

## People's Forum

# Writer accuses columnist of "splatter approach"

The Editor,  
I appreciate the fact that John Sommer in his column "Arts and Ideas" has firm convictions which he wants to share. But perhaps he should confine himself to ideas about art and leave ideas about religion, ethics and world peace alone. His handling of the latter in a column en-

titled "Universal human values needed" (The Herald, Wednesday, December 12, 1990) reminded me of a certain kind of art which the 20th century produced. I am thinking of the "artist" who lays his canvas on the floor, hangs a can of paint over it, drills some holes in the bottom of the can and allows the can to sw-

ing over the canvas in random patterns.

That is what I picture when I read the random splattering of ideas in John's article. I do not doubt for a moment he has good intentions, just as the "artist" may genuinely believe in what he is doing. I too long to see the people of this world caring deeply for

each other and for the creation which is our home. But I cannot see how shoddy thinking is going to bring us there. The responsible action John calls for will not grow out of fuzzy feelings, but only out of clear thoughts.

John begins his article with a splash of ideas which are so wild they leave the canvas altogether. He hails Mikhail Gorbachev as "truly great leader", the saviour who has set free Eastern Europe, even comparing him to Jesus. The facts are that Gorbachev, far from engaging "in leaps of imagination" is a thoroughly practical communist leader. The Soviets have driven their countries into ruin and cannot afford the cold war anymore. They want the west to invest.

The main thrust of John's article is the idea that if people will simply realize that we all worship the same god, or "divine principle", or whatever, and become responsible, caring people, we can save our planet from destruction. That is like saying to a couple of hockey teams, go out and get the puck in the net, never mind which net, as long as pucks are going into nets, we'll have a great game. Or like telling Toronto commuters to no longer aim at reaching Toronto, instead that they should simply drive and never mind the direction, for eventually they will certainly reach the destination.

A more helpful approach to the important question of how to save this world is found in a classic statement by G.K. Chesterton, "There are an infinity of angles at which one falls, only one at which one stands." The crucial question, as always is "What is

that "one angle"? In Charles Colson's recent book, *Against the Night Living In The New Dark Ages* he compares our situation in the west to that of Christian Britain in the time of Alfred the Great. Barbarian hordes were destroying everything in their path. Alfred, though vastly outnumbered fought back. Eventually the Danes were living side by side with the Britons, but not because they came together and decided they both worshipped the same divine principle anyway. The peace, and the foundation of Great Britain came when Guthrum, the barbarian king, rejected his pagan gods and asked to be baptised as a Christian.

I agree wholeheartedly that the source of peace and responsible living is religious. But certainly a religion must be chosen at least as carefully as you select your environment-friendly detergent. Polluters of the heart and mind have been around for as long as mankind. As C.S. Lewis says somewhere, "Horrible religions produce horrible cultures."

The splatter approach to ideas, religions or to solving the crises of our times is actually the root of the problem. What we need is to find the "one angle at which we stand." That new slant on things is what the Child in the manger is all about. As Jesus said in his characteristically uncompromising manner, "I am the way, and the truth and the Life. No one comes to (God) the Father except through me." Or, in the words of a bumper sticker, the graffiti of the highway, "Wise men still seek him."

Yours sincerely,  
Dick Vandervecht,  
Georgetown.

## Answers demanded from Region

Editor's note: The following letter was released to the Halton Hills Herald for publication.  
Mr. P. Pomeroy,  
Regional Chairman,  
Regional Municipality  
of Halton.

RE: CONDITION 1 - The Joint Board, THE CONSOLIDATED HEARINGS ACT, 1981, Reasons for Decision and Decision, February 24, 1989.

Dear Mr. Pomeroy:

In my presentation to Regional Council on November 28, 1990, addressing PW 209/90, "Proposal Calls for Waste Management Service," I raised many concerns about Condition 1 of the Joint Board's decision.

