

Living the Goldie Oldie times

It's the best of times, the worst of times. What is yer old Baba talking about? "The Tale of Two Cities" by Dickens? No, I'm speaking of these Goldie Oldie times in which those of us who are Seniors are living right now.

Some pundit or other was overheard to say that us old geezers are having the time of our lives because we're so well off and have loads of time to do nothing else but run around enjoying ourselves. Compared to all the other poor souls who still have to keep their noses firmly planted against the old work-grindstone, that is.

Well, that may be so on this continent and in this faire Dominion where we have so many Social Services in place to assist us oldsters, but there's a heck of a lot of other countries in this world where growing old ain't the fun and games it's cracked up to be. In some of the really poor Third World ones, they still don't pay much heed to the population crises and propogate all those children simply because that is their only security in life. Not every aged person in the

world is receiving the same benefits as those of us fortunate enough to be living in a country where such benefits exist.

As for being well off. Well maybe some of us have been fortunate enough to put aside assets, accounts and stocks and bonds on which to luxuriate in these Sunset Years, but I'm sure an

Life, According To "Baba"

awful lot of us are just managing nicely from month to months. Thank you, working peoples of today for making such security available to us.

But as for having time for nothing but frivolities, I grant you we may have the time, but fun and games it ain't all the time. Sure, we don't have the heartaches and headaches of bringing up a family anymore, but the heartaches (blessedly so) are still there as long as there is still a relative or relation remaining. After that, it's surely the loneliest of lonely times, and not to be envied.

Yes, we do have plenty of

retirement time in which to indulge our individual tastes in various activities or even a second career, and with some energetic souls it can be the busiest time of their lives. I won't bore you with statistics of famous names who did some, if not most, of their best work in the so-called 'declining years'. Suffice it to say, the body that thinks

actively remains a body active.

But even the physical body active winds down inexorably, and we become prone to all the aches, pains and incapacitating ailments which come to dog all of us one way or another in this seventh and final Shakespearean stage of our lives. That's when it becomes the worst of times.

But every stage of life has its worst and best. Childhood was full of being

told we were 'only children', but we sure didn't have any heavy responsibilities; the teens were the absolute dregs in some ways but very exciting in others; the early twenties were full of career and opposite sex problems which kept things alternately happy and gloomy. Then by the thirties there was usually marriage, home and children responsibilities and you thought you'd never live through the hundred and one crises but somehow you did. Then you were into the forties and fifties, things were calming down considerably and you were a lot older and much wiser about this living business. Then almost before you know it, you're a Goldie Oldie wondering where the heck most of your life has gone, and where did the stranger-person staring out from your bathroom mirror come from to take over.

Yesirree, bub, every stage of life is the best and worst of times. All depends on your outlook, and you can either make it always the worst, or the very best. Most of us muddle along somewhere inbetween.



Olga Landiak

Platitudes no longer enough

March 21 is set aside every year as the "International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination". The date was picked to commemorate demonstrators who were shot in Sharpesville, a black township in South Africa, thirty-one years ago.

Canadians should not just point self-righteous fingers at South Africa, when looking for racism. Reminders of racism and bigotry are right here, in northwestern Ontario. At the elementary school my son attends in the north end of Thunder Bay, a gang of 'skinheads' had to be disciplined by the principal for painting anti-semitic graffiti on school walls. Some graffiti were directed toward individual Jewish children, by name.

Across the street from our house last summer, a narrow-minded father chastised his children, in a voice loud enough for the whole neighbourhood to hear, for playing with "those...native kids" who live next door to me.

Such incidents can be dismissed as isolated acts by bigoted individuals, or we can recognize them as symptomatic of something much deeper - a society that has failed to come to grips with intolerance and systemic discrimination. Holding forums and conferences and issuing reports from Human Rights Commissions are useful, but far from adequate. We have to start in our homes and schools to teach tolerance of those perceived as "different" - whether those differences be skin colour, language, culture, religion, or physical characteristics. If we want our grandchildren to live in a world free of war and violence, our children have to learn that their parents have not always been perfect role models.

To accomplish this goal, our school boards were given the task last year by the Ontario government of becoming the front-line institutions of combatting racism. As a start, boards which did not have a policy on racism and discrimination were required to develop one. The guidelines from the Ministry of Education stopped there - the actual content of the policies were left up to the school boards.

On issues like this, there are really two types of policies - passive and proactive. A passive policy states broad principles, without bothering

clearly intended to be an "inactive" type of policy, rather than proactive. In a letter supporting the condemnation of the draft policy by *Race Relations Thunder Bay*, Corinne Nabigon, the President of the Ontario Native Women's Association, pointed out that the draft policy:

* contained no recognition of the large number of native students who come to Thunder Bay from isolated northern reserves for schooling. Nabigon says "adequate screening and preparatory classes are necessary for high school and elementary school children who must fly in from isolated

suggests changing the words "seek and support" to "actively develop". It also calls for "mechanisms by which community and parental input will be sought." Such wording changes are fundamental - instead of ending up with a policy of platitudes that will be filed and forgotten, the board would have a policy with clear goals and objectives, as well as taking the stance that procedures have to be put in place to deal with such an issue. Framing platitudes on a wall is no longer enough.

Jim McCuaig, the director of the Lakehead Board of Education, has responded defensively to the critique by calling it "premature". McCuaig shrugs and points out that it was, after all, "only a draft policy".

What McCuaig failed to mention was that the board had to be ordered in the first place, by the province, to write a policy. Failing to have a proactive policy for so many years is yet another indicator of systemic discrimination - since by not being part of the solution, the board was clearly part of the problem.

March 21 will come around again next year. I wonder how much progress will be made by then. Will the children of that narrow-minded father across the street still be ordered not to play with our native neighbours, just because of their skin colour? Will skinheads still be painting anti-semitic graffiti on school walls?

If the Lakehead Board of Education ignores the advice of *Race Relations Thunder Bay*, sticks with a policy of only hollow platitudes, and other school boards follow Thunder Bay's example, I must regrettably predict that such incidents will continue.



NORTHERN INSIGHTS

by Larry Sanders



with any details of how the principles are to be enforced. A proactive policy goes beyond platitudes to active practice - adopting the old maxim that if you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem.

The public school board in Thunder Bay issued a draft of a racism policy in December. On March 15, the Education Review Committee of *Race Relations Thunder Bay* presented a scathing critique of the draft policy, calling it "paternalistic and insulting to individuals and representatives" who had provided the board with their input before the draft policy was written. In case you haven't heard of it, *Race Relations Thunder Bay* is a committee of native and multi-cultural representatives appointed to be the city's watchdog on racism.

The draft policy, as I read it, was

Indian communities; they experience culture shock when they find themselves in the city of Thunder Bay without any knowledge or familiarity with basic urban skills as important as use of public transit."

* did not recognize "the unusual needs of our children who most often come from backgrounds of poverty, family violence and single parent households."

Race Relations Thunder Bay suggests fundamental re-writing of the policy, to make it proactive. For example, under the heading of "school and community relations" the draft policy says:

"The system will seek and support initiatives that provide opportunities for enhanced school and community relations."

Race Relations Thunder Bay