

Good old-fashioned, dirty politics

The late American composer Oscar Levant once cynically quipped that a politician is someone who will "double-cross that bridge when he comes to it." Which brings us, of course, to Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty and his shameless reaction to the final report of the Ipperwash Inquiry by commissioner Sidney Linden, a retired judge.

Even Linden hardly covers himself in glory with his blatant advocacy of the view that the Native protesters who occupied a provincial park in 1995 carry no shared responsibility whatsoever for the tragic events leading to the death of protester Dudley George at the hands of an OPP sniper.

But more on Linden shortly.

Moments after Linden's overwritten and overwrought report was released, McGuinty telephoned the George family to apologize on behalf



National Affairs

Claire Hoy

of Ontario and then stood in the Legislature to repeat his apology on behalf of the province. What McGuinty failed to say, of course, was that the real reason he set up the inquiry to begin with in November, 2003, was to embarrass former Tory premier Mike Harris and use the tragedy to enhance his own electoral fortunes.

Sure, McGuinty claimed he was "looking for the truth about what happened ...(and) what lessons we might draw from that tragedy so that we can ensure that it is never repeated."

Chances are - although one can't be certain - that those noble goals were indeed part of McGuinty's motivation.

But the main reason was good old-fashioned, dirty politics.

For years leading up to the inquiry, McGuinty and his Liberals - along with the NDP and most of the provincial media - had consistently blamed Harris directly for the tragedy, accusing him of personally ordering the OPP to use force to end the native occupation.

To be sure, Linden concluded that Harris was anxious to end the occupation - one would hope he'd want to since it was clearly illegal (unlike McGuinty who has allowed the illegal occupation of Caledonia to continue for going on to two years) - and said he did not believe the Harris denial (and the denials of others who were in the room at the time) over a controversial, and crude, comment he made about getting the Indians out of the park. At worst, says Linden, the Harris approach may have played a role in the OPP's decision.

But as to the oft-repeated accusation that Harris personally directed the OPP, Linden says there is no evidence to support that. None.

So if indeed McGuinty really wanted to get to the "truth" of what happened that night, and he is so ready to apologize to the George family, perhaps he should also apologize to Harris for all those false allegations he made against him over the years in order to buttress his own political fortunes.

As for Linden, while he is quite justified in criticizing the OPP - although he conveniently forgets that at the time there were a rash of serious and violent native blockades across the country - and criticizing the federal Liberals for having failed to return the Ipperwash military base which they took during the Second World War and had promised to give back (that's the base, by the way, as opposed to the park where the protesters staged their occupation) - it's simply mind boggling that a senior judge would absolve the protesters themselves of any blame in the subsequent events.

It's also amazing that he continually portrayed the native actions as a "peaceful protest," given that, among other established provocations, one of the protesters was actually convicted in a court for driving a school bus at the police and trying to run them over.

As the National Post editorialized recently, "there was once a standard in Canadian law whereby anyone who commenced an illegal act that resulted in injury or death was a least partly to blame ... but, at least for aboriginal Canadians, this concept no longer applies."

What's more, elected politicians are terrified to act. Witness Caledonia and the recent blockage by natives of the main rail line between Toronto and Montreal over an issue about a quarry pit which is miles away from the line.

Worse, Ottawa followed up the Linden report by offering the squatters in Caledonia \$125 million to end a land claim which the federal government has strongly argued has no legal merit at all.

No doubt that given all these sorry events the natives undoubtedly are now convinced that the laws which apply to the rest of us don't apply equally (if at all) to them, we can count on more of the same when they hold their national day of protest later this month.

Count on it.

And count on chicken-hearted politicians to wring their collective hands, send money, and continue to bask in their misplaced white guilt.

Missing some fatherly advice

Dear Dad,

It's been nine years since you left on your final voyage home. I hope the trip was worth it.

There have been times, more so recently, when I really could have used some fatherly advice. While you weren't the greatest at letting your feelings be known, I know some of your quips and words of wisdom would come in handy. They would have at least made me smile.

