

Reality Check

A Drama in 4 Acts

by

Hastings and Prince Edward Legal Services

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HASTINGS AND PRINCE EDWARD LEGAL SERVICES

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Cast:

Judge (also acts as mc)

Government Spin Doctor (self-righteous, a touch too elegant, nouveau-riche - uses official press releases, propaganda, common-sensical stuff)

Public Opinion (looks like what is commonly perceived as a typical welfare bum - blabbers commonly held biases and prejudices and redneck stuff)

Welfare Bum (university type, overqualified, too old to get a job - tells his story)

Fake Work Injury (not visibly disabled, but nevertheless unable to work in his trade - tells his story)

Bad Tenant (single mother of 2 slightly unruly children, shiftworker with frequent layoffs - tells her story)

Reality Checkers (quote and state facts, which contradict popular bias and government misinformation)

Introduction to Candlelight Vigil and Reflection Time

Why Do This?

Three years have passed since the social assistance rates were cut by 22%, and regressive changes were made to social assistance that now allow discrimination against poor women, youth, and adults living with parents. Workfare, forced work for welfare benefits, is also a reality for many of our friends, relatives, and neighbours. We've also seen changes to other laws which decrease workers' and tenants' rights.

This forty-five minute piece of what might be called guerrilla or street theatre is our way of portraying some of the anguish and injustice that we feel and see every day in the course of our work. Daily, we listen to people's stories of their lives and their pain, and how the system doesn't work for them. We try to carve out legal solutions to complex problems, band-aiding gaping wounds.

We can't help but lay awake at night considering the effects that changes to federal and provincial laws, and the collective hardening of our hearts, is having on them.

We are hoping that this vigil and reflection time, in its unique form, will be informative and meaningful to you, and cathartic for us.

The members of our board and staff, and of the community who co-operatively wrote the drama that follows, **hope** you can experience this drama as a chance to consider, and reflect upon, Myth and Reality, Propaganda and Truth.

This is a drama in four parts. You will meet a Judge, who governs the proceedings, a government public relations consultant, a character who portrays public opinion, and three different characters who have their own story to tell. Volunteers will also play the part of the "reality checkers" whose commentary and reflection will give us something to think about.

As community members, you will play the part of the Jury. In the final scene, the Judge will be asking you for your verdict.

We've woven stories we've heard from clients and others that are based on real experience, to build our characters' stories. We've changed details to protect the innocent and client confidentiality.

Each scene focuses on our three main service areas: workers' rights, housing rights, and social assistance law. Each scene will be followed by an interlude where we will dim the lights, appreciate our candlelights - this will be our vigil time.

Act I

The Case of the “Fake Injury”

Judge:

This man stands accused of being a disreputable employee, faking injuries, malingering, and milking the system. Carl, how do you plead?

Carl:

Not guilty

Government Public Relations Consultant:

Our system works - it enhances self-reliance of workers and employers - two equal partners in the workplace - in preventing injuries and effectively managing the consequences of injuries when they do happen. We've put in place a system that delivers the most generous benefits in North America.

Public Opinion:

You're lucky you got anything at all. I'd be suspicious of any accident in the first place that happens on a Monday. And I tell you, I seen guys work through a lot more pain than this character is willing to. I seen guys run over by bulldozers and keep workin'.

Government Public Relations Consultant:

We've devised a targeted, cost-effective approach to return-to-work and labour market re-entry, coupled with financial incentives to employers. This will ensure the employability of injured workers unable to return to their pre-injury job, with a focus on transferable skills that employers need.

Carl:

I worked for ten years earning a good wage as a sheet metal mechanic. My foot was severely broken in a fall caused by my employer not having a proper safety latch on a gate. My co-workers and I had asked for months to have it fixed. Because of my injury, I can't go back to that job, and my employer has said that there is nothing for me anymore.

It took me three months to get my comp claim set up, because my employer said I had hurt my foot outside work. All my savings had been spent. Employment Insurance paid me a bit, but I was already falling behind in my bills even then.

After one and a half years, and two surgeries, I was put in a program at a private vocational school, which started in October. In December, realizing that the cost of my program would affect their comp premium, my employer said that they had suitable modified work for me - a brand new position, they said. The WCB yanked me out of my training, and sent me back to work over my protests that the "suitable" job was just a sham.

