

For several years, McLaughlin College at York University has held a celebration on January 25, the birthday of Scots poet Robbie Burns (1759-1796). In addition to the traditional haggis, neeps (turnips) and tatties (potatoes), and a free glass of whisky to anyone who comes in a kilt, the College holds a poetry contest. In the last few years, I have contributed to the evening (outside of the contest) a piece of irreverent verse on some political subject. The tradition honours McLaughlin's including the study of public policy in its mandate, as well as Burns' practice of writing short (often critical) about political actors and events of his day. "For the People" and "Trumpty-Dumpty" were this year's offerings.

Robert Drummond

University Professor Emeritus, Political Science

Former Dean, Faculty of Arts

For the People

When Doug Ford started his campaign
He said, "I'm for the people!"
He loudly shouted this refrain
From every tower and steeple.

But now that he has won the toss
(An outcome most unnerving)
He starts to sound just like a boss;
What people is he serving?

"A budget deficit," he cries,
"Much larger than expected!"
But we all knew the budget's size
Before he was elected.

The Liberals dispute the claim
"It's just meant to get at us."
But they can scarce avoid the shame –
They've lost their party status.

So budget cuts may soon befall
In health or education;
Is "For the People" still the call,
Or only "For Ford Nation."

And are the people backing Ford
In line for savings healthy?
Or will we see the real reward
Go to the truly wealthy?

A man who's "for the people" must
Be willing to raise wages
For how can poverty be just
For those who've worked for ages.

The minimum, in figures rough,
Would rise to fifteen dollars
"No, fourteen bucks is quite enough,"
The people's premier hollers.

"Instead we'll offer "buck-a-beer;
Beer's minimum we'll collar."
But breweries don't follow near;
Most beer's still not a dollar.

"The people's" children need to learn
With teaching up-to-date
But if to sex-ed we must turn
It's nineteen-ninety-eight.

If sex-ed's not fit for the task
And beer sold for a song
"Then what," sarcastically we ask,
"Could possibly go wrong?"

With fentanyl and opioids
How are "the people" faring?
Is this a question Ford avoids?
Do we think he's not caring?

No, there'll be safe injections done
And treatment not impeded
But sites are only twenty-one
Not always where most needed.

"No carbon tax or cap-and-trade,"
The Premier has insisted.
If global warming's not man-made
It cannot be resisted.

And if the climate's change is caused
By greenhouse gas emissions,
Its progress will be little paused
By government decisions.

So if in January's cold
We face a future risky,
Then let us, as in days of old,
Give thanks for good Scotch whisky.

If weather, drugs and budget cuts
And lower wages rag us,
We'll say, with no ifs ands or buts,
Be sure to "Gi'e us a Haggis."

-- Robert J. Drummond
January 25, 2019

Trumpty-Dumpty

President Trump has sat on a wall
And Democrats hope he will have a great fall.
But if they impeach him, the Senate won't bite
And no-one can teach him to do what is right.
The government shut-down makes some people mad
But Donald assures us it isn't that bad.
Workers unpaid will just have to adjust
The President doubts they will ever go bust.
A mortgage to pay and no food in the fridge?
The Donald would just get a loan as a bridge.
And if they behave like him, back in the day,
They'll all become bankrupts and not have to pay.
So why does the President want a great wall?
Is it envy of China? Does that fill him with gall?
Oh no, says the Donald, that's not what's at stake;
It's "illegal immigrants" taking the cake.
"The southern border's a wide-open door
For terrorists, rapists, drug-dealers and more."
Don't blind me with facts, says the liar-in-chief
I must have a wall or there'll be no relief.
Just build us a wall; it will act as a funnel
(But maybe illegals will just dig a tunnel.)
Most smugglers use entry-ports now that are legal
Instead of a wall, you might just use a beagle,
Or other technology crafted to find
Hard drugs and bad weapons and things of that kind
And recognize people who might pose a threat.
Haven't we got any good at that yet?
Of course the great bulk of the folks without papers
Are not into mayhem or other such capers.
They're mostly just workers whose visas expired.
They've been loath to go home ever since they were hired.
And most of them didn't come up from the south
From nations whose names often drop from Trump's mouth.
Guatemalans, Hondurans who get Donald ragin'
Those with visas expired are mainly Canadian!
So while we are waiting to hear Donald call
For the money to build a great *northern* wall,
With glasses made full and with haggis on plate
Let's give thanks we are not yet the 51st state.

-- Robert J. Drummond
January 25, 2019