

The French, Dutch and Canadians¹

Boer-Todd Correspondence

Douglas Todd will be pleased that I remember some articles of his from 2003. Todd wrote about how Canadian secularists threaten to become oppressive to adherents of other worldviews. In addition, he wrote some articles in which he upheld the Dutch system of pluralism as being more authentic than our Canadian variety. Canadians should learn from their system.

Now, more than two years later (The Sun, 15 October, 2005), Todd holds up the French secular system as also more authentic than our Canadian brand. It does more to protect both the so-called “commitment to common national values” and “everyone’s right to be religious.” I wonder if Todd has forgotten what he wrote in 2003? The Dutch pluralistic system he advocated back then is almost the very opposite to that of the French he now advocates. In fact, the Dutch system constitutes a strong and consciously Christian rejection of French secularism. They are opposites. One can hardly promote both without being inconsistent. So, Todd, what’s up?

One thing all three countries--now including Canada--have in common is that they all blindly imported people from all over the world, not realizing that these people come with their own religions they will tenaciously uphold. I, a Christian, am one of them. More, they will demand a place in the sun for them. The secular spirit undergirding these host governments all expected these religions to wither away in the sanctified rationalistic, enlightened atmosphere of “advanced” Western culture. They would follow the pattern of most Christians, who have slowly caved into secularism and disappeared inside the walls of their churches.

Most, especially Muslims, will have no truck with that scheme. When they run up against the vacant walls of secularism, they will courageously stand up and resist. Eventually, in their legitimate anger at secularism, some will turn to extremism. That is currently the case with global Islam as well as its local varieties within Western countries.

¹Letter to Editor, *VS*, 16 Oct/2005 with a response from Doug Todd, 17 Oct/2005.

If the French and Dutch are at a loss as to how to deal with their now-native Muslims, they may thank their own Trudeaus for their brilliant schemes. These are based on a secularism that has always been blind to the nature and scope of religion and has always sought to suppress it by restricting it to four walls. As long as secularists retain this blindness, their religious “problems” will keep haunting them.

Whatever may have happened in the past, the real problem of *our* day, I submit, is not with the religions but with secularism. The pendulum has swung once again.

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Hello Jan,

Thanks for sending me a copy of your thoughtful letter. It's good to know, maybe frightening to know, you're keeping track.

The only comment I have is I don't think Saturday's column was "advocating" the French approach to secularism for Canada.

That said, I was pointing out the potential pitfalls of Canada's multicultural approach. It might not be perfect. In general, I was simply trying to give French secularism a fair hearing, and suggest that it's not as crazy as we might think -- that it might work for France given the French context. but I don't think I ever said it should be directly imported to Canada.

Holland is also adjusting its views of religious pluralism in light of recent events, particularly the murder of Theo van Gogh.

Thanks again,

Doug