

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Doctoring then and now - a game of numbers and an ever evolving field

The Editor

I am not all sure that Mr. John Malcom's hope that a probable increase in the total number of available physicians will necessarily translate into enough replacements for the aging doctors of Victoria County - or further afield in Cape Breton either for that matter.

There are number of reasons for this but the two main ones are, I think, the fact that the nature of medical practice in general and of the doctors who practice it continues to evolve; nothing is static.

To give a very brief summary of this evolving process look at the example of what has taken place in Baddeck over roughly the last 80 years.

For the first 40 years or so of this period, until the 1960s, Dr. C.L. (MacMillan) of immortal memory, on his own looked after the health of not just Baddeckers but of those living in the extended rural areas some long distances from Baddeck. In practice he seems to have had no specific office hours and even, if often out of touch on home visits, in winter by horse drawn sleigh, he was

### Gov't. & corporations - hand in hand into the future

The Editor

In 1996, John Ralston Saul gave us a spot-on assessment applicable to most of us, "Corporatism reduces civilization to the sum of its interest groups. We are all reduced - culture, public education, childcare and Medicare - to warring with each other for crumbs from the public purse and for charity from the private purse. If we accept that formula, we are back to the public good as nothing more than a beggar at the table of the kings and the rich."

Well, Mr. Saul later joined the 'privileged' and dined with the kings and the rich when his wife became the Governor General of Canada.

Paul Hellyer, former Member of Parliament since 1949, and later Defence Minister of Canada researched, later in his private life, our Monetary System with astounding conclusions. At great expense, he consulted with the best minds and their computers and concluded that the debts of the federal and provincial governments could have been \$220 billion less in 1992. Why was this man and his research ignored then, and later as he campaigned as the leader of the Canadian Action Party for Monetary Reform?

Why was the Father of Medicare,

virtually never actually 'off duty'.

In the 1960s first Dr. Monty MacMillan and then several of us came and went but after 'CL' there was almost always 2 doctors in Baddeck. Unlike him we all wanted a more orderly, more efficient form of practice plus some time off duty.

Probably the last time Baddeck had only one doctor for a substantial period was during the winter of '67 - '68 when I held the fort alone for about 6 months.

In the spring of 1968 Drs. Coakley and Chow replaced me and it has been mostly a 2 man practice since. Not all that long after in Neil's Harbour, Dr. Maynard MacAskill, like CL, a solo practitioner, was replaced by Drs. Murray and Buffett who have been there ever since.

By now then it is fair to say this is a half century old, largely unchanged perhaps even outdated model of practice during a time when the practice of medicine has changed markedly. Change which in this electronic age, seems to proceed it at an ever increasing rate.

Among these changes doctors seem to

Tommy Douglas, under constant police surveillance all his life? For wanting to improve the life of Canada's people? And why has the NDP, the successor of Tommy Douglas's CCF, totally abandoned their goal?

Would anybody go on an airplane trip, if the unqualified passengers were to hold a vote, as to who should be the captain, co-pilot and navigator? Nobody would even dream to suggest it, as this requires knowledge and experience. Why then, do we leave the fate of Spaceship Earth and ALL societies in the hands of politicians, no matter what stripe, who may be well-paid puppets (with some exceptions), but do little else but re-distribute "Crumbs"?

In view that Canada in 1992 could have had \$220 billion less debt, imagine what it could be today? And the wasteful and ridiculous arguments about the HST, and billion dollars gain or loss for the province(s) boils down to nothing more than trivial pursuit.

What are we to think? Missed opportunities, Conspiracy, Greed, Vested interests, or just plain stupidity? If we carry on as usual, we'll see our planet and its peoples suffer needlessly.

Gunther Ostermann  
Kelowna, B.C.

#### Letters to the Editor Policy

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have less and less autonomy, teams rather than individuals dominate in many fields, hyper-specialization increases exponentially, all kinds of information concerning matters medical is available to all at the touch of a key board and last but not least the newly minted doctors of to-day are simply not prepared to work the long hours and do the amount of night duty the doctors that still dominate medical scene in Victoria County consider normal.

