

Opinion



Things have changed from 70 years ago!

As of April 2nd, 1984, a major reform was forwarded by the Government of Canada. It is called the Young Offenders Act, and replaces a law that was over seventy years old.

At the time (way back then) it was probably a great reform. However things have changed ... times have changed ... and young people have changed. The old Act considered the young person involved in conflict with the law, as being sick and not responsible for their acts. The old law gave the state the full power to take charge of the young people for indefinite periods and this tended to lead to incarceration. In some cases, 16 and 17 year olds were not considered as being youths. They were categorized as adults and denied all benefits that were reserved for young people. The new law will now apply to all young people from ages 12 to 17 and in provinces where 16 and 17 year olds are now in the adult system, this will bring them into the youth system over the next year.

Young offenders will be viewed differently now under the new law. The new law recognizes that young people are not adults but they are not children either. The courts will now recognize the level of responsibility of youngsters and will determine immaturity and dependency on adults; and subject to that, the courts will hold them responsible for their acts. Under the old law in some instances, the offender was considered to be a danger to himself or to the rest of us. The new system will stress diversion, and official sentences will be able to include the victim for the first time, providing for reimbursement, restitution and compensation. Fines, instead of going to the state can by court, be ordered to be paid to the victim. The court can also order young people into community services.

But remember that the courts may come up against an occasional youngster who commits a very serious crime, or a teenager who is a mature, hardened criminal. In this case, the court can send the offender to adult court where full responsibility prevails and sentences can be made much tougher.

Along with more responsibility, the new law adds more rights. The new Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is meant for the young person also. A youngster accused, will have the right to counsel, the right to receive a clear sentence, and the right to appeal an adverse judgement. Their trials will now be open to the public but the media will have to protect the youth's identity. Plus, out of fairness, a young person's record will be forgiven and destroyed if he or she earns it by subsequent good behaviour. Basically, what the new Young Offenders Act provides, is this:

It is one method that hopefully, will reduce the rate of crime by the young people.

And it is also to insure that the young people have the same rights as all other Canadians.

By keeping the youngsters at home, in the community, and by making them pay through community services and victim repayments, it is a step in the right direction of creating a more responsible citizen.

Since April 2, 1984, there is a definition for a young offender. It's a step in the right direction.

This Week's Chuckle

No woman makes a fool out of a man ... she merely directs the performance.

Arthur Black

A Get Well Wish for you Arthur

Dear Arthur, Dear Arthur,
We are in a plight.
We don't have your copy
And this space remains white.

A publisher's nightmare
White space is INDEED!
Your wit and your whimsy
Dear Arthur - WE NEEDED!

We feel for you Arthur
We know of your pain.
A speedy recovery
We wish for you in vain.

The Radio Noon Show
And Basic Black too,
Is just not the same
With no presence of you.

So from all of us here,
And along the North Shore,
"Godspeed" - "Quick Recovery"
GET THOSE FEET ON THE FLOOR!

Karen, Sharon and Lynne



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Anchor

"Christ Lives!"

It is difficult for us to grasp the events that took place that first Easter. The women coming to the tomb were greeted by the news, "He is risen." Then they met Jesus who told them to tell his disciples that he would see them in Galilee. "There they will see me," Jesus said.

The basic Easter conviction is simply this: **Christ Lives**. That was the bottom line for the early disciples. It was the ground of all their hopes and the mainspring of all the amazing activity which followed after Easter. God raising Jesus from the dead, empowered the disciples to go out to the ends of the world with the message of God's redeeming love.

From that first day of the week to this day, followers of Jesus acknowledge that Jesus lives. He has gone to prepare a place for us where he meets us as we will meet him. He is also present this day in our hearts and he speaks to us in this life, for He is lord of the living as well as the dead. He is with those who struggle this day for truth, justice, and peace. His love triumphs over everything that would prevent God's purpose from being fulfilled.

There is a story told of a pastor in a small rural church who became very discouraged by the lack of performance on the part of his parishioners. He announced one Sunday morning that since the church was dead, funeral services would be held that evening. As the news got around, considerable curiosity developed and many people turned out to see what the funeral of the church would be like. That evening, as they entered the sanctuary, they saw an open casket in front with the usual flowers around it. After the funeral service was conducted with some modifications, the pastor invited the congregation to come forward to view the remains. As the parishioners passed by the casket they were startled to see themselves, because the pastor had placed a large mirror in the bottom of the casket.

By contrast on that first Easter, the stone had been rolled away from the tomb. Those seeking a dead friend met instead, a living lord. Their fear turned to joy as they realized that Jesus is living so they too could live. This Easter let each of us celebrate the victory of Jesus over sin and death. Let us do this together as members of His body, the church, so that the world will know we live also because of Jesus.
Rev. Brian Bilgelow