

Opinion

Race relations at a crossroads

Last Tuesday was the United Nations Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. A fairly wordy description for an entirely noble cause.

The day takes place on or about March 21 because that was the date in 1960 of the Sharpeville Massacre in South Africa.

Thirty-five years later, Nelson Mandela is that country's president.

Obviously then, the world is moving forward as it tries to get rid of racism.

It's a tough, long battle, though, and there are still many roadblocks along the way.

Canada has a long tradition of tolerance and racial harmo-



Viewpoint

Alan Shackleton

ny, but we still have much work to do.

Our biggest challenge is the speed with which our country is changing. Within a span of 10 years a rural intersection becomes an urban corner full of signs in a different language, some feel threatened by the intrusion while others welcome the diversity.

As the experts say, it's a matter of education. One needs to

understand why people of different cultures do certain things, instead of criticizing them for not doing everything the way you do it.

Where we often run into trouble in this country is with the professional do-gooders and social engineers trying to shove their version of the right thing down the throats of everyone else. They cause more harm than good.

The push to take the Christ out of Christmas in public schools is an excellent example of this.

Somebody (though it's impossible to pinpoint the exact individual, group, or government department) thought this was a good idea.

It would show that we're all so tolerant we would actually try and turn the single most important day of the Christian calendar into a non-religious event in an effort not to offend anyone.

It's these kind of lamebrained decisions that breed resentment, and they do more to fan the fires of racism than a hundred hatemongers could ever hope to achieve.

On the issue of eliminating racism I think we're at a crossroads where we either choose commonsense and genuine goodwill to others, or we experience an ugly backlash to the rapid changes we are going through.

Hopefully, it's the former.

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Odd goings on going on

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

Hamlet

Let's see now. There was the Canadian Federal Progressive Conservative Party which, thanks to the deft management of one B. Mulroney metamorphosed from the most powerful political institution in the country to a backwater, rump clique not quite as powerful as the Flat Earth Society.

There is the Cod Moratorium, in which Newfoundlanders, who've been fishing for cod since the time of Shakespeare, were prohibited by law from fishing for cod.

Yeah, I'd say 1994 was a pretty weird year, wouldn't you?

Well, you might say so, and I might say so...but Bob Rickard would disagree.

Mister Rickard is the editor of a very strange magazine called The Fortean Times, published in Britain. The Fortean Times devotes itself to measuring weirdness, worldwide and it says 1994 was slightly substandard, weird-wise.

Specifically, about two per cent less weird than 1993.

How do they figure? Well, each year, the folks at Fortean Times assess 34 different categories of what they call Weird Happenings. According to their calibrations, 1994 saw a marked decline in the number of, well, for example, paranormal experiences, crop circles, mass deaths and water monsters.

Which is not to say that 1994 was a Brady Bunch, Norman Rockwell, Preston Manning kind of year. Heck no. The Fortean Times notes significant increases in Alien Big Cat sightings, for one thing.

The Alien Big Cat syndrome has been getting headlines in Britain for the past few months. Felines much bigger than your

Basic Black

Arthur Black

average household tabby have been spotted in some of the wilder areas of Great Britain.

Other, even odder phenomena made the Fortean Times Strangeness Index. It notes that thousands of small fish were found flapping about on parking lots and roads in the Australian desert outback on Feb. 22 of last year. Strange? A little. What's even stranger is that this is the fourth reported "fishfall" in the area over the past six years.

What other events of 1994 does The Fortean Times deem newsworthy?

There is Canada's own contribution to Weird Highlights of 1994. The Fortean Times calls it Holy Spirit Fever Victims (or lucky recipients) of the fever burst into joyful tears, roar like lions or simply begin laughing uncontrollably. The fever seems to have its origins in a tiny church near Lester B. Pearson airport on the outskirts of Toronto. People come from all around the world to take part in what has come to be called the Toronto Blessing. Whatever it is, it's contagious. The Fortean Times has documented outbreaks of Holy Spirit Fever in Africa, India, South America and China.

Personally, I'm delighted that the folks at The Fortean Times are taking the trouble to document the odd goings on going on. I can't wait until they break a truly bizarre story like...oh, I don't know...aliens in charge of photo radar vans maybe...or a politician who actually keeps his prom.

Nah. That would be too weird.



ADAM

by Brian Bassel

OK, OK, YOU WIN, I'LL CALL. BUT WHY IS IT ALWAYS MY JOB TO CALL FOR BABY SITTING??

I DUNNO, ADAM, I HAVE AN AVERSION TO CALLING. BESIDES, THERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU JUST DO BETTER THAN ME.

LIKE DIALING A TELEPHONE??

NO WHINING AND BEGGING.

BRIAN BASSEL