I was soon doing work that really aggravated my foot. I tried to call my caseworker, but my case was closed - he didn't even return my calls.

Finally I stopped work after discussing my health with my doctor. I didn't get any more WC benefits. The folks at Employment Insurance said that my claim had expired. Welfare wouldn't help out, because I had a life insurance policy that I could cash in.

After three months, with the help of the legal clinic, the WCB realized that a mistake had been made, and that the job was a sham.

I was sent back to school with only three weeks to choose a course. I didn't really like the computer course. It was very difficult, and I had to stay at the college long hours to get access to a computer.

My bills were backed up a mile. My marriage was on the rocks, because of all the stress. My wife left me and took the kids to a new apartment. I moved back in with my folks. They can't afford to keep me, because they just have their old age pension.

The course became just too much for me. I failed several subjects that very first semester.

Almost as soon as my grades got to the Board, the letter came. "You're cut off", it said.

I've sent in an appeal letter, and I am still waiting for my second chance. My employer is fighting my appeal for a second chance.

I am on welfare now, getting \$50 after I pay my room and board allowance of \$195 to my parents. They cut me back from \$520 per month when that workfare law came in. Said adults on welfare living with their parents get less money than other people. I get the kids every second weekend, and I can't afford to do anything with them. Some days I get up, and I don't know how I am going to make it through the day, and I don't even care if I do.

Reality Check 1:

Does the government really mean it when it says that employers and workers have equal power in the workplace, and are encouraged to be self-reliant in preventing accidents? Is that why the number of Ministry of Labour inspections was down 55% over the past 6 years, even though the number of critical injuries during the same period was up 80%?

Reality Check 2:

Why does Carl have to fight so hard to have his word believed over his employer's? Is that related to the fact that the president of the WSIB gets a \$60,000 annual bonus to his salary for cutting the Board's payouts to workers like Carl?

Reality Check 3:

If there's a 1-800 number for reporting injured worker fraud, why can't it be used to report employers like this one? Call 1-800-MIKEHARRIS!

Reality Check 4:

Why is there a \$19.1 billion windfall in the Employment Insurance fund? Does it have anything to do with the fact that less than half the people who are out of work can no longer get

Employment Insurance benefits compared to the 82% who could in 1989? Why did they change the name from Unemployment Insurance anyway? Why is federal Minister Paul Martin

considering income tax cuts for people who haven't even paid into the EI fund? Why can only 4 people out of 10 who pay into EI actually collect benefits now? If Carl is unemployed, why can't he get Employment Insurance with that huge surplus sitting there?

Reality Check 5:

Why is Carl on Ontario Works when the new Workplace Safety and Insurance Board took in \$618 million more than it paid out last year? Why did they try to justify all their cuts by saying that the system was on the brink of collapse when the Board has \$8.7 billion worth of assets?

Reality Check 6:

With employers like this one, is it any wonder that the Ontario Medical Association reported to the government a "disturbing and increasing trend" - 51% of doctors said that patients had recently asked them to not report a workplace injury to the Board, at the request of their employers.

Reality Check 7:

Why does an adult living with his parents, who can't afford to keep him, get less welfare than anybody else? Isn't that discrimination under the Ontario Human Rights Code on the basis of family status? Didn't the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms say something about how people have to be treated equal?

Judge:

I will reserve my decision in your case

Interlude

Eileen McGann's "**Too stupid for democracy**" from her album: Journeys

Lyrics:

Oh I think we're just too stupid for democracy
Whoever thought majorities should rule?
I think were just too stupid for democracy
Show me a mirror, I'll show you a fool.

