



# Import



## A WEEKLY REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENTS IN HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Published by The Agora Group, 12 Peter Street  
Markham Ontario L3P 2A4

phone: (905) 294-9762

fax: (905) 294-8586

e-mail: [agora@consultant-network.ca](mailto:agora@consultant-network.ca)

web site: [consultant-network.ca](http://consultant-network.ca)

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*Welcome to this edition of Import. In it you will find summaries of new and interesting issues and developments in health and human services, as well as "In My Humble Opinion," a short analytical article by an Agora Group affiliate. Please feel free to visit The Agora Group's web site, which can be accessed by pressing the "our affiliates" button on the Consultant Network web site: [consultant-network.ca](http://consultant-network.ca).*

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### **MARTIN ANNOUNCES FEDERAL CABINET**

On December 12 Prime Minister Paul Martin announced his Cabinet. Several appointments may interest people in the human service field:

- **Minister of Health: Pierre Pettigrew.** First elected in 1996, Pettigrew represents the Montreal riding of Papineau—Saint-Denis. He served as Director of the NATO Assembly's Political Committee in Brussels from 1976 to 1978 and was Foreign Policy Adviser to the Prime Minister from 1981 to 1984. Pettigrew has also worked as an international business consultant. He served as Minister for International Cooperation, Minister responsible for La Francophonie, Minister of Human Resources Development and most recently Minister for International Trade. He was not generally considered a leading light in previous Cabinets.

Martin also appointed Pettigrew as Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. Analysts suggest Pettigrew has these dual portfolios as recognition that the biggest flash point between the federal government and the provinces/territories will be health care. Martin has made a commitment to hold annual First Ministers' Meetings, and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs will report annually to Parliament on the state of federal/provincial/territorial relations, priorities and initiatives.

Pettigrew also becomes Minister responsible for Official Languages.



Gerry Byrne from the riding of Humber-St. Barbe-Baie Verte (Newfoundland and Labrador) was named Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health with special emphasis on the Drug Review Agency.

- **Minister of State for Public Health: Dr. Carolyn Bennett.** First elected in Toronto's St. Paul riding in 1997, Bennett was a member of the Standing Committee on Finance and Chair of the Liberal Women's Caucus. Dr. Bennett worked a family physician in downtown Toronto.

Bennett is the first MP to fill this new Cabinet-level position, created in the wake of the SARS scare. Among her tasks will be the creation of a National Public Health Agency

- **Minister of State (Children and Youth): Ethel Blondin-Andrew.** From the riding of the Western Arctic (Northwest Territories), Blondin-Andrew has served in Parliament since 1988. She has worked as an Aboriginal language and curriculum specialist, a college instructor and a National Manager of Indigenous Development Programs. Blondin-Andrew is member of the Dene Nation.
- **Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Status of Women): Jean Augustine,** who held this cabinet position in the previous Chretien Cabinet. She has served as Chair of the Liberal Women's Caucus. First elected in 1993 from the Toronto riding of Etobicoke-Lakeshore, Augustine was a Principal with the Metropolitan Toronto District Catholic School Board and served as Chair of the Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority.

Martin's ascension to power was touted by his supporters as a democratization of parliamentary processes, partly through augmented powers for parliamentary assistants (MPs appointed to assist ministers in their duties), who will play a role in policy development and who have also each been assigned a specific responsibility by the Prime Minister. For the first time, parliamentary assistants were sworn in as Privy Councillors so they can be invited to Cabinet and Cabinet Committee discussions.

At the same time, however, Martin centralized three of his own priority concerns into the Prime Minister's Office by creating three PMO secretariats – aboriginal affairs, cities and Canada-U.S. relations, each with its own parliamentary secretary. Martin will also personally chair four of nine cabinet committees – the Priorities and Planning Committee (the "inner Cabinet" of 16 members), and committees on Canada-U.S. relations, global affairs and Aboriginal issues.

Martin also created:

- a Task Force on Active Living and Dignity for Seniors, reporting directly to him and headed by Toronto Liberal MP Tony Ianno. The Task Force will make recommendations on policy changes to improve the quality of life of seniors. It will examine current programming, new community-based approaches, and possible pension adjustments in consultation with seniors and their organizations.
- a Cities Secretariat within the Privy Council Office to assist in the development and implementation of a New Deal for cities. Former BC Premier Michael Harcourt will chair the advisory committee to this secretariat.

