

Montreal changed us

In this country, Dec. 6 is a memorial day to the suffering of women.

For the past 25 years, Canadians have paused amid the pre-Christmas festivities for a moment of solemn reflection and bitter mourning. On that day in 1989, an enraged man with a legally obtained fire-arm killed 14 young women at Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal.

Marc Lepine gunned down these women, 12 of whom were engineering students, simply because they were women. He said he was “fighting feminism” and wanted to stop women from “seizing” the advantages in life that are accorded to men.

Lepine killed himself shortly afterwards, so we will never know exactly what motivated his violent actions. Whether he was simply a hateful misogynist, or whether the root causes of his actions involved profound mental health problems that perhaps might have been remedied with today’s better understanding of psychiatry, is a question that will never be answered.

Nevertheless, the Montreal Massacre is a watershed moment in Canada’s growth as a nation. Before, we were in many respects a more innocent country, revelling in a history that, in comparison to many countries, was peaceful. Afterwards, even after that first flush of disbelief, outrage and grief, we became a sadder, darker society.

The anguished debate hinged on whether Lepine had truly acted alone, or whether his violent and hate-filled outburst had somehow been enabled by a tacit understanding in Canadian culture that women were capable of less, were worth less, mattered less.

Painful as it has been, it is this conversation that has brought us to a better place. The soul-searching of the past quarter century kept us vigilant. It is part of the reason women are better off now than at any time in this country’s history.

Canada offers more freedom, safety and respect to women than almost any other country in the world. As crime and homicide rates plummet, Canadian women are safer now than at any time since the mid-1960s. But more work is ahead of us.

WEB POLL RESULTS

(Go to www.theifp.ca)

The warning is out that coyotes are moving into urban areas. Have you seen a coyote in the Halton Hills urban area?

- Yes (57%)
- No (43%)

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Attacks were terrorism: reader

Re: John Shadbolt letter “Michael Chong was way off base: reader”, Nov. 20.

So Mr. Shadbolt you would have “extremists” armed with automatic weapons, RPGs, IEDs, etc., rather than what they had at hand.

The RCMP have labeled the murders in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu and Ottawa as terrorist attacks.

Both Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent and Corporal Nathan Cirrillo were members of Canada’s Armed Forces.

They were representatives of the Canada government, who in turn represent us, its citizens.

Thus, the attacks were against the Armed Forces, the elected government of Canada and its citizens.

The aim of terrorism is to terrorize. Ask the people at the War Memorial or the MPs in lockdown if they did not feel terrorized.

Maybe all the articles written about the “terrorists” are wrong and they are simply misunderstood.

Letters to the editor

Mr. Shadbolt, maybe you have been smoking or drinking something that caused your rant.

Douglas A. Ford,
Acton

Entertainment was delightful

We attended a children’s concert (Gaud-eamus Choirs Nov. 29) at St. John’s United Church, which was out of our normal scope of activities on a Saturday night.

We were surprised by their performances, which reflected their talented advisers and musical understanding of the adult volunteers.

These youngsters and their mentors should be publicly thanked by their sold-out audience.

It was a wonderful evening. Thank you all.

W. Gordon Rea,
Georgetown

Recycling does pay off

One morning I was watching three squirrels looking for breakfast.

Two were looking in the swept up flower beds finding little to eat.

The other squirrel was in the swept up piles of leaves enjoying breakfast.

All I can say, recycling can pay off for the smart ones.

Norman C.R. Foote,
Acton

Letters policy

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