It is my opinion that Halton Region is concentrating its efforts on Condition 2 and practically ignoring Condition 1. (As you

know, Condition 2 focuses on garbage incineration and Condition 1 addresses the more environmentally friendly ways to deal with waste - namely reduction, reuse, recycling and composting.) Evidence to support my opinion includes the extensive EFW feasibility and siting work already completed by the Region. In contrast, the Municipal-Regional Joint Waste Management Committee is not even established yet. This, despite the almost two years that have passed since the Joint Board's decision, and the obvious importance that the Board placed on waste reduction by addressing reduction before EFW.

As I stated in my presentation to Council, the Regional Municipality of Peel has 19 staff members involved in industrial, commercial and institutional

(ICI) waste reduction. Metropolitan Toronto and the Regions of Hamilton, Waterloo and Durham have all made serious commitments to the ICI sector in the form of staff, waste audits, market directories and so on. To my knowledge, Halton Region has made zero commitment to waste reduction in the ICI sector.

In order that I may be completely up-to-date on the Region's initiatives in the areas of waste reduction, reuse, recycling and composting, could you please answer the following questions. I am also interested in any other related information; details of the wet/dry pilot project for example.

1. May I be a member of the planned Municipal-Regional Joint Waste Management Committee? (Refer to article in The Independent, "Waste Management: Getting the public's help," December 12, 1990.)

2. What reduction, reuse, recycling and composting expertise do the planned members of the planned Municipal-Regional Joint Waste Management Committee have?

3. Will the planned Committee draw on outside sources for expertise? If so, who and what agencies will they draw on?

4. What specific initiatives beyond those listed in Condition 1 will the planned Committee consider?

5. How many public meetings will the planned Committee hold?

6. How will the planned Committee incorporate the ideas of the public into the overall waste management scheme?

7. Who will set out the terms of reference for this committee and how will they be determined?

8. Given that zero collars have been budgeted for implementation of recommendations of the planned Committee in the 1991 fiscal year, how will such initiatives be funded?

9. If reduction, reuse, recycling and composting initiatives prove to be capable of diverting significant volumes from disposal, will Halton Region scrap its plans to incinerate?

I have notified the Ministry of the Environment of my concerns and trust that both the Region and Ministry will address the issue promptly.

Sincerely,  
Diane van de Valk,  
Georgetown.

## GST column redux

Dear Editor:

I read with interest your column in the Weekend Outlook about the GST Christmas. As you know from a recent column that I wrote which you published I am not a fan of the dis-information that the Federal Government is publishing about the GST and the price decreases that MAY happen.

The article from the Senate in Ottawa is just as self-serving as the Government's articles. The unelected Senate made up of political allies given their just rewards for long time political support is not the group I want to govern us.

As an editor you should endeavour to get to the truth which is somewhere in between what the Federal Government has said and the article provided from the Senate. At the present time everything on the list that is manufactured with the exception of clothing is subject to a 13.5% Manufacturer's Sales Tax which is a hidden tax. This tax will be replaced by the GST.

The MST is levied on the price that the retailers pay the manufacturer or importer. The retailer then takes his mark up on his delivered price, further the Provincial Sales Tax is placed on the product giving tax on tax. While some prices may come down after the GST is imposed I am doubtful that prices will

decrease on small items.

On the other hand every service mentioned in the article will go up as in the past these services were not taxable. The Feds assume that any savings that the businesses get from GST input tax credits will be passed along. I say good luck on that!!

Make no mistake the GST will be highly inflationary in the first year and cause greater negative strain on the economy at this time of recession.

The purpose of this letter is to warn journalists such as yourself not to fall into the same trap as the Federal Government by publishing distorted stories of the GST and its impact on the economy. This is a complex issue the average Canadian is not fully aware of the GST, your job should be to set them straight and not publish self serving articles by either side of the debate.

One last note - I was remiss in not congratulating you and the paper on the fine Remembrance Day Supplement that you published - it was a job well done.

Best regards,  
Doug Penrice,  
Georgetown.