Martin also split the scandal-plagued department of Human Resources Development Canada into two separate departments:



- the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development whose mandate will be promoting a well-functioning labour market and lifelong learning systems, including student assistance. The department will work with Citizenship and Immigration Canada on foreign credentials accreditation. Its Minister Joseph Volpe (a Toronto MP) will also engage the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and communities in community development and the social economy.
- the Department of Social Development which will oversee the income security system for seniors, people with disabilities, families and children. Its Minister Liza Frulla (an MP from Quebec) will also be responsible for the existing Voluntary Sector Initiative, working in particular with the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development.

Martin is widely regarded as a policy activist in the social affairs field, but a fiscal conservative – and it will be interesting to see which of the two dimensions prevails.

### **ONTARIO RELEASES MENTAL HEALTH REPORTS**

On December 12 Ontario's Minister of Health and Long-Term Care released nine regional Mental Health Implementation Task Force reports. These had been written at the Ministry's request over the past two years by nine regional groups, each comprising both providers and non-providers of mental health services in each region, as advice to the Ministry on how to implement the Ministry's mental health policy, *Making It Happen* (1999). However, the reports remained on the shelf in the Ministry for a number of months.

At the same time the Ministry also released:

- the report of the Forensic Mental Health Services Expert Advisory Panel
- the report of the Forum of Mental Health Implementation Task Forces (an umbrella group comprising the chairs of all Task Forces). This umbrella report contained several themes:
  - proposals to create regional mental health authorities (the lone dissenter from this is the report from Southwest Ontario)
  - creation of a Premier's Council on Mental Health
  - tackling the wage disparity between institutional and community workers in the mental health field.

All eleven reports can be accessed at:

[http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/pub/pub\\_menus/pub\\_mhitf.html#R1](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/pub/pub_menus/pub_mhitf.html#R1).

It may be significant that these reports were released by the Ministry on what was known to be one of the busiest news days of the year (competing with the swearing-in of the new federal Cabinet), thereby almost guaranteeing the release of reports would get no coverage (and the Minister would not be asked many questions about what he intends to do as a result of these reports). Release of the reports was not accompanied by a government or Ministry media release (other than an announcement of a "photo op" with the Minister).



## **NEWFOUNDLAND ISSUES MENTAL HEALTH DISCUSSION PAPER**

In late November Newfoundland and Labrador released *Working Together For Mental Health: A Proposed Mental Health Services Strategy For Newfoundland And Labrador*. The report proposes six strategic directions for mental health (including addiction services) in the province:

- enhancing mental health promotion and prevention
- providing the best range of clinical services
- creating easy access between services
- involving consumers and families/friends
- using resources efficiently
- demonstrating accountability to consumers and the public.

The report also proposes a redraft of the province's Mental Health Act:

*"The age of the current Act (30 years) reflects a time when patient rights were not a paramount issue in the health system. Thus, the legislation is weak on the protections afforded to individuals detained by the Act. Secondly, the act is outdated in terms of developments in the practice of psychiatry and out of step with current mental health systems in other comparable jurisdictions. It no longer reflects the reality of mental health practice. Without question, there is a pressing need to design and implement a new Mental Health Act which will reflect current knowledge and clinical practices while respecting the individual's autonomy and decision making power. An overhaul of the current legislation is a necessary step within a comprehensive mental health strategy."*

On November 27 Elizabeth Marshall, Minister of Health and Community Services, announced that eleven community meetings on the proposed strategy for mental health services will be held throughout the province between December 3 and February 3 to engage families, informal care givers, interested community members and organizations in the change process. As well, separate sessions will be held for consumers of mental health services and health providers, and will be closed to the public and media to ensure confidentiality.

The discussion paper is available as a 36 page PDF file at

<http://www.gov.nl.ca/health/publications/pdffiles/Mental%20Health%20Strategy%20Disc%20Doc%20Nov%202003.pdf>.

## **HIGH ON LIFE: ADDICTION HELP OFFERED VIA E-MAIL**

One barrier to addiction treatment is the sense of embarrassment or shame many people – particularly young people – feel about approaching the system for help. High on Life, a youth-oriented program operated by the Alcohol and Drug Recovery Association of Ontario, hopes to change that, through its "Ask Our Counsellor" web page. People sending an e-mail receive confidential advice, or a referral to appropriate service, from a certified addiction counsellor.

Jeff Wilbee of High on Life says the web site is also useful for school counsellors, teachers and school administrators who face problems of alcohol or drug use among their students.



Says Wilbee, "In a time of need, people should have as many avenues as possible for getting help with the need. We believe the Internet is increasingly a youth-friendly way to reach out".

The Ask Our Counsellor service can be accessed at <http://www.highonlife.org/home.asp>.

