville

Proud of support

Dear Editor:

The last few weeks in Ontario have been an emotional roller coaster for students and parents. Education is the backbone of our society. Bill 160 is about choices.

It is about keeping educational choices in the hands of the people who work, maintain and nurture our children throughout this province.

Generations of parents have believed in the open-ended educational system that we enjoy each day.

Change is a healthy part of any institution. In our homes, our churches, our communities and our country, change continues to open the door to new possibilities. Education has undergone many changes over the last 10 years. The schools of Ontario are strong, they are places where the rights of the individual are respected and the individuality of our children are encouraged. Most of all, the schools are a place where children are taught, that the future is a place to reach for through their intellect and through their emotions.

I am proud to be an Ontario Catholic teacher and I am proud of the support the Milton com-

Looking Back ...



The king and queen at the annual Halton Centennial Manor Halloween Party in November, 1970 were Margaret Gow and William Cripps. With them were Ethel Hay and Jessie Levitt.

munity has shown for the future of education in our province.

Diana-Lynn Johnston
Milton

BR teachers battle bill

Dear Editor:

We the teachers at Bishop Reding High School would like to explain why we're involved in the political protest of Bill 160.

Bill 160 will seriously diminish your democratic right to have input into what goes on in your child's school. Specifically, this bill will empower the government to make all educational decisions behind the closed doors of Queen's Park, without opportunity for public discussion or appeal. Your local trustees will have no control over the spending of education dollars.

Last year, as many of you know, the government slashed \$500 million from the education budget. Our students can attest to the harmful impact this caused.

This government has admitted its intent to extract an additional \$600 million from public education. How does this put students first?

Bill 160 has nothing to do with quality education. It has everything to do with financing the provincial debt at the expense of our children's futures. Historically, people have taken strong stands against injustices. These stands have not always been popular. We believe Bill 160 is morally wrong for our communities, our parents and especially our students.

Sharon Bradley
and Bishop Reding teachers

Teachers aren't too responsible

Dear Editor:

Every time I read letters like those written by Mr. Martin, Mr. Templeman and Mr. Jarolawski, against provincial government initiatives, I feel like I've heard these claims elsewhere.

The teachers can blame the government all they want to, but the fact remains that it is the teachers who breached a valid legal contract. Which brings me to the issue of democracy.

Since Mr. Martin seems so interested in this topic, I ask; Is it democratic for teachers to inconvenience parents without consulting them? Is it democratic for teachers to abandon their responsibility to provide an education to children? Is it democratic for teachers to prevent students from taking text books home in an attempt to maintain some form of learning?

Since the answer to each question is obviously no, a strong sense of protection towards democratic principles can not be at the root of the teacher actions.

While I agree that some of the funding cuts are too extensive, the bottom line is that no one gives up power voluntarily. This dispute is about power and the ability to protect well (over) paying jobs.

As far as Bill 160 allowing the minister to dismiss an employee who does not comply with the Ministry of Education, where is the problem?

Jim Timbers
Milton

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