

# Win or lose, we lose

Like no other unnatural phenomenon, war focuses the global spot-light on the wondrous differences between the people of this planet.

For instance, at first I was quite surprised by the often-repeated Arab saying on how they select their enemies. It goes something like: "My brother and I against my cousin. My cousin and I against a stranger."

It sounded awful familiar. "My brother and I against my cousin. My sister, my brother and I against my father. Everybody against my strange stepmother." And then I remembered, it's the words that Bill Ballard lives by.

At a time when world "finger pointing" is as popular as "carpet bombing", we have to let the Germans off the hook on this one -- at least they didn't sell chemical weapons to Harold Ballard's family.

The other most often repeated Arab saying we're hearing these days is the one that goes: "Even if hE loses, hE wins." (Writer's note: the spelling of "hE" is correct. Grammatical logic holds that if Christ's pronoun is an invariably capitalized "He" then the pronoun of the Antichrist should be an oppositely capitalized "hE".)

This belief by many Arabs cautions that, even if the coalition forces beat the living bejesus out of Saddam Hussein, as long as hE survives, hE's a winner in their eyes.

As westerners, you and I can't comprehend this complex, cultural reasoning but as a loyal Canadian, I sure wished we had adopted such a mind set a long time ago.

"When you lose, you really win." Think for one moment what this would have done for the career of George Chuvalo! Beaten by every heavyweight boxer who put on gloves between 1968 and 1979, but never knocked off his feet, under the "survive and triumph" doctrine, George Chuvalo today would be *invincible*, retiring with a perfect 96-0 record.

If we had the "you lose/you win" rule

in Canada, John Turner would be prime minister, Pierre Trudeau would still be married, the Leafs would be a professional hockey team, Ben Johnson would have a gold medal and Frank Miller would be remembered.

Think of the possibilities. If we all adopted this "when you lose/you win" theory of success, Canada Post would be recognized as a government department that delivers the mail. Robert Campeau would be a millionaire, and Free Trade would be making us so wealthy we'd all be driving brand-new *Bricklins* and buying clothes at *Creeds*.



William J. Thomas

Yes, you can almost hear Louis Armstrong singing: "What a wonderful world it would be."

Meanwhile back on earth, the one being surgically altered by Tomahawk missiles and cluster bombs, there are other confounding strategies.

For instance, that Iraq ground assault on the deserted Saudi Arabian town of Khafji worries me. Canadians feel safely removed from the bombing and mass destruction of the war, but I say to you, as an amateur military strategist, if Iraq is bent on attacking and occupying abandoned ghost towns - how safe is Elliot Lake? If these tank attacks are as they say, military probes on vacuous border towns, shouldn't the people of Windsor be fleeing north on the #401 and blowing up bridges behind them?

And the Gulf War is remarkable for several other reasons.

We're almost one month into a world war and France hasn't surrendered yet.

With the whole world distracted by the events in the Mideast, Germany hasn't annexed Austria or moved tanks into Poland for security reasons.

The United States of America, undoubtedly the most awesome military machine in the world, appears to be doing as well against actual armed forces as it did against Cuban engineers in Grenada and apartment dwellers in downtown Panama City.

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# Why the depression

Yes, why? Why is there so much depression around? It's almost an epidemic. Just about every second person one meets is moaning and groaning about something lacking in their lives. What is it? Just a twentieth century malaise which has its roots in the cold technological side of our present society, instead of the warmer, kinder, more human side which existed in the young time of us Goldie Oldies?

Or is it just that too many expectations are just too high? Since the advent of the Blue-Eyed Monster into our living rooms, we have been awash in a flood of promotion for material goods and a very materialistic life-style way and beyond the hope and reach of most people. They look, they see, they drool, they wish, they want. And then they go to the extreme of lying, cheating, stealing, conniving and sometimes even murder, just to get and to have.

You think I'm telling some fairy-tale when I say 'murder'? Believe me, I'm not. There are such tales coming out of the Big Garbage Cities which tell of kids being killed by others just for the latest 'in' shoes which are supposed to give the kid-murderees some special status among the dim-witted boys and girls of their particular little horror gang.

We have come down to that? We have really become ape-like in our non-emotions and non-feelings towards the human race? Is it really a cut-throat, stab-in-the-back world now to see who can pile up the greatest amount of status symbols in the way of cars, clothes, jewelry, furniture, recreational toys, vacation jaunts, god-knows-what-else? And is this what we are teaching our children by exposure to this kind of materialistic greed that they, too, should expect all this when they enter the so-called 'mature' adult world? Is it any wonder we have all the criminalities of today when impatient youngsters, fueled by these expectations, go out there and take by force what they can't get by plain dumb hard work.