### **SASKATCHEWAN: PREMIER TO HOLD LOCAL ROUNDTABLES**

In an interesting move to foster community consultation, Saskatchewan Premier Lorne Calvert announced on December 2 that he and his officials will attend a series of roundtables across the province every year. While the main theme will be economic development, local attendees can raise any issues that concern them.

Calvert said his government will host ten community Roundtables between September and June of each year, divided between rural, small urban and urban settings. Each of Saskatchewan's First Nations will also be visited at least once every two years. A cross-section of opinion leaders from the surrounding community will be invited to attend the Roundtable meetings. The invitation list will be established in consultation with local leaders and community representatives and may include business leaders, community development officials, local labour leaders, educators, clergy, health providers, farmers/producers, seniors and youth.

### **ALBERTA STARTS "SPORT FOR LIFE" PROGRAM FOR TOBACCO-FREE LIVES**

On December 12 Alberta announced the launch of *Sport For Life*, a new program that teams the Alberta Government with Olympic athletes to encourage kids to follow active, tobacco-free lives. The program is a partnership of Alberta Health and Wellness, the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission and the Calgary Olympic Development Association (CODA). The cost for the 2003-2004 pilot year of the *Sport For Life* program is approximately \$250,000.

Under the program, National and Olympic athletes will deliver *Sport For Life* messages to schools around the province. The team includes three-time Olympic bronze medallist Clara Hughes (speed skating and cycling), Olympic gold medallist Kelly Bechard (women's hockey), two-time Paralympic medallist Earle Connor (athletics) and a number of Alberta Alpine Ski Association youth ambassadors.

As well, CODA's Canada Olympic Park in Calgary, a non-smoking facility with more than 1.2 million visitors annually, will promote healthy messaging and programs for youth. *Sport For Life* messages will also be delivered at select youth sporting events in Alberta.

### **HEALTH CHARITIES ARGUE FOR FEDERAL SUPPORTS**

*Import* frequently profiles the importance of the civic sector and argues for a stronger civic sector operating as the partner rather than the servant of government.

A recent submission from the Health Charities Council of Canada (HCCC) to Parliament's Standing Committee on Finance provides a good description of the size and impact of the voluntary sector in Canada, and calls on the Federal government to invest more heavily in that sector – particularly in health charities, in Health Canada activities that support the work of charities, in partnership-based research and in a more level playing field for people with disabilities. HCCC represents fifty-two national-level health charities.



According to the HCCC submission:

*“Often considered to be the third pillar of society, Canada’s voluntary sector is impressive. There are over 175,000 non-profit organizations, of which approximately 80,000 are registered as charities with Revenue Canada. Over 5,500 of these registered charities place a strong emphasis on health. The voluntary sector is large; it has an estimated \$90 Billion in annual revenues, with \$109 Billion in assets. This is comparable to the size of the economy of British Columbia. This sector accounts for 1/8 of Canada’s Gross Domestic Product. About 60% of the revenues in the sector are spent in teaching institutions and hospitals. The voluntary health sector is a major stakeholder in the field of health research, raising approximately \$300 Million each year to support health research.”*

HCCC makes a case for four major improvements:

- creation of a \$15 million annual funding stream for national voluntary health organizations
- increasing funding to Health Canada by an additional \$400 million annually for the next five years
- increasing the base budget of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research to \$1 billion over the next 4 years and ensuring that funding is used for partnering with other organizations, particularly with health charities.
- investing in enhancing the quality of life and providing equal opportunities to succeed for people with disabilities by:
  - developing a labour market strategy to address the needs of people with disabilities on such issues as training and employment
  - creating new funding investments for people with disabilities for transfer to the provinces/territories to invest in disability-related supports such as home care and transportation
  - broadly reviewing tax policy as it affects persons with disabilities, including expanding the definition of the Disability Tax Credit to include people with episodic or cyclical disabilities.

HCCC’s submission is found as a 12 page PDF file at <http://www.healthcharities.ca/en/03-07-21%20draft%20HCCC%202003%20Brief%20to%20Finance%20ENGLISH.pdf>. HCCC’s web site is at <http://www.healthcharities.ca/en>.

## **FEDS GIVE GRANTS FOR ABORIGINAL HEALTH RESEARCH**

On December 9 Federal Health Minister Anne McLellan announced funding for six research projects on Aboriginal health, as part of Health Canada’s Aboriginal Community-based Research initiative. This initiative is meant to develop and enhance the capacity of the scientific, research and aboriginal communities to undertake community-based research. It supports research undertaken in partnership with the aboriginal community that meets international standards of scientific excellence.

