

# Politics in Real Time:

## Do Governments lie to the People?

They promise the moon and the stars. When they get in power there will be milk and honey and no one will be short of anything. They assume office and then the lies begin. The propaganda machine dishes out half-truths and downright lies and people shake their heads and say, 'it's politics what do you expect?' Telling the truth is a revolutionary act, says George Orwell.

In America most people believe that politicians are liars. In the current presidential campaign America is served with daily doses of bullying from Donald Trump while 60 percent of the country cannot trust Hillary Clinton. President Obama in a 2015 speech at the United Nations said, 'you can jail your opponents, but you cannot imprison ideas. You can try to control access to information but you cannot turn a lie into truth.'

Mr. Obama was directing his remarks to world leaders but he will do well to listen to the message of American toward their leaders. According to EMC Research, 'two-thirds of Americans said that they have no say in what happens in the government with 73 per cent saying the government does not listen to the people.' Why do politicians lie? One MSNBC contributor thinks he has the answer. 'It's the public,' Josh Barro says. 'The public puts politicians in a position where the only thing they can do to make the public happy is lie and so, people lied.' Try telling that to the residents in Flint, Michigan!

There are other statistics that should cause politicians to take stock. For example, 69 per cent of voters think that America is on the wrong track while 65 percent believe that politicians are lying and 59 percent feel that the country would be better off if all the elected officials in Washington were removed. The shutdowns of the government in Washington with the politicians blaming each other did not go down well either.

Ron Paul, a former Republican Congressman,

says that most people do not believe the government anymore. Why is the government lying? How can a government stay in power if it misleads the electorate? The Indian strategist Chanakya Kautilya documented several ways to outwit the enemy and lying and manip-

intervention.

During the Watergate crisis lying reached a new high. Richard Nixon and his entourage told one lie after another to cover up the break-in of the Democratic headquarters. This was before the polls showed that Nixon would win re-election comfortably. At one point Nixon went on television and told the nation, 'I am not a crook.' That too turned out to be lie. Nixon resigned the presidency and left office in disgrace, having told one lie too many.

In 1988 George Bush told the nation to, 'read my lips no more taxes.' When he got into power he raised taxes. President

led the United States to be in a bind. After billions of dollars and the loss of hundreds of lives the US does not want to stay in Iraq but it cannot leave either. Will the legacy of George Bush remain tarnished? It is too early to say but his name will always be associated with the war in Iraq.

Those who feel that lies drive the engine of politics point to the presidency of Jimmy Carter. Here was a president that tried to be moral in the White House and even lectured Americans on decency. It is argued that he ruled meekly and was held a hostage by the Iranians even to the last day

town had to be made at the State level.

In 2014, in order to save money, the State decided to switch the water supply of Flint. Why pay Detroit for Flint's water when it can be switched from Lake Huron to the Flint River? The problem was that the water in the Flint River was filthy and the residents knew it. The State knew it too but it lied to the residents. The water turned out to be brown and corrosive. This meant the water mains were eroding and corrosion added to the pollution. Lead seeped into the water. When the residents complained about the taste of the water Mayor

Dayne Waling went on television and drank it to make the point that the water was safe.

A group of scientists from Virginia Tech found elevated levels of lead in the water but officials from the State 'insisted that their own research was more accurate.' Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha saw that the children were affected and she spoke out but the State denounced her findings. Dr. Hanna-Attisha said the State had the correct data all along but they chose to dismiss it. The long-term health consequences do not look promising for Flint. Governor Rick Snyder and his Department of Environmental Quality must take the blame for playing games with the lives of the people of Flint.

In a democracy, as in the United States, lying to the people is worrying. But to the people of North Korea lying is woven into the fabric of national policy. The North Koreans are told that Kim Jong had a supernatural birth, that Kim invented the hamburger, that he is the best golfer in the world and that internet access is banned because Kim wants to protect the reputation of the West. The propaganda machine says that these make North Korea the envy of the world and for good measure Kim also has magical powers.