Think of the majority of people that you meet:
Do you think that their opinions should be law?
Well, if you're like the majority, you think the rest are nuts
Thus democracy reveals a fatal flaw

Think about the average uncultivated field:
There's twenty-thousand weeds for every flower
And over in the corner where manure's piled high
You'll find the weeds who want to be in power

And every four or five years they will play a little game
Saying "You can pick your leader – take your choice"
Any they throw us out a line which we swallow every time
And that's the end of having any voice

Oh I think we're just too stupid for democracy
The democratic world is under curse
I think we're just too stupid for democracy
Though all of the alternatives are worse:

Dictatorship is full of nasty people who will shoot you
Plutocracy is likewise full of sharpers who will loot you
Oligarchy's full of snobs who snag all the important jobs
Monarchy is kind of fun but still I think its day is done
Communitistic theory's fine but put in practice every time
It turns from nice to nasty and I don't think it would suit you
Which leaves us meritocracy
Which always sounded good to me...

Folksingers in the government and all the laws must rhyme
Folksingers in the government, oh we'll have such a time!
Jamming about policy and singing party line . . . but...
Maybe your ideas of merit aren't the same as mine...

Oh I think we're just too stupid for democracy
Though all of the alternatives, all of the alternatives
All of the alternatives are worse!

Act II

The Case of the “Professional Dead Beat Tenant”

Judge:

Will the Tenant please come before me.

You are being accused of being a “professional dead beat tenant”: a tenant who preys upon innocent landlords by moving into an apartment knowing full well that you can’t afford to pay the rent.

Further, you are accused of not paying the rent on purpose and dragging out the eviction process through legal technicalities so that you can live rent-free for as long as possible.

What do you have to say in your defence?

Tenant:

When I moved into the apartment I really believed that I would be able to pay the rent. Before my marriage broke up, I owned my own home and was used to making mortgage payments being in a situation where I’m on Family Benefits and can’t pay the rent is really embarrassing.

The problem is that my ex refuses to pay the \$600.00 outstanding support, and the **Family Responsibility Office** is too backlogged to help.

I’d love to move some place where I can afford to pay the rent. I’ve applied for subsidized housing, but the **waiting list in Belleville is two years long!** Since the break-up of my marriage, I wanted some stability for my daughter. I wanted her to stay at her old school so that she could continue to be with her friends. I can’t afford a car; so I need a place near the school.

When Family Benefits refused to increase my cheque, because the father isn’t paying support, I went to the legal clinic, and they are helping. The problem is that even with the support payments accounted for, Family Benefits doesn’t give enough to pay for the rent. My rent is **\$670.00**, and Social Assistance only gives me **\$554.00** for my shelter costs.

My worker keeps telling me that I’m living beyond my means, and that I should find a cheaper place to live, but when I fill out applications for cheaper apartments I’m automatically refused because I’m a single mom with two kids on Social Assistance. The places that will accept me are **cold, damp, unhealthy basement apartments**, far away from my family and the children’s school.

Judge:

Says here that you owe the landlord \$600.00 in rent. Is that true?

Tenant:

I agree that I owe the landlord some money, but I had to spend **\$400.00** to get baseboard heaters put in, because the landlord refuses to fix the furnace. I called the City, and they gave the landlord an **Order** to fix the furnace, but he just ignores it.

Look, all I want is an **affordable, reasonably maintained, and safe place** for me and my kids to live. I don't think I should be labelled a "deadbeat" and have to move my kids to another school simply because the Government's housing allowance doesn't cover the rent, and because the landlord won't do the repairs.

Judge (looks at the Government Public Relations Consultant):

And what does the Government say to this tenant's defence?

Government Public Relations Consultant:

On **June 17th** the Ontario Government passed the **Tenant Protection Act** which still protects sitting tenants from high rent increases, much like the old law, but gives the landlord the ability to raise rents to whatever the market can bear, once an apartment becomes vacant. This is called **Vacancy Decontrol**.

So, while we've kept tenant protection, we've also given developers and landlords an incentive to build and to invest in affordable housing.

(points to tenant) The reason why this woman can't find a decent place to live is because, under the old law, there was no financial incentive to build affordable housing: Taxes for apartment buildings are sky high; it was easier to get a divorce than to evict a tenant; Rent Control meant that landlords could not get a fair return on their investments. Because of Rent Control this woman and her children face the streets.

We passed the Tenant Protection Act because we know that the best tenant protection is the free market. The Minister of Housing has promised to "get Ontario out of the housing business". Look at the **BOONDANGLE** of social housing providers wasting billions of hard earned tax dollars. Let the Free Market get to work to create affordable housing for this family.