The grant recipients are:

- **Dr. Cheryl Bartlett** (University College of Cape Breton) to use cultural and traditional healing practices to advance mental health research (\$222,000 over three years)



- **Dr. Yoshitaka Iwasaki** (University of Manitoba) to study stress/trauma and coping/healing among Aboriginal peoples with diabetes in an urban Manitoba community (\$222,157 over three years)
- **Dr. Jude Kornelsen** (BC Centre of Excellence for Women's Health) to will look at issues in rural Aboriginal maternity care (\$212,706 over three years)
- **Dr. William Leslie** (University of Manitoba) to study factors contributing to high rates of bone fractures among Manitoba First Nations and what the outcomes of these fractures are (\$43,768 over one year)
- **Dr. Donna Mergler** (Université du Québec à Montréal) to combine traditional and scientific knowledge to maximize use of traditional food and minimize toxic risk (\$225,000 over three years)
- **Dr. Brenda Munro** (University of Alberta) who will work to increase the quality of health of Aboriginal homeless youth in Edmonton (\$188,360 over three years).

Despite Ontario's sizable Aboriginal population, none of the research awards were specific to Ontario.

### **ARCTIC GROUP: GLOBAL WARMING A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE**

On December 10 Sheila Watt-Cloutier, Chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC), addressed the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Milan. The Circumpolar Conference, founded in 1977, represents 155,000 Inuit who live in Alaska, Canada, Greenland and the Far East of Russia. In her address Watt-Cloutier pointed to the effects of global warming on Inuit environments and populations:

*"The human rights of Inuit are under threat as a result of human-induced climate change. So, my second purpose in being here is to announce the intention of ICC to defend the human rights of Inuit by using the well established tools available under international human rights law.*

*For generations uncounted, Inuit have observed the environment and have accurately predicted weather enabling us to travel safely on the sea-ice to hunt seals, whales, walrus, and polar bears. We don't hunt for sport or recreation. Hunters put food on the table. You go to the supermarket, we go on the sea-ice. Eating what we hunt is at the very core of what it means to be Inuit. When we can no longer hunt on the sea-ice, and eat what we hunt, we will no longer exist as a people.*

*Talk to hunters across the North and they will tell you the same story, the weather is increasingly unpredictable. The look and feel of the land is different. The sea-ice is changing. Hunters are having difficulty navigating and traveling safely. We have even lost experienced hunters through the ice in areas that, traditionally, were safe! The melting of our glaciers in summer is now such that it is dangerous for us to get to many of our traditional hunting and harvesting places.....*

*Some might dismiss our concerns saying: 'the Arctic is far away and few people live there.' That would be immensely short sighted as well as callous. The Arctic is of vital importance in the global debate on how to deal with climate change. That's because the Arctic is the barometer of the globe's environmental health. You can take the pulse of the world in the Arctic. Inuit, the people who live further north than anyone else, are the canary in the global coal mine."*



Watt-Cloutier said her group is exploring legal ways to link human rights and climate change with the aim of putting pressure on the US and other nations to do more to cut emissions of greenhouse gases. She said the Inuit were likely to complain about global warming to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, a part of the Organization of American States. The Commission's rulings are non-binding, but said Watt-Cloutier, *"powerful governments do not like to be branded as human rights violators. We will probably decide exactly what to do around April next year."*

Watt-Cloutier currently lives in Iqaluit, Nunavut. She was born in Kuujuaq, Nunavik (northern Quebec) and was raised traditionally on the land for ten years before attending school in southern Canada and in Churchill, Manitoba. Watt-Cloutier has an educational background in counselling, education, and human development. Her early experience as an Inuktitut interpreter for the Ungava Hospital in Nunavik led to a lifetime commitment to improving health conditions and education in Aboriginal communities.

The Inuit Circumpolar Conference web site is at <http://www.inuitcircumpolar.com/index.php?ID=1&Lang=En>.

On Arctic affairs the Inuit Circumpolar Conference works closely with the Arctic Council, a government-to-government organization established in 1996. The Council comprises government representatives from Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the US and acts as an intergovernmental forum for addressing common concerns and challenges faced by Arctic nations. The Inuit Circumpolar Conference is one of five Aboriginal organizations that have Permanent Participant status with the Arctic Council as a way for the council to consult with Arctic Indigenous peoples. The Arctic Council's web site is at <http://www.arctic-council.org/about.html>.

