

VIEWPOINT

Our society must care for its needy people

By Gerry Landsborough
Herald columnist

Every now and again comes a news story that touches something deep within my soul.

What happened to David Holman is such a story. David Holman is a vagrant who lives in Chicago. He recently survived an experience, a horror story, that equals anything I have ever read of. During the last two weeks of February in the bitter winter weather, David Holman sought shelter in a cold dirty West Side basement. Sick, too weak to stand, unable to go for help, he was slowly eaten each night by "rats".

He said "I could hear them coming through the garbage coming for me."

He screamed for help but an apathetic society ignored his cries - the "I don't want to get involved" syndrome.

WAS FOUND

Eventually on March 3rd Officer Sam Cozza responding to a call, found him.

According to Dr. Richard Pearson of Cook County Hospital "the rats had gnawed the fat off the calves of both legs to the ankles, his feet were black - frozen".

His legs had to be amputated below the knee and the fingers on both hands were also removed.

Though this particular story

took place in Chicago the conditions are such that it could have happened here.

Rats are part of any large city, as are the vagrants, the winos, the discards of society. It is ironic that countries that send billions and billions of relief dollars around the world can become apathetic to their own hopeless and starving.

How often have you gone to a large metropolitan and walked in, just another who "lives in the gutter".

People today are hardening their hearts to a socialized government. They scoff at welfare "unemployed bums" is the cry from the stronger segment of society.

NON-CARING SOCIETY

Particularly now at election time people look upon socialized government as something to be rid of. Yet the plight of David Holman is the result of a non-caring society.

The weak, the helpless and the hopeless, the afflicted,

will always be with us and the need for society to care for them is solely for society's benefit.

Which of us would have the stomach to watch "rats" chew away another human being and walk away without compassion? Those of us who would answer "yes, I could" remove themselves from the humanity of man - from the tying bond of the human race.

There is a movement in Western society that tells us that we are spending too much, looking after the poor. Yet there is no hesitation in saying that when the rats finish a "David Holman" they will surely come after us. That is why society should care - solely for its own preservation.

Peace of mind seems to be a prime motivator for today - everyone is searching - society is searching.

But where does peace of mind lie when rats can chew a fellow human being right on

our own door steps? Surely the knowledge that when they finish we will be the next target is enough to remove even the tiniest shred of self-assurance.

The old saw "charity begins at home" is a very accurate truism. What torture, what deprivation anywhere in the world could be worse than to be slowly eaten to death by rats. The most amazing thing

in the David Holman story is what one hospital attendant noted how he beat starvation, intense cold, and the risk of rabies and blood poisoning Survival.

If the responsibility to help those who cannot help themselves is not ours - then who will assume it?

Who will take the responsibility to keep the rats from your doorstep - if not you?

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Longer wait for Long John

What could have been a big disappointment for about 150 music fans from Toronto turned into an enjoyable "Long John Baldry party" at Norval's Way-Jay Club Sunday.

Unaware that the Baldry concert scheduled to take place at the club Sunday afternoon had been postponed, a large contingent of the English blues-rockers' cult following turned up ready to hear their hero, only to discover that his concert has been re-scheduled for Apr. 13.

Things turned out well, however, after Way-Jay owner Jim Robertson apologized for the inconvenience and directed the Baldry fans to the Way-Jays disco lounge, where they played and danced to Baldry tapes they had brought along themselves.

Tickets already purchased for Sunday's show will be honored Apr. 13. The Way-Jay is negotiating with a well-known Montreal-based band to open the show for Baldry.

respected vocalist in her own right who has previously toured with Joe Cocker and Leon Russell, among others.

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POP PERFORMER

More than almost any other pop performer in the world, Long John Baldry is highly respected as a major influence on current trends in music. As co-founder with Alexis Korner of England's (and possibly the world's) first blues-rock band, he became a catalyst in the initial musical development of Mick Jagger and Charlie Watts, Cream's Ginger Baker, Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page, Trinity's Julie Driscoll and Brian Auger and Rod Stewart prior to the Small Faces.

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Back when he was still just Reginald Dwight, Elton John was a member of Bluesology along with Baldry and saxophonist Elton Dean. He later created his famous stage name by combining those of his two former colleagues.

Having already recorded several albums for Warner Brothers, and GM Records, Baldry recently released his debut Capital LP, Baldry's Out. Featured on the album and in his touring band is Canadian singer Kathi McDonald, a much

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