In July 1985 the world was stunned when the 'Rainbow Warrior' was



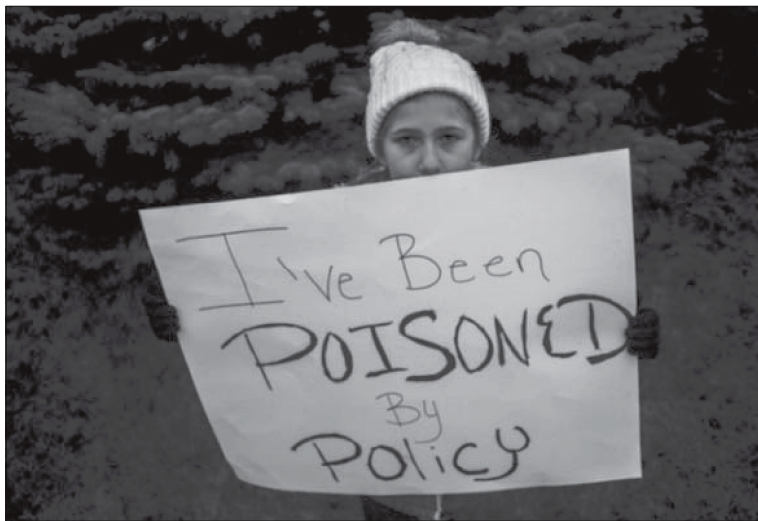
Dr. Dhanpaul Narine

bombed. This was a ship that was docked in Auckland in New Zealand and was on its way to protest against French nuclear testing at Mururoa Atoll. The bombing of the ship resulted in the death of a photographer. Who gave the orders for the bombing? There were denials from the French government but in the end it was forced to admit its involvement. The order to bomb came from the Defense Minister Charles Hernu, who resigned. In 2015 Jean-Luc Kister, who worked for Hernu, apologized for his role in the incident.

The killing of Father Jerzy Popieluszko in Poland in 1984 sent shockwaves in Europe. He had opposed the rule of the Communist government. The government denied any involvement in the death of the priest but it was forced to admit that the secret police was responsible. In 1990, in an interview with 'The Guardian' General Wojciech Jaruzelski apologized for Communist excesses. 'It was a nightmare,' he said. 'It is a great burden for me, and will be until the end of my days.'

In developing countries corruption and lies abound. Nigeria is the latest case of corruption. This country has been blessed with oil but it has proven to be a curse rather than a boon. Oil revenues account for over two-thirds of government spending and politicians and the oil company have been saying for years that there is proper accountability. But big lie has surfaced: the state owned oil company cannot account for \$16 billion and the finger-pointing has begun. These days, with lies, Instagram and Twitter, who needs sex and the videotape!

The views expressed in this column are solely those of the writer and do not necessarily represent the views of the THE WEST INDIAN.



This protestor sums up the lies that were told to the residents in Flint, Michigan.

ulation was on top of the agenda. Machiavelli said that the Prince must be a fox and a lion. He must be wily and at the same time be ready to be merciless to the victim. In the United States a Washington lobbyist said that, 'every President has not only lied at some time, but needs to lie to be effective.' Lying is the engine that runs American politics.

Franklin D. Roosevelt told Americans in 1940 that he had no intention of sending young people to the war. But he was actually preparing the groundwork to do so. In 1961 John F. Kennedy told Americans that, 'I have previously stated, and I repeat now, that the United States plans no military intervention in Cuba.' But his administration had all the plans in place for the

Bill Clinton denied furiously that he had 'sex with that woman.' But after irritating Americans with the definition of 'is' Clinton went on television and admitted that he did have relations with 'that woman' after all. What does he want young aspiring politicians to believe?

Clinton's successor George W. Bush said in 2003 that, 'intelligence gathered by this and other governments leaves no doubt that the Iraq regime continues to possess and conceal some of the most lethal weapons ever devised.' General Colin Powell even went to the United Nations with maps and charts to show the likely places where the weapons could be hidden. As it turned out the weapons of mass destruction were not found. But it has

of his administration. If only he were a lion or a fox he might have fared better, it is said. But Jimmy Carter has redeemed himself in the eyes of America and has brought credibility to his local and international activities.

One of the biggest lies of modern times has occurred in Flint, Michigan. This is a town that has experienced its share of poverty, long before the water fiasco. In the last thirty years Flint has declined as a progressive town. It declined as a result of the closure of the auto plants and people left to look for jobs elsewhere. It is estimated that around 40 percent of the people live below poverty. In 2011 the State took control over Flint which meant that all decisions over the running of the