Reality Check 1:

When the Government tells you that Rent Controls are to blame for this family's dilemma, they fail to mention that it was the Davis Tories who first brought in rent controls as a response to a housing crisis in the mid seventies. The housing crisis came first. To stop rent gouging by landlords taking advantage of a tight housing market, the Davis Tories brought in Rent Control.

Even if you buy the government myth that it was Rent Control that created this housing crisis, then why wasn't affordable housing being built under the previous NDP Government who exempted new buildings from rent control?

When the Government tells you that the lifting of rent controls means that more affordable housing will be built, they fail to tell you that landlords, developers, and even their own commissioned study have consistently said that that the lifting of Rent Control is not enough to get private industry to invest and build more affordable housing. Even the **Toronto**

Sun reported last week that, according to a landlord lobby group, the lifting of rent controls “have had little impact on new rental construction”. In every jurisdiction where rent controls

have been removed, from British Columbia to New York, the lifting of rent controls has meant greater evictions, more harassment of tenants and drastically increased rent. Vacancy Decontrol gives even good landlords an added incentive to get rid of tenants, so that they can advantage of the tight rental market.

Reality Check 2:

When the Government blames others for tax injustices levied against tenants, they fail to mention their role in allowing municipalities to tax tenants at a rate of three times that of homeowners. The downloading of social housing and other services previously paid for by the Province means that this tax imbalance will not be corrected. If in the distant future tax reductions did occur the result of the affordability of rental accommodation would be negligible because the new so-called Tenant Protection Act allows for **unlimited** rent increases for vacant apartments. Any savings that might occur would go directly into the pockets of landlords.

Reality Check 3:

When the Government says that landlords could not make a “fair” profit under Rent Control they neglect to tell you that, according to the **Russell Canadian Property Index**, Ontario’s apartment sector has delivered a 10% annual return on investment over the past 10 years. Compare this to the retail sector 9%, industrial sector 8.4%, office sector 5.2%, and mixed-use projects such as Toronto’s Eaton Centre 3.2%. Nice work, if you can get it!

Reality Check 4:

When the Government tells you that it was easier to get a divorce than to evict a tenant, they neglect to tell you that under the old system landlord and tenant court was the fastest court in the land. The new Tribunal isn’t much faster for “disputed” applications, but the vast majority of cases are processed or rubber-stamped without the tenant giving their side of the story. Justice and bureaucratic efficiency don’t mix.

Reality Check 5:

When the Government uses the **BOONDANGLE** of social housing as an example of how much better the private sector can carry out projects, they neglect to mention that it is private developers who have been accused of questionable practices, inefficiencies, and faulty work under former government programs that funded social housing projects.

Reality Check 6:

The reality is that there is little protection for this family under the so-called Tenant Protection Act. This law allows for greater, and in many cases unlimited, rent increases. This law allows landlords greater flexibility to discriminate against people, simply because they get social assistance, or are unwed moms. This law makes it harder for tenants to get urgent repairs done be eliminating rent freezes, if a landlord is in serious violation of municipal property standard by-laws. But worst of all, this law means higher rent for those who can afford it the least.

A couple of weeks ago, the Cities of Toronto and Ottawa declared homelessness a “National Disaster.” The reality is that there is a direct link between the lack of affordable housing and homelessness. Why is a law that fast-tracks evictions and takes away Rent Control called the **Tenant Protection Act?**

Judge:

I will reserve my decision

Interlude

Brenda MacDonald’s **“Struggling & Juggling”** from the album **“Struggling & Juggling”**

Act III

Judge:

I call the case of the case of the individual who has been accused of relying solely on government support for a living, the Welfare Bum.

Public Opinion:

As a taxpayer, I am sick and tired of it that my taxes are used for paying people on welfare to sit at home, drink beer, and watch television.

Government Public Relations Consultant:

Since June 1995, we have been working to restore integrity to the welfare system. These changes are founded on the principles of accountability, effectiveness, and fairness. Under the old system there are many rules that do not make sense. We are paying people for costs they do not have, failing to recognize income from other sources in a realistic way, and providing benefits when another program is available (Janet Ecker).

