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Don

a v.i.p. and me

(very interesting person)

By KATHLEEN A. HICKS



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DON BLENKARN:
Member of Parliament
Member of Conservative Party
Lawyer — 19 years.

ME: It has been said of you that you are an impatient 43-year-old lawyer who likes shaking up the establishment. Having been a lawyer for 19 years, why did you switch to politics?

MR. BLENKARN: I suppose a person supports other political candidates and works with them and has ideas as to what should happen with this country and he gets to the point where he feels he has to do more. Why does a person go into the ministry? He receives a calling, and I think I received a calling. It's a situation where you feel it is your obligation to do some things that you think perhaps should be done to make your country a better country.

ME: How successful do you think this past year has been for you?

MR. BLENKARN: Very — in terms of the original objectives I set. I have had a fair amount of influence in the House of Commons and with my own party. I've managed to do some small things in terms of changing the direction we seem to be going. These may not appear impressive, but bit by bit we are getting some things done and problems attacked. It's a long grind — it's not like business where you make up your mind you are going to buy something or sell something tomorrow and it's done — it's a long process. BUT I feel we are accomplishing something.

ME: One of the social problems you wanted to overcome was high-rises. You wanted to make the family home a reality again. Have you been making any headway with this housing situation?

MR. BLENKARN: Yes, I have managed to change our entire party caucus position around in connection with its national policy in terms of housing. I have managed to persuade our party that it is the right of every person at some time in his life to be able to own a home with its relevant green space and private accommodation and private land. I've managed to persuade our party caucus that it is the obligation of the Federal Government, through Central Mortgage and Housing or otherwise, to use Federal funding to assist with parks, with total service packaging for municipalities in the provinces. This is our party policy on housing now; I have managed to do a fair amount within our party in terms of mortgages. We have managed to persuade our party that municipal taxes to some extent should be deducted from income taxes. Now this hasn't come into legislation, but we are the party in opposition. And when you are speaking as the party in opposition, what have you done? Well, we have managed to change the minister's attitude toward land banking and new cities out in the bush somewhere to getting down to the real basic task of reducing the lot value in Metropolitan areas. He's talking the game now, but last spring he wasn't talking that at all. He's starting to think about what we've been saying and he's starting to act and respond. So you bit by bit get the bureaucracy to start thinking about the people out there in the country and reacting to what you say and the feelings of the people. Whether they would react without me there or other members of my party there, I'm not sure. I suspect they wouldn't react nearly as quickly.

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