

# We must regain our trust in leaders, institutions

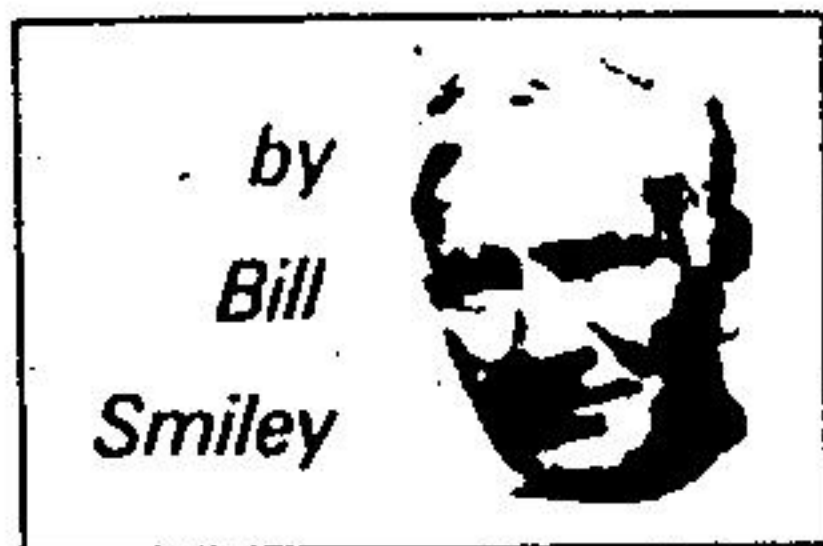
No great theme this week, so will chew around at a few shorter items. One of the recent events that did not exactly send a surge of pride or joy or trust through me was Pierre Trudeau's addresses to the nation. They were depressing, not for their content, which was as stale as yesterday's news, but for their lack of it.

Where was the old wit, the charming shrug, the coy smile, the candy-floss philosophy? All missing. Nothing left but an aging and unwanted politician desperately trying to hang on.

I found it deeply ironic that the man perhaps least trusted in all of Canada should be pleading with us for trust. He was barking up a hollow tree. The average Canadian has lost his old trust in government, the banks, the economists. This wide distrust has filtered down into our national being until we find it difficult to trust anyone outside our immediate family. And even there, you never know when your wife is going to open your mail or go through your pockets.

Trudeau was right, of course, but I wish the idea had come from someone else. We must regain that trust in our leaders, our institutions, and each other, or the way ahead is one of darkness and despair.

But do you really trust the so-called skilled worker who does a job for you? Do you trust the car salesman? Do you trust the Post Office? Do you trust the Department of Revenue, with its nifty, cold-blooded computers, its warnings, its



by  
Bill  
Smiley

speed in snatching your money and its tardiness in returning it, without interest?

How about you doctor? Your lawyer? Your dentist? Your husband? Your wife? Your children?

Do I really trust my grandson when he sends a letter to me, through his mum, that says, "I love you very, very much, and I hope you don't die for a long, long time."? After all, it is getting close to Christmas.

Do you even trust yourself? That's about as close to home as we can get, and I certainly don't always trust myself. Enough. But answer honestly.

Went to a Professional Development day for teachers recently. Sat near the back of the auditorium while an attractive, highly intelligent woman who had raised seven kids and holds a high post in educational circles tried to inspire us.

She did her best, but I wondered how

much of it was sinking in, when I looked out over the heads of the teachers. The bald, white heads of the majority. I couldn't help thinking of my first P.D. day, more than twenty years ago.

Then, the majority of teachers was young, dedicated, keen, militant, innovative. In 1982, the group was middle-aged, conservative, perhaps just as dedicated, but tired, hanging on, a bit disillusioned.

At the afternoon session, went to a seminar about gifted children. It was enlightening, and rather frightening. Many, many parents believe their children are gifted, when they are merely bright.

By the time the poor little devils are put through I.Q. and dozens of other criteria, it turns out that there are darn few truly gifted children, and that teaching them is a whole new ballgame.

At least I am pleased that governments are finally going to pay some attention to the gifted child, and nurture their creativity. Therein lies the future of the world, because these young people are analytical, critical, questioning, not content to swallow the same old flabby ideas and concepts that society tries to stuff them with.

For years, all the money has been poured into helping slow learners, a worthy and necessary cause, while the truly gifted were allowed to dull their

minds, become bored or frustrated, and frequently drop out of the scene. It's a welcome turn-around, but it's been a long time coming, and the previous waste of these people has been appalling.

I can think of dozens of kids, former students, whose innate giftedness was so thwarted, frustrated or suppressed by the school system and a hypocritical society that they literally dropped out of both and became failures, in the eyes of the world at least.

It's too late for my own children, but I hope my grandboys, and yours, and your children to come, will benefit from this latest awakening from a long sleep of our educational leaders.

This column is too dang serious. Let's turn to something a little more lively.

I get quite a few fan letters, but not too often a fan in the flesh as it were. The other day, a tiny bundle of cheer and energy dropped in: Vikki LePage of the Port Colborne weekly. She pumped up my ego, smoothed my ruffled feathers, and left me feeling quite benign toward the world.

She was brought round by a relative, Mrs. Jones, and we had a great time remembering all the Joneses I'd taught: John and Nancy, Bill and Barbara, nice kids all.

Vikki and I posed for a picture, arms around each other. Hope it turns out, and thanks for coming around Vikki. You made my day.



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