On December 2 Canada appointed a new Ambassador for Circumpolar Affairs, who coordinates Canada's participation in the Arctic Council, represents Canada at international meetings on circumpolar issues and consults with Canadians (particularly northern governments and Aboriginal groups). The new Ambassador, Jack Anawak, is member of Nunavut's territorial legislature representing Rankin Inlet North. He is a former Nunavut cabinet minister, a former Member of Parliament for Nunatsiak and served as Nunavut's interim commissioner prior to the creation of Nunavut in 1999. Anawak was born near Repulse Bay, Nunavut and raised in traditional outpost camps in the Kivalliq region, where he learned traditional Inuit survival skills. Canada's three territorial Premiers endorsed Anawak for the ambassadorial position.

## **OUR NEXT DOOR NEIGHBOUR IS EVERYONE: EGYPTIAN ACTIVIST WINS HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH AWARD**

Egyptian psychiatrist Dr. Aida Seif El Dawla was one of three winners of this year's Global Rights Defender Award, given annually by Human Rights Watch.

El Dawla had direct experience with injustice when she witnessed the arrest of her father by Egyptian authorities, leading to his imprisonment for over two years. Growing up in an activist family, El Dawla carried the activist tradition into her life as a university student, then as one of several psychiatrists who founded Egypt's Al Nadeem Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence. The Centre was created to help victims of torture, but the Egyptian government prevented it from using the word "torture" in its name – which led to a different challenge. Since the Centre's name referred to "victims of violence", a flood of abused women came to the Centre seeking help. This led to Centre to create two program streams – one dealing with torture victims, the other dealing with



women who had experienced violence. The programs dealing with domestic violence often use trained volunteers to work with abused women.

While El Dawla and her colleagues had expected that most torture victims would be political activists, they were surprised that a large number of ordinary Egyptians who had not been politically active came forward to seek help after police torture. Says El Dawla:

*"This does not make sense, a citizen walking home to find himself suspended for three days, arms from the ceiling, naked, electrified, for nothing? It does not fit, it's a strange piece of the puzzle. It fits nowhere, it destroys the whole coherence of the human being.... Even when neighbors are sympathetic, they keep away because they might be the next victim by contacting those people. So it's a completely lonely and confusing experience. So what we do is we try to give it sense - the idea that they are not alone."*

The Centre also tries to make these experiences public and it issues reports about torture by Egypt's police. If victims are willing, the Centre helps them file lawsuits against police officers who abused them. For some, taking action against the perpetrators can be a step in their recovery as they find a way to strike back against their abusers.

Even before founding the Centre, El Dawla had been heavily involved in women's rights issues in Egypt and had helped found the New Women's Research Center in 1984. Recently she helped found the Egyptian Popular Committee for Support of the Intifada and the Popular Committee Against The War In Iraq. El Dawla is also an advocate against female genital mutilation, a practice that in the early 1990s affected an estimated 97% of married Egyptian women between the ages of 15 and 45. In describing the impetus for her work beyond the anti-torture movement, El Dawla says:

*"For the person being tortured nothing is worse than torture, but for someone who starved to death nothing is worse than starving. Think of the man who killed himself because he can't provide for his children. I think this was the worst thing that ever happened to him. They're all forms of oppression. Torture is the most obvious because it has physical constraints: you're blindfolded and don't know where they'll beat you or electrocute you next. You can't even commit suicide."*

## **AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL ISSUES REPORT ON TORTURE TOOL MERCHANTS**

On December 2 Amnesty International released *The Pain Merchants: Security equipment and its use in torture and other ill-treatment*, a report documenting the domestic and international trade in devices that can be used for torture. According to the report:

*"In the last thirty years, devices such as electro-shock stun guns, plastic baton rounds and disabling chemicals have been marketed to security forces as 'less than lethal' equipment. Amnesty International has serious concerns, both about the medical effects of much of this equipment, and about its employment in torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment...."*

*'Less than lethal' security equipment is a growing international business. In 2003 the Omega Foundation in the United Kingdom identified some 856 companies in 47 countries which were active in the manufacture or marketing of 'less than lethal' weapons. Governments' regulation of the sale and use of these products is often seriously lacking and this requires urgent action.... Amnesty International calls for laws and regulations to:*



- *ban outright from use, manufacture, transfer and promotion all equipment the primary use of which is to commit human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian standards*
- *suspend the use, manufacture, transfer and promotion of any type of equipment where credible evidence has shown that it may inherently lend itself to human rights abuse, pending the outcome of a rigorous, independent and impartial inquiry into the use and effects of that type of equipment*
- *prohibit the transfer and use of any type of equipment where credible evidence has shown that it may inherently lend itself to human rights abuse unless the receiving party has established rules (including mechanisms which enable the effective monitoring and observance of the rules) which regulate the eventual legitimate use of it and which are based upon international human rights and humanitarian law standards."*

The report is at <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGA400082003>.