Editor's note: The Halton Hills Herald has already done a feature on the GST and who and what it will affect. Under our senior reporter Ben Dummett's byline, the article was published Oct. 3, 1990. It was a straightforward appraisal of the GST.

## Remember the past

Dear Sir:

Our Federal government's miscalculations in the mood of the people of Canada, when it comes to introducing legislation without regard for the country as a whole, has now become commonplace.

For the record: The Meech Lake Accord, Free Trade, (so called), the G.S.T. and now a possible involvement in a conflict in the Gulf, creating a situation which is demanding budgetary reductions within various government departments, including once again Veterans Affairs. Not satisfied with the April 1990 increases to Veterans room and board, reductions in benefits without full consultation or acceptance of those affected, the elimination of Heavy housekeeping benefits, and now a proposed reduction of \$35,000,000 in the departments budget. This will only result in a reduction of staff, with repercussions and delays to future benefits or the processing of claims. I am also led to understand that the proposed G.S.T. will have an effect on the Veterans annual Poppy Campaign, in that

it will, in some instances, tax the production and in some cases the sale of Poppies or Wreaths.

This writer finds it ironic, that a government which recently granted Reparation payments to the Canadian Japanese, for adverse treatment in Wartime Canada, and Japanese during the war were responsible for untold suffering and death of Canadian prisoners, can, without concern for these ex-prisoners and other veterans, reduce further the budget of a department dedicated to the care of these self same veterans. "God forbid."

The History of war is written in terms of battles, campaigns, grand strategies, and costly mistakes.

The Reality of war is the sacrifice of mortal men and women.

The History of Peace is sometimes the Forgotten promises. "Those who can not remember the past, are condemned to repetition in the future."

Sincerely,  
Charles Tutty,  
Georgetown, Ontario.

## Opinion

# Ethnic rivalry could end in civil war

At its worst - and it may be at its worst this Christmas Eve - ethnic rivalry can end in civil war.

The southeastern European country of Yugoslavia is a federation of a dozen diverse ethnic groups, the Serbians being the most dominant. But there are areas of varying size where one or another of the 12 groups has a majority, and other sections where these groups are minorities.

The resulting stew is a potential cauldron for ethnic and nationalist conflict. Under the nasty Communist dictatorship of Josip Titi and his successors, tribalism was generally kept under control

until the late 1980s.

But now all six of Yugoslavia's republics have held generally free elections, the last two being in Montenegro and Serbia last week.

Unfortunately, that has only made the prospect of fighting even more unlikely.

The winner in Serbia was Slobodan Milosevic, a Communist who calls himself an ex-Communist and who played the Serbian nationalist card and won overwhelmingly. The eight million Serbs represent about 36 per cent of the Yugoslav population.

Milosevic has warned he will not allow the disintegration of the

Yugoslav federation.

The warning is specifically directed at Slovenia, which lies along the Austrian border and is the most westernized of the Yugoslav republic, home to about

two million people or eight per cent of the Yugoslav population.

There, anti-Communists easily won a majority in parliament early this year, and they have hinted at independence ever since, particularly whenever Milosevic seemed to imply more centralization rather than a loose confederation was the best solution for Yugoslavia's deep economic problems.

On Dec. 23, Slovenes vote in a referendum on secession. The results of the balloting should be known Christmas Eve.

Croatia, the Yugoslav republic adjacent to Slovenia, and where a majority of the country's 4.5 million Croats live, is a close

ally of Slovenia in desiring much looser ties among the six republics.

Many observers believe it would react strongly to defend a Slovenian declaration of independence, and to oppose Serbian intervention.

Earlier this year, Serbia imposed tariffs against Slovenian and Croatian goods in an effort to pressure the two republics, but it backfired when Slovenia and Croatia retaliated in kind.

On Nov. 15, the increasingly powerless federal prime minister, Ante Markovic, warned the Slovenian-Serbian clash "directly threatens the country's survival."

Derek Nelson  
World Affairs  
Analyst  
Thomson News  
Service



Yugoslav federation.