Public Opinion:

Welfare fraud is rampant. Everybody knows that the welfare bums make quite a bit of money with moonlighting and not reporting the extra income.

Government Public Relations Consultant:

Measures to prevent fraud and misuse of the welfare system have resulted in significant savings for taxpayers in 1997-98: Over 1,100 welfare fraud convictions - Assistance reduced or terminated in approximately 14,800 cases - Identification of \$63 million in overpayments as well as an additional \$37 million in avoided future costs (Welfare Fraud Control Report, November 13, 1998).

Public Opinion:

I betcha there is lot of work available, if these lazy bums would only get off their you-know-whats and look for a job. The least these people can learn from the Workfare program is to set an alarm clock and get up at a respectable time.

Government Public Relations Consultant:

People on welfare have told us that Ontario Works is making a difference in their lives, “ said Minister Ecker. “It is helping them develop skills, make contact with potential employers and give something back to their communities (Janet Ecker).

Public Opinion:

Don't you know that the welfare bums have lots of kids just to stay on social assistance?

Government Public Relations Consultant:

Our reforms are returning responsibility and accountability to the welfare system. They're helping thousands of people across this province - people like Marie Johnson of Brockville, who in just eighteen months has gone from a daily struggle on welfare to a job as an office administrator (Mike Harris).

Public Opinion:

Finally somebody has the guts to tell the welfare bums that there is no free lunch in Ontario. Its a good thing that Mike Harris makes them work for their benefits.

Government Public Relations Consultant:

Ontario Works is providing people with the skills, confidence and opportunities to return to work. And they are finding real, paying jobs: As a direct result of these reforms, 304,000 Ontarians have stopped relying on welfare since this government was elected in mid- 1995 (Harry Danford).

Welfare Bum:

My name is John; I am 52 years old; I am a personnel manager. I worked for a large company for over twenty years, until it closed in 1993, due to the recession. At that time I was married with two children who had just entered university. While I tried for a long time to find jobs in my field, we lived off unemployment insurance and our savings. Despite sending out resumes by the hundreds, I could not find work; I suspect my age had something to do with it. Then I tried my luck as a real estate agent. Tuition fees for the course and a respectably looking car took care of my RRSP's. I worked hard to make the sales, but I was not a success, and in 1995 we had to declare bankruptcy. We lost everything, but we paid all our debts, and my kids could finish their university education. However, the stress was too much; I am under medication against clinical depression. To make matters worse, my wife divorced me in 1996. Since then I have tried to find any kind of job, but I am usually turned down because I am either too old, overqualified, or my skills are outdated. Once I even delivered newspapers, but it cost me more than I earned.

Finally I broke down and applied for social assistance. Never in my worst nightmares did I see myself in the role of a welfare bum, but the prospect of being homeless or starved was even worse. Until that point of time I had, like many other people, been under the impression that it was cinch to get on welfare. I tell you, it is anything but easy to pass the test of poverty, or to cheat. I had to submit bank statements, life insurance cash surrender values, the value of my car, declare any other assets which might be liquefied, and on, and on. Anyway, I did qualify for social assistance. They also let me keep my car, because it is worth less than \$5000. I receive just enough money to pay for rent and food, but the monthly cheque gives me a sense of security. I should be grateful.

What I find very scary though, is that I am grouped with all the other welfare people, who I don't even know, as potential criminals. Perhaps it is true that some welfare recipients cheat on the government, but why does the government have to mobilize the whole Ontario population to keep a watchful eye over **all** of us so-called welfare bums? Why was it necessary for the Ministry to establish a force of **Eligibility Review Officers** who can knock on my door anytime,

just because some anonymous caller denounced me on the snitch line? The mere fact that I receive social assistance does not automatically mean that I am also a bum or a criminal.

I deeply resent this Workfare nonsense. With all respect to government intentions, it is a ridiculous and counterproductive exercise. I fail to see how resume writing would land me a job; I could teach those guys a thing or two about that skill. Neither do I understand how helping with charity bingos will get me in touch with prospective employers. The only thing that would get me off welfare, would be a decent job, only one of the 725,000 jobs promised in the Common Sense Revolution. Is that too much to ask?