In light of the Amnesty International report, *Import* decided to take a pre-Christmas shopping trip to see what one supplier of less than lethal weaponry had to offer. We visited the web site of Florida-based Nova Technologies, whose president John McDermit said in September 1997, *"It's possible to use anything for torture, but it's a little easier to use our devices."* Nova's web page describes the firm as "the world leader in less-than-lethal technology".

According to Nova's December 2003 price list, its "Police Special" hand-held stun gun or its "Consumer Spirit" stun gun costs US\$139.95. However, for the more cost-conscious torturer, Nova's "Freedom" stun gun retails for US\$79.95. A RACC Belt (a stun belt marketed for "prisoner transport" that can be placed around a victim and triggered from distance of 200 feet – "one size fits all with D ring for handcuffs") has a heftier price tag of US\$895.95. Nova is proud of its products, stating that most other products *"will not take a person down .... Nova products are superior because they will take a person down."* More details can be found on Nova's web site at <http://www.nova-usa.com/frame.html>.

On the other hand, Nova's products are fairly old hat in terms of the technology of less than lethal weapons. The German-based firm Rheinmetall W&M has developed a "plasma taser" that fires an aerosol spray towards the target which creates, according to Rheinmetall, a conductive channel for a shock current of 50,000-volts. Says Steve Wright of the Omega Foundation, *"Such new technologies enable systematic human rights abuses to be more automated, so that one operator can induce pain and paralysis on a mass scale"*.

### **ANOTHER NEIGHBOUR: PRIVATE ENTERPRISE SLAVERY**

As the vultures gather around contracts for rebuilding Iraq it is worth looking at the track record of one US company that is already picking at the carcass – and the effects of that company's activities on the health and well-being of people in Bosnia, in Colombia and in Ecuador – all carried out through contracts with US officials.

Ben Johnston, from Texas, is an aircraft mechanic formerly employed by DynCorp, a US firm contracted by the US government to provide support services to US armed forces in Bosnia. But on arriving in Bosnia in 1999 Johnston discovered DynCorp employees were doing more than fixing helicopters. According to a wrongful dismissal lawsuit filed in Texas on behalf of Johnson in 2000:



*"In the latter part of 1999 Johnston learned that employees and supervisors from DynCorp were engaging in perverse, illegal and inhumane behavior [and] were purchasing illegal weapons, women, forged passports and [participating in] other immoral acts. Johnston witnessed coworkers and supervisors literally buying and selling women for their own personal enjoyment, and employees would brag about the various ages and talents of the individual slaves they had purchased."*

Johnston drew these abuses to DynCorp's attention – but rather than rewarding Johnston, DynCorp fired him for bringing "discredit to the company and the U.S. Army". This forced him into protective custody by the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Division (CID) until investigators could get him safely out of Kosovo and back to the US. Johnston's lawsuit was settled out of court, preventing full exposure of DynCorp's actions.

What made the allegations more troubling was the lack of interest by US military officials in ending the abuses. An internal e-mail from DynCorp employee Darrin Mills, who was sent to Bosnia to look into the problems, said, *"I met with Col. Braun [a base supervisor] yesterday. He is very concerned about the CID investigation; however, he views it mostly as a DynCorp problem. What he wanted to talk about most was how I am going to fix the maintenance problems here and how the investigation is going to impact our ability to fix his airplanes."*

Subsequently Kathryn Bolkovac, an American policewoman, was hired by DynCorp's British subsidiary to fill a UN post aimed at cracking down on sexual abuse and forced prostitution in Bosnia. She was fired by DynCorp after she amassed evidence that UN police were involved in trafficking young eastern European women as sex slaves. Said Bolkovac, *"When I started collecting evidence from the victims of sex trafficking it was clear that a number of UN officers were involved from several countries, including quite a few from Britain. I was shocked, appalled and disgusted. They were supposed to be over there to help, but they were committing crimes themselves. When I told the supervisors they didn't want to know."*

In September 2001 a class action lawsuit was launched in the US for damages resulting from another DynCorp activity – the spraying of herbicides by DynCorp pilots on coca and poppy fields and adjacent areas in Colombia and Ecuador as part of a contract with the US government. According to the account of one of the many affected families:

