

ME: You certainly have kept your promise in keeping the communication channels open to your constituents by way of a riding office, dialogue papers, and weekly columns. Just how receptive has the public been since you've been in office?

MR. BLENKARN: As you know, we have just sent out the seventh newsletter dialogue to the constituency. The returns on the questionnaires that have been enclosed in some of the dialogue papers have been just superb, and the feedback from people has enabled me to understand what the people in Mississauga are thinking and to use the thoughts that have been expressed, not just in the questionnaires, but in letters and in briefs — some of the briefs I have had from people have been first-class on matters — have enabled me to get the information and thoughts right across to all the Members of Parliament. So it has been a very successful two-way street in the communication matter, and I am going to continue that. In politics, it is too easy to become part of the ivory tower, part of the establishment, to develop the concept, as many politicians have, that they are far superior to the unwashed masses — and this is not my idea at all. A politician is a representative of people. His job is to listen to them and make sure that their concerns are communicated to government and through government.

ME: Being a lawyer by profession must be invaluable to you in your MP position. Just how do you use this legal training to the best advantage?

MR. BLENKARN: It sure is. One of the comments I made to Mike Petrie in my office was, "You know, Mike, you don't have to be a lawyer to tend this job, but it sure helps." Knowing the legal route is a big advantage and it makes it so much easier to represent people. Another thing you have to remember is that the Members of Parliament are involved in making laws, and if you can't read a statute and you can't understand what the statute says, you have a hard time making sensible comment.

ME: You are a member of four caucus committees: Finance; Housing and Urban Affairs; Environment; Manpower and Immigration. What is required of you on behalf of each of these committees?

MR. BLENKARN: I take sub matters on them, for example, in Housing and Urban Affairs, I have been pretty involved in the end of land assembly and servicing in particular with reference to the greater Toronto area. Our chairman in that is Eldon Woolliams; he is our Member from Calgary. On Manpower and Immigration, I have been doing a fair amount of work on the Unemployment Insurance Commission. While Lincoln Alexander is chairman of it, the question of the Unemployment Insurance Act and some of the headaches that come as a result of that Act are primarily my concern. The work is divided up amongst the members

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on the committee, and if you happen to be fairly knowledgeable in a certain field, then you can contribute a fair amount from your experience. Finance is a very large matter; Robert Stanfield is the chairman of this committee. I am involved right now in a bill in connection with a mortgage investments corporation. I have had a fair amount of experience in the mortgage field, and I am producing a series of amendments on that Act and carrying the discussions and the committee on the Act pretty much myself. This is not a statute that is going to set the world on fire or anything, but it is going to increase the supply of mortgage money for the small communities in Canada — there are some small communities that don't have any funding at all for financing. John Fraser from Vancouver is the chairman of Environment. My concern in the environment is the Great Lakes, in particular sewerage problems, the International Joint Commission's problem in trying to clean up the lakes. I am concerned about the other ones, but I get more worked up about what happens right here on our own beaches.

ME: I have heard you work a 16-hour day. How do you maintain such energy?

MR. BLENKARN: I don't know. My wife wonders, my family wonders. I can get along on a relatively small amount of sleep if I have cat naps — that helps. But how do I do it? I don't know. I usually start at about 7:30 in the morning; I'm up and going, and thinking and doing things. I usually work in a sense through every lunch and supper hour by holding luncheon and dinner meetings with Members of Parliament and people coming from around the country; and I usually don't get home until just before the national news. I get tired sometimes, too, and every once in a while I have to stop and sleep for a couple of days.

ME: How trying was your year of campaigning to gain your Member of Parliament position?

MR. BLENKARN: It was pretty difficult, because I didn't know very much about politics when I decided to run for a nomination and then tried to get elected. I know a little more about it now, but I am still kind of green. Sure it was trying, because you have to motivate people to work for you, and that can be a problem. And some people ave their own particular axe to grind, so it takes a little bit of getting to know how to play the game. From that point of view, like anything new, it's trying. As far as meeting people and talking with people and shaking hands, I rather enjoy that anyway and I don't find it any burden, headache or problem.