

OPINION

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Numbers at right

Rae is going on a diet by cutting off hands

Prepare yourself. There is going to be a major public sector strike in this province, and chances are it will paralyze Ontario with disastrous results.

Since Bill 48 squeaked through the legislature this week, effectively cutting \$2 billion from the public payroll for each of the next three years, the storm continues to brew in the labor sector that elected Bob Rae and the NDP in the first place.

With just three unions coming to terms with the government, an enormous majority of the province's workers are still far from the table, and far from complacent.

The largest public sector unions are talking tough follow-



Viewpoint

Andrew Mair

ing the debacle at Queen's Park Wednesday.

The Ontario Federation of Labor, the teachers, CUPE, and OPSEU among others are now issuing veiled threats that the legislation will be bucked all the way.

And that means job action. Workers will send a strike mandate to their leaders to battle the cuts, which include 12 unpaid days off, three year wage freezes, and the loss of

some 10,000 jobs.

The opposition to this bill is almost unparalleled.

The bill itself narrowly passed and the Ontario Federation of Labor is in complete opposition to the plan. It is a sad state of affairs when three of the MPPs vote against the measures taken, and an even more damning indictment when NDP leaders in other parts of the country, on both a provincial and federal level, are looking at Ontario with a raised eyebrow.

Rae said his government has had to make some difficult decisions in coming up with his three-tiered system to reduce the deficit. What he doesn't admit is that it was this same government that placed us in this condition through some

very shaky months at the beginning of the NDP tenure.

Granted, the recession played a part. True, transfer payments were cut to the province. Admittedly, the previous government's books were not as clear as it said. But some serious bungling at the outset has left us in a terrible bind, and now matters are going to get worse.

This legislation is somewhat like going on a diet by cutting off your hands. But now the hands are going to fight back.

Campaign literature told voters how to vote

Dear Editor,

The recent Liberal nomination meeting for Markham-Whitchurch-Stouffville, was a big improvement on the one held on a warm summer Sunday in 1988.

Good acoustics meant the speeches could be heard even above the din of those who apparently did not want to listen. And the balloting was efficiently handled so that the lines moved quickly.

I think, though, that the number of signs posted by two of the candidates in and around the school where the meeting was held was a waste of money and an affront to the environment. Surely after weeks of selling voting memberships, the number of undecideds would be minimal.

But a more serious matter was the pre-voting agenda with three parts: the nomination and seconding of the candidates, the candidates' speeches, and finally, an explanation of the balloting process. This latter was most important because a preferential ballot was being used for the first time. The rules, were spelled out simply and clearly. Then the audience was turned loose in the corridors leading to the voting hall, to be met by one candidate's workers handing out hundreds of sample ballots listing the four candidates with three of them ranked as to first, second, or third preference; the fourth, apparently, did not even merit being ranked fourth out of four.

But it was the statement at the bottom of this sample ballot which

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stunned me. It presented another rule, one not mentioned from the platform: "Must vote exactly all three candidates as shown above."

From what Central American banana republic have we borrowed the election manual that allows voters, on the way to the ballot box, to be told that they must vote exactly as indicated on the hand-out?

The results of an election where this was allowed should, of course,

be declared invalid, but we know that this will not happen, and the candidate responsible will keep his nomination. He should realize, however, that there are still many Canadians, including Liberals, who do not like being told that they "must" vote in a certain way, and that this fall they will have a chance to vote for whomever they please.

Fred Farr Thornhill

Editor's Note: Mary McGowan, returning officer at the nomination said it's up to the voter to recognize campaign literature. All candidates were allowed to hand out material up to the gymnasium door where the voting occurred.



by Brian Basset

ADAM



MARKHAM ECONOMIST AND SUN STOUFFVILLE TRIBUNE UXBRIDGE TRIBUNE
Weekender edition
A Metroland Community Newspaper
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The Markham Economist and Sun, Stouffville Tribune and Uxbridge Tribune, published every Wednesday and Saturday is one of the Metroland Printing, Publishing and Distributing group of suburban newspapers which includes: Ajax Pickering News Advertiser, Barrie Advance, Brampton Guardian, Burlington Post, Collingwood Connection, Etobicoke Guardian, The Liberal, Georgetown Independent/Acton Free Press, Kingston This Week, Lindsay This Week, Milton Canadian Champion, Mississauga News, North York Mirror, Oakville Beaver, Orillia Today, Oshawa-Whitby This Week, Peterborough This Week, Scarborough Mirror, The Era Banner.

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Dumb Crooks folder saves drawing blanks

The most common question people ask when they find out that I scribble for a living, is "where do you get your ideas?"

I always tell them that I steal them. Which is true. I steal my column ideas from books, magazines, TV programs, things I see on the street, conversations I deliberately overhear in the supermarket.

Unfortunately, sometimes even theft isn't enough. Every once in a while a guy will find himself hunched over his word processor, a deadline dangling like a Damoclean switchblade over his neck, his fingers poised like twitchy talons over the keyboard and...

Nothing. No inspiration, no ideas, not even the ghost of a notion to fill the blank gaze of the monitor before him.

Scary... but all is not lost. There's always the Dumb Crooks file to fall back on.

It's a manila folder that I keep beside my desk, bulging with news clippings about ruined robberies, fouled-up felonies, heists gone haywire and gormless gangsters gang-a-gley.

The daily papers are full of them — tiny little "filler" stories about would-be crooks whose walk on the wild side turned into a prat-fall.

Such as? Well, such as the story out of Fort Erie, Ontario, last month. A woman working late in an accounting office looked up to see a man armed with a club. He demanded money, then ordered the woman to get into her car.

She did. He waited for her to unlock the passenger door.

She didn't. Instead the woman drove straight to the police station. The cops immediately issued a bulletin in which the details were sketchy. Officers were alerted to be on the lookout for a man who was "not too swift."

Speaking of Not Too Swift — how about Donald M. Thomas? Mister Thomas escaped from jail in California after serving 89 days of a 90 day sentence. He was captured. He now faces up to 20 years in prison.

Ah, yes but he'll go down as a Legend of Crime. As the Bird-brain of Alcatraz.

And let us never forget the famous Edmonton Two — a couple



Basic Black

Arthur Black

of Albertan Butch and Sundance wannabes who made Canadian criminal history of a sort the night they knocked over the Petro Canada gas station just outside Vancouver. They surprised the attendant, tied him up and left him in the washroom, escaping with the contents of the till.

But they were as I say, from Edmonton, and a little bewildered by the bright lights of Vancouver. Which is why 20 minutes later, they pulled into a gas station to ask directions.

A...Petro Canada...gas station. The same Petro Canada station they'd knocked over earlier.

The station attendant, just removing the last of the ropes from his ankles looked up to see his worst nightmare happening all over again. "I guess they didn't recognize me or the station."

He stammered out directions then quickly called the cops. Just as he was hanging up, the attendant looked up and saw...

the same two guys coming towards him.

Their car wouldn't start. Could the mechanic...? Alas, the mechanic wouldn't be on duty until 8 a.m.

The Edmonton Two were waiting for a tow truck when a police cruiser pulled in and graciously offered them a free ride downtown.

Let's give the last word to Thomas Russell in the San Joaquin County Jail. Mister Russell, who was doing time for burglary, was startled to receive a government cheque for \$26,447. Startled, but not paralysed, he immediately used \$6,500 to post his own bail and promptly left town with the remaining 20 grand.

Which no doubt really ticked off the San Joaquin County tax collector. He'd sent the cheque to the wrong Thomas Russell.

Not exactly a story of dumb crooks, you say? True.

But the bad guys have to win one once in a while.