

Letters = I'm still waiting to hear from McMurtry

OPEN LETTER
 William Hodgson, MPP
 Queen's Park
 Toronto.

I got your note re Health Minister Timbrell several weeks ago. His letter to me crossed with mine to you very pleased to hear that at last the government had allocated additional funds — \$85 million was it? — to

hospitals. Without doubt, without melodrama, this will reduce suffering, save lives.

The government's long overdue action illustrates the value of people continuing to make their protests heard. After all, it is their money.

You must excuse my lengthy silence. With the

coming of the hot summer days I dropped my spluttering pen off at the Home for Incurables, for rest and treatment.

And I thought this would allow ample time for Attorney General McMurtry and Premier William Davis to answer my letters of several months back.

It was no go. My pesky pen still has this com-

pulsive urge to talk. The two ministers still remain clammed up.

I haven't heard a word. Premier Davis has made publicly a number of noble noises.

During the period he has strongly declared for: (1) national unity; (2) half-a-million for the Boat People; (3) Helping ourselves to Alberta's oil income.

This last larcenous suggestion sounded odd coming from a bitter opponent of socialism, one supposedly dedicated to Conservative free enterprise.

What brand of government do we have? Or do all brands now contain the same ingredients? Is it simply the "we-want-to-get-elected" brand or party?

I see that besides not answering me, Attorney General McMurtry doesn't bother answering other people either.

It is reported that the "gays", having also written him several months back unanswered, are now staging a sit-in at his office.

So I'm in gay company. Do I deserve that?

My letter to McMurtry asked for information re hate laws (or whatever they're called). I was directed to the Attorney General's office by the Toronto office of the federal department of justice, after two abortive attempts to get the information from them.

Passing the buck, apparently, is still a popular Canadian pastime.

To be quite specific, I complained to McMurtry about a letter published by the Toronto Star on April 14 from Irving Layton.

This was a vicious, lying, unprovoked attack on WASPS, which could engender hatred and contempt in the minds of the uninformed or gullible.

As you know, after several attempts, over several months, I seem to have addressed the

Imagine, therefore, my surprise on reading the Toronto Star of August 24. Included in a news report that the Western Guard had been ordered to stop using the telephone for what had been described as "hate messages" was news of — can you believe it? — Attorney General McMurtry.

Apparently he is alive. Moreover, he is concerned about "hate" and "racism". (Coming from just the disapproved directions.)

He is reported as saying that the order to stop the Western Guard messages is an important victory in the battle against racism. He was most concerned that the messages were directed against groups rather than individuals. He said there are effective laws.

I share his concerns. I wish he, or someone, would tell me what these laws are.

But why is he concerned about "hate messages" coming from the Western Guard, and apparently completely unconcerned when they come from, say, Irving Layton?

As Attorney General, the arbiter and guardian of law in Ontario, is he concerned with equal application of the law? Or is he primarily concerned with votes, politics, and getting re-elected?

In your last letter to me, Bill, you asked me if

there was anything else you could do.

I would very much like you to ask the Attorney General the questions I present above.

I'm not looking for personal publicity, being smart, funny, or whatever.

I'm concerned about the government of my

province, about equal application of justice and the law.

Sid H. Britton
 34 Hillview Road,
 Aurora

EDUCATION: Mess is typical of board

How can one help but criticize the York County Board of Education?

The facts about the entire teacher dispute are really quite obvious and have been clearly expressed through all forms of the local media. The board is just now getting down to serious negotiations at the time when the 1980-82 talks should be starting. In my opinion the mess we are in now is typical of the board, and just emphasizes the poor business qualities the board possesses.

It is bad enough that the

board has let the negotiations drag on for over a year-and-a-half, but just when the talks are coming to a very crucial and tender stage, the board goes and blunders again.

The case I am referring to involves the August 27 meeting of the school board trustees and the topic of teacher lock-out.

For over a week the trustees knew that provincial mediator Harvey Ladd had called a mediation meeting for the following day, August 28. If I were a teacher, that

would be enough to set me in a rage. The board simply added fuel to the fire. OSSFT District 11 President Tony Bulson came right to the point in a letter he sent to the trustees:

"A decision by the board to close schools on September 4 would; make an agreement more difficult to reach during mediation sessions which begin tomorrow; suggest that the board and its advisors place a greater emphasis on administrative practices and conveniences than on the learning process per se." Why did the school board not schedule its meeting after the mediation talks were over?

For all students, especially those entering the all important Grade 13, a teacher lockout to say the least is damaging. Yet, at the same time, the trustees are saying "we have to think of the students."

Why didn't the board think of the students when they voted 14-3 in favor of a lockout before the negotiations the following day? A lockout means that students will not learn anything.

However if the teachers were on work-to-rule and allowed inside the school, the students would at least have the benefit of being taught. It is true that exams and tests, and so on, would not be marked, but as it stands now we will be waiting at home in limbo doing virtually nothing.

The York County Board of Education claims that it is always looking out for the interests of the students. When was the last time the board consulted the people caught in between this conflict?

Please note: this letter is not directed towards those trustees who voted against the lockout.

Jim Watson,
 Thornhill

York's students hostages again

So York County's secondary school students are hostages yet again to a power and control fight between the board and its teachers. How silly to have such a contest at this time.

Seemingly the battle now is who decides what a teacher does with her spare periods, and what are a teacher's extra-curricular duties. The board perceives it has the right and responsibility to decide; similarly the teachers see the decision is theirs.

Surely, the decisive factor is a matter of negotiation on an adult-to-adult basis between a principal and her teachers. They, after all, are the ones on the spot and directly informed about the needs of a school and in particular, of its students, for their growth as intellectual and social human beings aspiring to a gainful and responsible place in society.

But instead of common sense prevailing, and from my interpretation of last night's (viz. August 27) meeting, what we have is the old story. In a fight both sides see themselves as right, and so to justify we have wordy old rhetoric running things; in the board meeting, only one presentation had data to back up statements.

Too bad: the students again are the losers. It is a well-known principle in learning-teaching that continuity of instruction is a key to achievement. Who knows? A youngster may open all sorts of doors to his future. To start the year with no lessons at all is absurd.

There is another factor making it necessary for secondary schools to operate normally on Tuesday, September 4, 1979. It is the law of the

land. As St. Paul said, "I live by faith, but I abide by the law."

So, trustees of York County, let the schools open and have faith that a school's staff through the good offices of principal, staff and students will resolve extra-curricular and spare period difficulties. Somehow I have an optimistic feeling that everything will turn out all right to the benefit of students. From my knowledge of good teachers, and they form the core of any staff, their hearts are in the right place — doing the best they can for their students.

That is what teaching is all about. The real problem is that, as old Jimmy Durante used to wail, "Everybody wants to get into the act," for some egocentric goal.

Yours faithfully,
 D.R. Rees
 18 Thornbrae Dr.,
 Thornhill.

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