*"Between January and February of 2001, heavy spraying of toxic herbicides was carried out by employees or agents of the DynCorp Defendants in Colombian territory located no more than one mile from their home in Ecuador. The herbicides were sprayed repeatedly over the aforementioned period day after day with occasional rest periods of two and three days. On the days the fumigation took place the spraying occurred between six in the morning and four in the afternoon. Heavy clouds of liquid spray dropped from the planes, shifted with the wind, and repeatedly fell on the home and land of Plaintiffs.*

*As a result of the heavy fumigation carried out by the DynCorp Defendants over the area, Plaintiffs Venancio Aguasanta Arias and Rosa Tanguila Andi, and their children, developed serious health problems including heavy fevers, diarrhea, and dermatological problems. One of the Plaintiffs' children, Venancio Andres, was affected so severely by the spraying that he suffered from heavy bleeding through his intestinal system and had to be transported to the hospital at Lago Agrio, where he was treated. Plaintiffs and their children were in an excellent state of health prior to the fumigations by Defendants, and suffered the aforementioned medical problems for a period of weeks after the fumigations stopped. They continue to suffer to this day from serious irritations to their eyes which they have not been able to*



*cure. In addition to the health problems developed as a result of the fumigations of their land, Plaintiffs suffered the losses of their coffee, yucca, plantain and rice plantations, which is their sole source of subsistence. The animals they own were severely affected by the fumigations, including that their chickens developed blisters in their skin and died."*

Despite these allegations of serious human rights abuses, in early 2003 DynCorp was awarded a major contract by the US State Department, worth up to \$50 million in its first year, to recruit a private police force for Iraq. Said former UK Defense Minister Peter Kilfoyle, *"I find it difficult to believe that, at a time when bringing law and order to Iraq needs to be handled with delicacy and sensitivity, a private American firm like DynCorp is entrusted with this job."* In response to the contract, Human Rights Watch wrote to US Director of Iraqi Reconstruction Jay Garner:

*"Human Rights Watch is particularly concerned about the contract already awarded to DynCorp to hire 1,000 civilian advisors to help the government of Iraq organize effective civilian law enforcement. In a November 2002 report on trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Human Rights Watch found that DynCorp's personnel had participated in human rights violations and the company has not done enough to ensure that adequate safeguards are in place to prevent such activities. DynCorp was found liable by a British employment tribunal for firing an employee who blew the whistle on involvement by U.N. police and peacekeepers in the trafficking of women and girls into forced sex work. Another former employee testified during a legal proceeding that eight DynCorp staff members in Bosnia had allegedly admitted to him that they had purchased women and girls in 1999 and 2000."*

During 2003 DynCorp merged with the California-based firm Computer Sciences Corporation (CSC). According to statistics compiled by the US Center for Public Integrity, between 1990 and 2002 DynCorp and CSC received \$15 billion in US federal contracts and made \$1,218,944 in political campaign contributions, most to Republican candidates (including George W. Bush). As well, in 2001 CSC spent \$520,000 to lobby Congress and various government agencies on its own behalf, and Computer Sciences Corporation spent \$1,100,000 on lobbying.

#### **OUR READERS SAY....**

In response to last week's editorial on examining our institutions, a reader with experience in long-term care suggests a number of questions that boards of long-term care facilities should ask about their institutions:

- *"How are staff chosen and what credentials are required?"*
- *What professional upgrading is provided and required of them over time?*
- *Are audits conducted of issues such as crisis response and evacuation, delivery of food (to the mouths of residents, not just their bedside table) and quality of food, physical activity, preventable consequences of debility?*
- *What communication activities (not 'plans', but actual activities) are in place with families and providers of care?*
- *How transparent and welcoming are resident and family services - i.e. if a resident or family has an 'issue', how simple is their means of expression and how does the institution respond (process and results)?*



- *Are family and friend visits noted and is there a program in place for proxy social contact for those who do not have family and friends visiting regularly?*
- *Does the establishment organize external activities for residents?*
- *Is there a volunteer program in place?*
- *When residents leave for whatever reason (including in particular when they die), how is that dealt with (a) with their roommates if applicable, and their fellow resident friends (b) with their families (c) with the establishment's staff?*
- *And here's another question I would pose, intended to be hypothetical. Would the institution allow (with residents' and staff consent of course if they were included) an unbiased photographer, paid by an external party, to wander unaccompanied through the facility, recording their choice of images to be made freely available to the Board and families at anyone's request?"*

### **IN MY HUMBLE OPINION: POLITICS AND SCIENCE**

Scientists and politicians make strange bedfellows, even though they may have much in common. Ian Gibson, a UK Labour MP and former Dean of Biological Sciences at the University of East Anglia, put it cynically – but perhaps accurately – when he said ambition and back-stabbing are common to both.

