

## Talking to teachers

By Constance Scrafield

The assignment was to talk to teachers - maybe five of them - about how the strikes are affecting their personal lives. No matter how often I broached that subject, it was swept away: they wanted to talk: only about why they were on the streets of Orangeville; on the streets all over the province.

Their emotions were barely controlled when they spoke about the extensive cuts, the intensive curbs on their discourse with parents, the demerits of online learning for elementary and high school students; the risk of violent and unruly behaviour in the classrooms, how - whatever teachers elsewhere are saying - here in Orangeville, wages are absolutely not part of the issues.

When we asked how this was going down at home, they shrugged off the question with- 'everybody understands we have to be here - everybody supports us.'

Interestingly, when it came to the students themselves losing out on class time, people passing in their cars beeped their approval, waving out their windows, shouting, 'Don't give up!'

'The students get it- we want to be in the classrooms doing our jobs; this government wants to make that so difficult, it might be soon impossible to do a good job? is anybody listening to him?'

The Ford government wants to save millions of dollars on education. It gave up millions of dollars when it cut the csp-and-trade carbon tax; it is throwing away millions of dollars on its retracting of environmental projects. It wastes money and time going to court, conducting endless negotiations on matters which are 'ill-considered' and on which it will eventually have to back off.

In all its knee jerk reaction to taking over the government, on a campaign to undo as much of what the Liberals had achieved that is good for the province, its people and, very often, the planet, no new intelligent, progressive new policies have been offered. The ideas that have come forward have, in general, made life more difficult for those they affected: policies which they have since had to retract.

Education: to cut back on the education of our future leaders in every walk of life- those who will rule this country and, to some extent, the world and in industry, science, education, medicine - raising the generation to follow them is criminal. Our high school students are entering a brave new world, as abruptly changing as we ever seen.

The idea of 'saving' money to rob students of all ages of excellent education is an obscenity.

Governments, business and industry who only look to the bottom line either fail or incur huge crimes against humanity. The old expression: 'behind every great fortune is a great crime' is often proven. Certainly, this time, left unchallenged, Ford's government will commit the crime of reducing a high standard education to a system in shambles.

The burning question is why are so many students in need of individual care and attention? Teachers have theories about diet and stress in the homes but research seems to be slow and failing in determining causes, treatment and what to do about schooling. Currently, teachers, parents, psychologist and the students themselves are in favour of an inclusive classrooms that brings special or individual needs children to be part of regular school classroom.

Not, however, at the cost of educating the rest of the class and this can only be accomplished by continuing with adequate funding to pay for the properly trained individuals to work, one on one, with the students in need.

It seems this is the primary source of urgency in the negotiations between the unions and the government. To leave teachers in the

class on their own with students whose behaviour can be erratic, unpredictable and even violent is to put the lessons at risk and the educating system into chaos.

Many of us remember very clearly when this was not a problem. Sure, there were the rebels in the class ? in younger days, children who cried for their mummies, who ran around the room and spoke out without raising their hands but this behaviour was easily quelled by the authority of the teacher's reprimand. ?Johnny, sit down at the your desk and behave.? Repeated disruptive behaviour saw the child down at the principal's office and, eventually, a calmer student back in the class room.

No longer for two basic reasons: teachers are no longer allowed to discipline students ? at all, it seems: not to fail them for not doing work, not to insist they tow the line, do extra homework, write lines on the black board...

The other reason is that many more children are coming to school with many more differences in their abilities to learn and to cope with learning.

Why is this? The science is still working in it.

We are so proud of ourselves for the way in which technology is revolutionizing who we are and how we live, without due regard for our babies. We should think about that.