Reality Check 1:

In the midst of plenty for some, more poverty, inequality, hunger and homelessness mean a growing number of people are not sharing in the general economic upturn, the survey by the Ontario Social Development Council found. . . .

And while the numbers on social assistance benefits are declining, they are “deceiving”, because fewer people are now eligible to receive them . . . (Toronto Star, Nov. 13, 1998)

Reality Check 2:

Premier Harris tells us that Marie Johnson was on welfare for 18 months and then got a job as an office administrator. He implies that this would not have happened without Workfare. This is simply not true. People have always found jobs and got off welfare on their own. In 1995, the average stay of employable people on welfare was only 15 months.

In this context it should be noted that many people on welfare **are** working - at low paying jobs. Social assistance provides them with a “top-up.”

Reality Check 3:

Fraud in the welfare system is no more prevalent than it is in the income tax system, maybe less so.

The generally accepted estimate from studies of income maintenance programs in Canada and other countries of the amount of improper payment - which includes administrative errors by the system and honest mistakes by recipients, and fraud is 2 to 5% of total payments.

Taxpayers are hurt far more by other kinds of fraud. Between \$5 and \$20 billion are lost every year in Canada due to tax evasion alone. That is more than Ontario’s entire welfare bill.

Reality Check 4:

The **Welfare Fraud Control Report** of November 13, 1998 informs us . . .

that in September, 1998 a total of roughly 311,000 cases, representing about 700,000 people, received welfare assistance.

That for the period of 1997-98, the Ministry received about 62,000 referrals for suspected fraud via the 1-800 snitchline and other communications.

That the result were 1,100 fraud convictions, less than 0.4% of the total caseload.

While Minister Ecker celebrates savings of "\$63 million in overpayments as well as an additional **\$37 million in avoided future costs** (talking about creative accounting!!)", she does not reveal how much of these savings paid for the expense of 320 eligibility review staff.

Reality Check 5:

And then there is Anderson Consulting which has been hired by the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Provincial auditor Erik Peters, in his annual report this month, stated that he couldn't find out why the government would agree to pay as much as \$180 million out of future savings from retooling the mechanics of the \$5billion-a-year-welfare system.

The "reform work" of Anderson executives is billed to the government at \$575 per hour for a job which ministry staff could do for \$70 per hour; the charge for data entry clerks is \$57.

We also may want to mention that the government contracted with Anderson Consulting despite their abysmal record with other jurisdictions.

Judge

(defers ruling)

Interlude

Poem To Be Read By a Community Volunteer

First they came for the people on welfare,
And I did not speak
Because I was not poor.

Then they came for employment equity,
And I did not speak,
Because I was not a member of a minority.

Then they came for health care,
And I did not speak,
Because I was not sick.

Then they came for education,
And I did not speak,
Because I didn't have children.

Then they came for pensions,
And I did not speak,
Because I was still young.

Then they came for my union contract,
And I did not speak,
Because I didn't think I needed my union.

Finally they came for me,

And there was not one left to speak out.

Act IV

Judge:

Could the three accused please stand?

Your charges have been read. Your pleas have been taken. I have heard evidence from many sources.

In instructing the jury, I wish to add some parts of my own. May they influence your deliberations

My apologies to George Orwell A few reflections from "1984", the age of Big Brother.

The state motto: War is Peace, Freedom is Slavery, and Ignorance is Strength. . . .

I am reminded of Newspeak whose sole aim was to narrow the range of thought:

. . . Every year fewer and fewer words, and the range of consciousness always a little smaller. Big Brother thought that the Revolution would be complete when the language was perfect.

And I am struck by how we are entering the age of Doublethink:

. . . To tell deliberate lies while genuinely believing in them, to forget any fact that has become inconvenient, and then, when it becomes necessary again, to draw it back from oblivion for just so long as it is needed, to deny the existence of objective reality and all the while to take account of the reality which one denies

Deliberate exercises of Doublethink are: the Ministry of Peace concerns itself with war, the Ministry of Truth with lies, the Ministry of Love with torture, and the Ministry of Plenty with starvation.

Big Brother thought that if human equality is to be forever averted the prevailing mental condition must be controlled insanity.