The more complicated things get, the greater the need for peace of mind. I could really use a pat on the head, like the ones I give Liam on a daily basis. Inside every man you can find a sad, and scared little boy, at times.

And to this very day, I still seek your affection and approval. Weird, huh?

Maybe because I don't have you around, I'm more affectionate with Liam. I'm also hard on him, too, trying to mold him, prepare him for the world. Perhaps I should lay off a bit and let him enjoy his childhood as it was meant to be. I criticize him for being a goofball, but then I think of your often-used phrase about the apple not falling far from the tree. Ain't it the truth?

There was a time, not too long ago, when I tossed him up on his favorite perch - atop my shoulders. I told him that was my favorite place, too, when I was a wee one. Remember when you'd carry me back and forth in the front hallway, before dinner? I can still see your smiling face and hear the echoes of my laughter. If only the hands of time could be turned back, just a little.

Dad, let me tell you, you'd be over the moon with your only grandson, now a strapping six-year-old with as much gumption and stubbornness as curiosity and enthusiasm.

Liam has a bit of Lucifer in him and he's kind of trying at times. Sound familiar? He's busy as a bee and loves darting around the house in his Superman costume. He loves space and hopes to one day explore the stars. Like his dad, his head is literally in the clouds and his feet not quite firmly planted on the ground.

He's quite smart and a quick learner when he con-

Ask France!

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France gets along very nicely with 85% of its power from nukes, so they obviously know how to do it. Why not get them to do it for us? It would be money better spent than the never-ending multi-million-dollar golden handshakes given to fired Hydro executives.

John C. Tysoe
Cheltenham



Mark Pavilons

centrates. He can recite lines from a movie or phrases he's heard in an almost photographic fashion. He loves soccer and there's no doubt you'd be on the sidelines with me if you could. Maybe you are.

Mom literally eats him up. She comes over almost weekly to babysit for us and shares some priceless moments. She's beaming when she leaves - a testament to the impact he has on her. I'm sure you would have loved bouncing him on your knee and laughing at his antics.

If you get a moment, stretch out those large hands of yours and give him a pat.

It's funny, you know, how much of you is in me. There are times I have to stop myself from using one of

your lines, or making "that face."

I am only now realizing that fatherhood is a duty, a lifelong occupation that requires great skill, patience and responsibility. Considering the training we get (what training?) I think the Pavilons style of fathering will soon find its groove.

Remember Lexie? She was the only grandchild you held, ever so briefly, before you had to go. There's a photograph of you on the deck chair, taken during our last Father's Day together.

Some say Lexie has some of our traits, but I really can't see them. She's as beautiful as she is smart and I'm confident she will help change the world one day, as a doctor, lawyer or artist. We shared a cry at the emotional ending of *The Phantom of the Opera* last week. Our day together was great and I walked on air the rest of the week. I never let her out of my sight, and my protective hand was always ready for action.

If you're allowed, please extend those loving arms and give her another great, big hug.

Kyleigh, our little 22-month-old terror, is as cute as a bug, and pretty much just as messy. I'm not sure if she's inquisitive or just

ornery, but she gets into everything. She's the only child to have figured out how to release the tray of her highchair with her toes, and open containers of all shapes and sizes. She'd make a heck of an escape artist or safe-cracker! She now takes *Oma* by the finger and leads her through the back yard. Oh, how picture perfect it would be for her to have her other hand similarly occupied. Your long fingers would dwarf her tiny palms, but I'm sure her gesture would melt your heart.

If you can find a way, please blow her a heavenly kiss.

Just as every fiber of my being loves these three angels, I know your heart would have been overcome with joy at the sound of their voices.

Feel free to visit any time. Bang some cupboard doors; fill up a couple of glasses with the good stuff.

I can't imagine a Father's Day with two generations of dads. It would have been glorious!

Liam told me the other day he would cry for "one hundred days" if I were to pass unexpectedly. That's the best Father's Day sentiment a guy could get!

Thinking of you.

Your Son

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