

DAVIE VILLAGE COMMUNITY FORUM

6 November, 2004

INTRODUCTION

In 1958, I left Canada and returned to live in the West End in 2001. By that time I was 63. During those years I lived in various countries and on various continents. During those same years, Canada underwent drastic cultural and philosophical/spiritual changes. The realization of the extent and depth of these changes grew on me only gradually as I participated in WE life. Some of these changes are positive; others, negative. In this paper I emphasize the negative, for the occasion of this Forum calls for concentration on problems.

I live right in the village at Davie and Bute. I am a neighbourhood activist: participate in WECAN, am President of WEST END NEIGHBOURS IN ACTION (WENA) [This submission is a private one, not on behalf of WENA] and participate in the various forums called by the city and others to deal with our social problems. I regret I cannot attend this one due to prior business obligations in Victoria.

WHAT WE DON'T NEED

There have been so many of these forums that I am beginning to get tired, for it seems the result is little more than talk and more talk, analysis and then suggesting that we must get to the root of things. And since the roots are beyond us, we end up doing little more than nothing. We don't need anymore of that. We need ACTION, serious action.

Neither do we need more of the Police telling us they need more money or the City telling us the laws are all there but the Province....!

And yes, we need to get to the root of things, but most of our problems are provincial and national that will take an enormous amount of work to correct. Since they don't change very easily, we continue to sound wise by proclaiming we need to get to the root--and then, since the roots are mostly beyond us, we end up doing nothing. We don't need that spirit anymore. It does not get us anywhere.

THE ROOT PROBLEMS

I can tell you what I think the root problem is. Or is it plural--root problems? I suspect there is one root problem that has created a whole raft of 2ndary problems. However, it is beyond Davie Village to solve the root problem(s), except in concert with the province and, indeed, the entire nation. Though we can have some input in those problems, if we wait for their solutions, our Davie problem will only get worse in the meantime. So, we must do what we can about our own immediate problem, our local problem.

Nevertheless, allow me to briefly list at least a few of our root problems. If my listing goes beyond the politically correct (PC), please realize that PC solutions have been largely ineffective. It is basically an approach of running after one bush fire to another. PC only produces the ambulance that picks up the drowning victims without ever preventing anyone from throwing them into the river to begin with. And so the taxpayer who works hard every day, has to pay for more subsidized housing for the victims pulled out of the river every year. He keeps paying for more drug rehab and safe injection sites.

It is my contention that the Canadian government has built a prison for its working taxpayers. One of the bricks of that prison is known as "human rights." Though human rights were and are needed, they have gone way beyond their proper bounds and now protect only those who know how to manipulate the system, but *the average citizen now experiences human rights laws as our own Canada-made prison. When human rights are separated from human obligations, they become*

oppressive for the wrong section of the population and liberating only for those who have little sense of obligation to neighbour and society. Even the Police is caught in that prison. They are often hamstrung in their dealings with them. The recent Stanley Park incident was an explosion of frustration resulting from lop-sided human rights. I have heard Police almost pleading with trespassers to please move and change their behaviour! I wonder if they do not feel totally ridiculous in such "human rights" situations.

Another brick in that prison is our so-called *multi-culturalism*. Though most of the people on the street are Canadian Caucasians and First Nation, the current emphasis that our population has to be tolerant towards all customs and traditions has led to a negative boomerang effect on more traditional Canadian customs and traditions. We lean over backwards to accommodate ourselves to foreign cultures, but suppress our own to the point that the younger generation is hardly aware of our own traditional concepts. The result is confusion and loss of all standards of right and wrong. Our families are falling apart, partially because of this loss of cultural standards. People no longer know how to relate to each other properly. All respect for authority is lost. Canadians from other cultures and immigrants often shake their heads at the deep confusion to which Caucasian society has sunk.

There is one more problem I wish to merely mention. Going beyond a mere mention could lead to my crucifixion! Perhaps this is another reason I am in Victoria today! I want all of you to ask yourself seriously *whether the secular spirit of Canada, along with its individualism, does not freeze our hearts and minds, deprives us of all standards, produces meaninglessness in our lives and thus, again, seriously contributes to the destruction of our families and most other human relations*. Meaninglessness easily translates into addiction. Broken families lead to addiction.

THE DAVIE VILLAGE PROBLEM

Almost everyone will describe it in her own way. The Davie problem is *not* that we have addicts and street people in Canada or even in BC, but that we have an over-abundance of them in our village. *We have more than our fair share of homeless, panhandlers, and drug addicts-peddlers. It is this disproportionality that I think we have to work at.*

1. The Mentally Disturbed

I suggest that WEnders get together and begin to pressure the provincial government to re-open adequate facilities for these people. Perhaps all the various community associations should get together on this one. This campaign should aim at involving the wider city and province. *These people are the only legitimate ones on the street* and I want us to treat them with compassion. They should not be turned into a political football. *Please discuss how we can begin this campaign and take the first step....* The rest of this submission is not about them.

2. Drug Peddlers, Addicts, Panhandlers, and Other Street People

Human rights in the abstract tell us these people have a right to be on the street. However, when the entire community of tax-paying residents is upset, afraid, angry, when our parks are no longer hospitable to families, when the community holds meeting upon meeting about them, when the police clearly cannot cope with it, then human rights have been exhausted and reached their limits. I propose the following actions:

- A. The people of the WE organize into street groups and drive all these undesirables out of our area. The groups should be big enough to be impressive and commanding.
- B. The people of the WE let the city know we expect the city to spread the facilities catering to that crowd over the entire city. Here we will not accept "no" or "maybe" for an answer. We are serious.
- C. We seriously propose that the government establish boot camps where all these people are given compulsory military-like training for 3 months to teach

them discipline, respect, responsibility and work. De-tox should be part of the programme.

D. Those who end back on the street, take them to work camps and force them to work on projects for which there currently is either no money or no people. E.g. in parks, forests and on fruit farms in their season. The matter of wages can be discussed.

Once we have solved our immediate local problems, WEnders can join the politicians and other leaders to solve the larger problems of the province and the nation.