

## OUR VIEW

# What is the world coming to?

It was reported last week that ESPN has removed Robert Lee, a part-time employee with the network who calls about a dozen college football and basketball games a year, from the broadcast of the University of Virginia's Sept. 2 game in Charlottesville.

"We collectively made the decision with Robert to switch games as the tragic events in Charlottesville were unfolding, simply because of the coincidence in his name," said ESPN in a release. "It's a shame that this is even a topic of conversation, and we regret that who calls play-by-play for a football game has become an issue."

Damn right it's a shame.

It seems that in today's world, we live in constant fear of offending someone. In this instance, if nobody can figure out the difference between General Robert E. Lee and Asian-American announcer Robert Lee, then this world is in bigger trouble than we thought.

Closer to home, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario approved a motion at their annual general meeting calling on school boards across the province to rename schools bearing the name of Sir John A. Macdonald, Canada's first prime minister.

They say this should be done "in recognition of his central role as the architect of genocide against Indigenous peoples, the impact that this has on the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, parents and educators, and the ways in which his name-sake buildings can contribute to an unsafe space to learn and to work."

We're pretty sure that the school, and many others, was named after him because he was this great nation's first prime minister, not because of the mistakes he (and many others) made in treating our Indigenous people.

Since the tragic events in Charlottesville earlier this month, more and more demands of removing landmarks and renaming places are in the news.

But when is enough going to be enough?

Henry John Temple, Third Viscount Palmerston, for whom the town is named, was allegedly a womanizer. Do we rename the Town of Palmerston because of his alleged affiliation with adultery?

The water tower in Mount Forest reads "High, Healthy, Happy" in reference to the town's elevation to sea level. Do we take those words down because people affiliate the word "high" with stoner culture?

While we may not agree with the views of people symbolized in statues, and names of schools or towns, these things are part of our society's history. They serve as reminders of the events, and mistakes, that shape our society as we know it today. We always tell our children to use the mistakes we make in life to learn, and to be better. By rewriting the history books and removing these reminders, both good and bad, of our past, how are we supposed to do that?



## Implying Omar Khadr a terrorist is just plain wrong

This month the IFP published two letters expressing diverse negative opinion and reaction to Omar Khadr and the issues surrounding his story.

I am writing to explore other points of view in the interest of raising awareness of these controversial issues and to argue that Canada is better and Canadians can do better.

There are, of course, many aspects and sides to the very controversial payment of legal compensation to Omar Khadr as a result of his lawsuit against the Canadian government.

The premise of the Andely July 27 letter is that Khadr is a "travesty" and that this "points to a seri-

ous problem in our country."

To label the individual as such, and not the issue, amounts to stigmatization. The travesty is the inhumane treatment of a child by both the U.S. and Canada in the name of revenge, in the context of an international sectarian and cultural war.

Identifying the individual as our country's problem points to gross oversimplification and misunderstanding. Our country's problem and challenge is to learn how to administer justice and human rights in complex and unique circumstances.

To further name Omar Khadr as a "terrorist" in that letter, is simply wrong.

He was a child soldier by definition of UN conventions that Canada is a signatory to. To deny an apol-

ogy is to deny that Canadian officials breached his charter rights.

This has been acknowledged by a majority of our elected representatives when the government realized it could not defend against the case.

It is true that "the people of Canada are not responsible," as stated in that letter, for Omar Khadr's conditioning by his family or society, but we are responsible, individually and collectively, for holding our government and each other accountable to our laws, social justice and the basic principles of our democracy.

The second letter by Edith Hehn-Murray attempts to compare the witness to tragic torture in a past conflict to the contemporary, illegal offshore detention and torture of Ca-

nadian citizens processed by Canadian authorities in other countries willing to do and hide the dirty work.

Any form of torture visible or invisible is illegal, immoral and demands our compassion and condemnation.

The continuing debate over the many more issues arising from this injustice will hopefully move our society along in the right direction and show leadership to other countries.

Eric Doubt

## Letters to the Editor



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