In this context it is worth noting that the two 'new' doctors who have indicated their wish to practice here are willing to replace only one of the current doctors which implies they, as individuals, want to take on the responsibilities for a quarter not a half or

even a third of the work of the Baddeck practice. This further implies (does it not?) that they will most likely only stay if two other new recruits are found to replace the other retiring doctor. In other words if Baddeck wants a reasonable degree of medical stability it probably needs to recruit not two but four new doctors, a tall order for one small town competing with a host of others in a similar pickle.

Of course this also assumes that other than an increase in the number of doctors the 50 plus year old model of family practice is the way to go, but is it?

Dr. Jim O'Brien  
Big Harbour, NS

### Nova Scotia's future is not about a war economy

The Editor

I am really appalled by the waste of taxpayers money by the Dexter government in its mediocre phoney propaganda campaign titled Ships Start Here, which likely has a budget in excess of half a million dollars. Might the government have not put these funds into the Arts which would have created jobs now, or saved a bunch of teachers jobs, or added more doctors or nurses to our health care system, or lowered university tuition.

Fronting for the Irvings isn't what I want my tax money used for, or my Premier to be doing. If the Irving Shipyard wants to bid on a Federal contract that's their business not ours.

### Famine is a time of opportunity

The Editor

There is something about Canadian culture that sees emergencies as moments that last a couple weeks, but the reality is that without the right measures, an emergency state can become a permanent state. We are seeing this with the drought crisis in the horn of Africa right now as millions face severe starvation and tens of thousands already dead.

As the global audience witnesses an entire region being preyed on by truly a more permanent state of natural disaster, we have a choice. We have a choice to see this as an opportunity or as a horror. If we see this as a horror, we will remain in shock and turn our faces. But if we see this is an opportunity, we can remain rightfully responsible, and communicate hope with our words and with our hands. We can intervene.

The truth is the only thing that separates us from these families living in an extreme drought is where we were born. Despite what you might tell yourself, they see the same moon and wake up to the same sun; they have dreams, fears, and stories; they did nothing to deserve this atrocity.

Just for a moment, imagine with me, that it is you and those terrifying pictures you see in your newspaper, those are your kids. Those are your kids who you cannot feed and who lay on your back and those are your kids' friends who drop dead at your feet. You walk for miles in desperation, you are forced to leave children behind, your daughters face the danger of rape and assault, and yet you have to keep on walking. The wrenching in your heart that you feel as you read these words; that is compassion.

Without doubt, our Western culture finds the idea of extreme famine overwhelming. We have no point of reference for what it means to truly be in lack. Our issues border more on the side of obesity, than starvation. So we turn the page, we change the channel, we think about our favourite TV show.

Allow this to be an opportunity more than a horror. Even if you simply pause to hear their story and look at their faces, give these people the dignity of being heard. Give them the chance to dream again.

Ashley Beaudin,  
Smithville, ON

### Put limited federal money to better use

The Editor

A lot of money from the federal government's Building Canada Funds allocated to Nova Scotia is spent. Use of these funds for the proposed p3 Halifax Convention Centre would eliminate about two-thirds of the remaining money. This means the federal government would have little money for infrastructure in Nova Scotia in the remaining three years of the program.

If the federal government commits \$47 million of these funds to the convention centre project, only \$27 million would remain in the Nova Scotia allocations of the Major Infrastructure Fund and the Provincial Territorial Base Fund. This is only 7.3% of the \$374.7 million originally committed to these two funds, intended to last until 2014.

The \$47 million could be better used. Expenditures on sport and recreation facilities, highways, marine terminals, railways, airports, broadband connections, waterworks, transit, clean energy, waste management, arts and heritage are all allowed categories in the Funds. If the convention centre is funded, many worthwhile and necessary projects would not have access to federal funds.

Let's hope the federal government says "No". This would free up not only the \$47 million, but also the \$327 million promised to the project over 25 years by the provincial and municipal governments. Let's make better use of our limited tax dollars.

Peggy Cameron,  
Halifax, NS