And I am also struck by the role the Reality Checkers have played in bringing to the fore comments and **strategic questions** to assist in our deliberations:

Reading of Strategic Questions

Strategic Question 1:

Questioning is a basic tool for rebellion. It breaks open the stagnant, hardened shell of the present, opening up options to be explored.

Strategic Question 2:

Questioning reveals the profound uncertainty that is embedded deep in all reality beyond the facades of confidence and sureness. It takes this uncertainty towards growth and new possibilities.

Strategic Question 3:

Questioning can change your entire life. It can uncover hidden power and stifled dreams inside of you . . . things you may have denied for many years.

Strategic Question 4:

Questioning can change institutions and entire cultures. It can empower people to create strategies for change.

Strategic Question 5:

Asking a question that leads to a strategy for action is a powerful contribution to resolving any problem.

Strategic Question 6:

Asking questions that open up more options can lead to many unexpected solutions.

Strategic Question 7:

Asking questions that help adversaries shift from their stuck positions on an issue can lead to acts of healing and reconciliation.

Strategic Question 8:

Asking questions that are unaskable in our culture at the moment can lead to the transformation of our culture and its institutions.

Strategic Question 9:

Asking questions and listening for the strategies and ideas embedded in people's own answers can be the greatest service a social change worker can give to a particular issue.

Judge (continues):

And I am struck by lessons learned from watching geese - let me just share one with you:
“When a goose gets sick, or wounded, or shot down, two geese drop out of formation and follow it down to help and protect it. They stay with it until it is able to fly again or dies. Then they launch out on their own with another formation or catch up with the flock. **Lesson:** if we have as much sense as geese do, we too will stand by each other in difficult times as well as when we are strong.”

Considering all you have heard, and my instructions to you, **MEMBERS OF THE JURY**, are these people **GUILTY** or **NOT GUILTY**?

Jury:

NOT GUILTY!

Judge:

Gentlemen, and gentlewoman, you have heard the jury’s verdict. You are free to go. This court is adjourned and I would as for a few closing remarks.

Closing Remarks

Thank you for your patience with our fledgling attempts at drama. We hope next year, that instead of reflection and analysis we can celebrate some small victories, or success stories, that at this time, seem to be far too elusive.

Closing Song:

James Gordon Tamarack's "We owe it to the Pioneers" from his album Tamarack 13

Lyrics:

If they saw their squandered legacy they would surely be ashamed,
All they worked for all those years for we have given it all away
To the bankers and the bureaucrats and to the Conrad Blacks
We owe it to the pioneers to take this country back.

For the miners in Cape Breton toiling deep beneath ground,
Who never even made enough to buy the coals that they'd found,
The dustbowl farmers starving in their cold tarpaper shacks,
We owe it to the pioneers to take this country back.

Chorus:

Take back the spirit that was captured in
The canyons of concrete and glass,
Give it back to the lakes and the mountains and
The fields of prairie grass

To the migrant workers harvesting the crops with callused hands,
Who thought that they had made it to a fair and honest land,
To the labourers who cleared the swamps and laid the railroad tracks.
We owe it to the pioneers to take this country back.

For the women in the textile mills and the canning factories,
All those who dreamt some day they'd have respect and dignity.
For the natives on the Fraser drying salmon on their racks
We owe it to the pioneers to take this country back.

Chorus

And for those who scratched a living from this rocky, frozen earth.
Who thought they'd settled where you were not judged by your net worth.
Canadians who've fallen in between the corporate cracks
We owe it to the pioneers to take this country back.

The Mission Statement

Hastings and Prince Edward Legal Services

Exists

To serve our clients.

We reach out to them

In a caring way.

We dedicate ourselves

To provide

Quality legal and advocacy service

To our low income clients.

We pursue

Not only justice in individual cases

But seek to empower ourselves

And all low income citizens

To pursue

Social change and social justice

In our community.

Materials to be used:

Official Government statements, press releases, propaganda, etc.

Letters to newspaper editors, newspaper editorials

Actual case stories

Statistical facts, actual case stories from lawyers, social workers, reporters

The Law

For the interludes sing-alongs, short poems, comical situations