But the rest of us poor helots labouring in the field of human services need both the politicians and the scientists, and we need them working together to address problems of the health and wellbeing of those we serve. But if they are going to work together, they need to know each other – a difficult process given the gap between the two. In Australia's parliament, for instance, only 2.2% of MPs have scientific backgrounds. In the US Congress only 1.3% are scientists (although another 4% are health-care professionals, including nine physicians). I am not aware of statistics for Canadian legislatures but I doubt the figures are much higher here.

Let's assume, then, that our politicians are not scientifically inclined. It is also fair to say that many of our scientists are not politically inclined. As Carl B. Feldbaum, president of BIO (an international biotechnology industry organization) put it recently, *"Many scientists are simply uncomfortable with the rough and tumble, the decidedly unscientific messiness of public engagement. In fact, some actually find the democratic process demeaning..... In politics, passion can triumph over logic and numbers"*.

Some scientific communities have tried innovative ways to reach out to politicians. Often these are attempts with a fair dose of lobbying for increased research funds, but they also have educational components to them:

- Since 1994 the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences has hosted its "Breakfast on the Hill" seminar series for parliamentarians, political staffers, senior public servants and the media, to demonstrate the importance of social science and humanities research. At each seminar a noted academic speaks on a theme relevant to politicians and their servants.
- Each year in the US capital the Science-Engineering-Technology Work Group (a coalition of 35 professional scientific societies) and the Coalition for Technology Partnerships (a group of high tech companies and trade associations) organize a Congressional Visits Day when teams of scientists spend time with individual congresspersons, briefing them on scientific issues of interest to the politicians.



- For the past five years the Federation of Australian Scientific and Technological Societies (FASTS) has hosted “Science Meets Parliament”, an event stretching over several days at which up to 200 scientists discuss their work with Australian parliamentarians. What makes the Australian event particularly interesting is that FASTS polls politicians in advance to find out which scientific issues concern them most, based on a lengthy list of scientific priorities. Scientific teams then brief each parliamentarian on the issues that concern them most. This year, more than two thirds of parliamentarians took part in the event. Not surprisingly given Australia’s droughts, water quality/salinity topped the politicians’ list of concerns, but “a healthy start to life” and “preventive healthcare” are not far down the list.

All three of these examples are national-level initiatives. This makes sense given the pots of money that national governments provide for research. Paul Martin’s appointment last week of Arthur Carty, President of the National Research Council, as National Science Advisor to the Prime Minister, further emphasizes the importance of science at the national level.

But bridging the gap at the provincial level makes sense too, particularly in areas like ecological sciences, health sciences and behavioural sciences since they affect areas in which provinces must make decisions based on logic and numbers as well as (not instead of) passion.

Why not try, in Ontario for instance, a “Science Meets the Legislature” endeavour, patterned perhaps on the Australian initiative – a process that engages politicians in determining the priorities on which they feel they need scientific information and education?

Perhaps Ontario’s universities should take a lead on this. Obviously universities have their own axes to grind – but in the absence of these axes, the industries that use scientists to make their dollars might do it – and these days I trust universities more than I trust industries.

Science is not a panacea any more than politics is. Both are flawed. And while we value both our political system and our scientific culture, we also distrust both of them – politics because we believe it is dishonest, and science because we fear that science will be misused to hurt us.

But we can need something even if we do not trust it fully – and we need both our scientists and our politicians, working together. As Princeton University President Shirley Tilghman (herself a scientist) put it in a 2002 speech:

*“In my own field, molecular genetics, the successful completion of sequencing the first human genome, like all scientific progress, has created the potential for both good and ill depending on how we as a society use the enormous amount of information that is being generated about our genetic makeup. . . . We need to make the best use of this information for the good of society, and to reach the right resolutions, we need scientists who are comfortable with ethical issues, ethicists and lawyers who understand science, and politicians with ethical sensibilities and wide-ranging intellects who are capable of listening with well prepared minds and then acting on a vision that sees farther than the next election.”*

John Butler, the Agora Group



## FROM THE QUOTES VAULT

*“Scientific knowledge, even in the most modest persons, has mingled with it a something which partakes of insolence. Absolute, peremptory facts are bullies and those who keep company with them are apt to get a bullying habit of mind – not of manners, perhaps; they may be soft and smooth, but the smile they carry has a quiet assertion to it, such as the Champion of the Heavy Weights wears upon what he inelegantly calls his ‘mug’.”*

Oliver Wendell Holmes, The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table, 1857