Work? That's almost a nasty word

today. Who wants, or needs, to work when there are government assistance programs in place being horribly abused by the lazy, ignorant and arrogant? Or, those who do work, chain themselves to monstrous debts via the all-too-easy down payment and credit card routes just so they can have everything they THINK they need for a happy and satisfied life.

But are they? Of course not. Those debts are like the Rock of Sisyphus which he had to eternally roll uphill only to have it roll down again just as fast. You're never out of debt. But who worries about that now-a-days? Nobody, as far as I can see. Debt, too, is a way of life which has promulgated itself into governmental debt at all levels so that we are billions and trillions of dollars in debt all over the world. Then comes



Olga Landiak

the really depressing Depression Boom, and we ALL fall down on our materialistic keesters wondering how we got in this mess in the first place.

How? Easy. By expecting and wanting too darn much. We no longer seem to be content with the little we need for existence and then a few small luxuries after that. No wonder people are depressed when they continually compare themselves with somebody else up the money ladder who seems to be having such a great time and more fun than them. Even millionaires consider themselves poor compared to billionaires.

This wide-spread depression is of our own making. We expect too much not only in our private lives, but also from our politicians who are only as human as we are. We get the pols we deserve and, if they are acting and behaving in ways that frustrate us, then we have only to blame the very materialistic society we have allowed to come into force. They are as much a product of it as we are.

When we get back to a simpler, kinder, more compassionate society, rid of all murderous greeds and self-interests, then perhaps we can expect a lot of this murdering depression to be laid to rest. But we have to *want* to change.

# White Elephants won't go away soon

Last week, I introduced you to the old MNR buildings in White River. I told you how the province decided, back in 1979, to consolidate the White River District office with Wawa, and transfer all the staff. The buildings were vacant by the spring of 1980. Today, those buildings are still there - heated, empty, and, for the most part, unused. I promised last week to tell you why this happened, and why the Provincial Auditor is partly to blame.

The buildings are under the management of the Ministry of Government Services - the provincial government's landlord. If they had been in the private sector, and weren't needed any more, they would have been turned over to a real estate agent, and sold. Unfortunately, that's not the way it works when the taxpayers are paying the bills.

The Ministry of Government Services first has to canvass all other provincial ministries, and find out if anyone has a use for the buildings. That process is supposedly still going on. Some of the houses were turned over to the OPP a few years ago. But other departments have

either failed to give an official opinion, or are continually asking for more time for a "review". That's obstacle number one.

Obstacle two is southern Ontario bureaucrats who don't know the realities of life in the north. In order to legally sell off the buildings, they first have to be hooked up to the municipal sewer and water lines, and the huge block of land has to be surveyed, so individual lots can be sold off.

Year after year, the Ministry of Government Services has put the sewer and water line work out to tender, and every year the tenders come in way over budget. Last fall for example, the bids were 57% over budget. The Ministry of Government Services had a budget of \$140,000 for the work, and the lowest bid was over \$220,000. The Toronto planners in charge of drawing up the budgets and the tender specifications ignored the fact the work would have to be done in bedrock - the Canadian Shield. Dave Campbell, the regional director of the Ministry of



## NORTHERN INSIGHTS

by Larry Sanders



Government Services in Sault Ste. Marie, told me "we will put the work out to tender again this spring. We're confident we will start the work this summer. We have the money this time."

Obstacle three is the lack of planning by the province. Keith Belisle, who owns a small construction company in White River, struggled with the mass of red tape

around the buildings for two years, and finally put in a formal offer to

take the whole mess off the province's hands last fall - for just under half a million dollars. Belisle's offer included taking on all the the government's problems - like renovations, sewer and water lines, street repairs, and commitments to existing tenants. You would think Belisle's offer would be welcomed with open arms by the bureaucrats. Not so. All Belisle got was a run-around. "When (the province) decided to change their offices from White River to Wawa, that's a fair decision. I can't argue with that. (But) I think at the time they

should have had a plan what they were going to do with this complex. But I don't think they've had a plan. And that's were I feel the real injustice has been to the taxpayers, and to the people of White River."

Obstacle four is the set of rules set down for the disposal of government property by the Provincial Auditor. In southern Ontario, these rules might make sense. They say when buildings are declared "surplus" by the province, the taxpayers must be protected. The Ministry of Government Services must sell the property for "market value". In the case of these buildings, finding out what "market value" is, seems problematic for the bureaucrats. One person told me they asked about buying just the old district office, and was told the price would be a hundred thousand dollars. Would you pay that much for a building that needs major work, and hasn't been used in 11 years?

The municipality of White River wants to take over these buildings, but can't afford "market value". They've told the

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