

A lesson in the fine art of compromise

BY JOHN GORMLEY, THE LEADER-POST JULY 8, 2011

It's an obvious relief to everyone - mainly students and their families - that Saskatchewan's 12,000 teachers are now closer to a new agreement.

With mutual praise and optimism, the teachers' union, the government trustee bargaining group and the mediator brought in to deal with the case all agree that progress has been made amidst goodwill and hard work by all concerned.

The recommendations of mediator Richard Hornung deftly split some of the differences that originally seemed so intractable between the sides and will serve as the framework of a tentative agreement.

Hornung succeeded in getting the parties to accept that any agreement would have to contain the province's formula of 5.5 per cent over three years but, at the same time, moving into certain so-called "market adjustments".

And for those of us tiring of public sector conflict-driven bargaining that mirrors the Industrial Revolution more than the modern workplace, this mediation process may set some standards that can be helpful in future negotiations.

One is the agreement by both sides that in order to set so-called comparators with other teachers' salaries, an average will be used among the western provinces. This way, the high salaries of Alberta teachers are offset by the lower pay of B.C., all moderated by the middling pay of Manitoba. Parity with other provinces isn't always the most important aspect of public sector pay, but at least having a framework will help narrow the issues more quickly in future talks.

With the inevitable summer increase in crime - like the rest of us, bad guys try to get out more after a winter of staying close to home - from violence to highway deaths, robberies to senseless vandalism, there is a common thread in many news reports.

For example, after five dogs were tortured and killed on the Cote First Nation and looters broke into evacuated homes in the flooded small town of Roch Percee, police laid charges against people under age 18, so "the Youth Criminal Justice Act prevents the suspects from being publicly named". While it's good public policy to treat young offenders differently than adults, I get the importance of not stigmatizing kids who run afoul of the law by identifying them. To a point.

But when many young offenders responsible for senseless crimes are often also charged with breaching conditions of release from many earlier charges and convictions, isn't there a time when the cloak of anonymity should be lifted off ?

While the increasingly quaint and archaic notion that being named is one way of deterring kids from

crime, there is a more compelling case that public safety and protection are improved by knowing the names of serial offenders who live in your neighborhood or who attend your child's school. Give kids one or even two free passes on being identified if they break the law. But it's time that repeat offenders are known for what and who they are.

Even by the often dodgy standards of some of Britain's "no holds barred" tabloids, the behaviour of the popular News of the World (NOTW) has been inexcusable and appalling.

Several years ago, two people, including an editor, were jailed when NOTW was caught hacking into Royal Family cell phones.

In recent weeks, with several dozen lawsuits underway against NOTW, stunning accusations surfaced of hacking into the voicemails of young murder victims - in one case deleting voicemails which gave a teen victim's family false hope that she may still have been alive.

Now, with police investigations suggesting as many as several thousand people may have had accounts hacked by NOTW, including the families of dead soldiers in the Iraq war, the British government announced an inquiry into the affair.

So, after 168 years, the News of the World will print its last paper this weekend. Good riddance to bad rubbish.

Gormley is a talk-show host, lawyer, author and former Progressive Conservative MP. He can be heard Monday to Friday 8: 30 a.m. to 12: 30 p.m. on NewsTalk 980 CJME.

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