

LETTERS

United against the real enemy

We are all tired, frustrated and feeling powerless after two years of this pandemic. What happened? When did our collective dealing with a life-threatening, or possibly life-altering virus morph into resentment and division? When did we begin to judge each other and question science and our health professionals? When did we lose our focus on the real threat? When did we lose our values of respect and responsibility for our neighbours and each other? Impatience and temper are signs of the stress we are all facing. If ever there was a time to reflect and think about the consequences of our words and actions, it is now!

I too want to be able to see and hug my loved ones, see my friends, go shopping and even travel without this constant feeling of anxiety. We are all free to choose: fight each other, or unite and deal with the real enemy — our vulnerability to COVID-19.

Gabriele Kimstra, Hamilton

Anarchists, not protesters

Recent articles regarding the "Freedom Convoy" give protesters too much credit. They are anarchists. Anarchy is defined as "a utopian society of individuals who enjoy complete freedom without government." Our society is a democratic society, not a free society; we are governed by rules that the majority of the population has agreed we should have, for the protection and greater good of society. Without those rules, our society would become apocalyptic, anyone could do anything they wanted provided they were the strongest. Since only about 15 per cent of the population refuses to get a vaccine while the rest of us willingly line up, they cannot claim to fight for everyone's freedom. Democracy has spoken. We the majority of people agree to the rules the government has imposed regarding vaccines. If you want to be unvaccinated, accept the restrictions or look at moving to a country where being unvaccinated is the majority.

Joe Jaroszek, Dundas

Growth numbers are suspect

I vaguely remember in the late '70s and early '80s, a story in *The Spectator* suggested that by the year 2000, we would have a population of 750,000/800,000 and the name of the city would change to Wentworth. Even now, we are nowhere near those numbers. We now have new projections; should we trust them? Personally, I would question the wisdom of the new numbers to destroy vital farmland.

Luigi Leombino, Hamilton

Opinion piece was just that

The *Spectator* published Feb. 1 an opinion piece by Ms. Wendy Moir, the new CEO of the new Home Construction Regulatory Authority (HCRA). Several eyebrow-raising statements were made, and new home buyers should keep asking questions.

Having a code of ethics trumpeted by the new CEO doesn't mean anything unless it's being enforced and the public needs to see evidence it's being enforced. To date, there's scant information about any disciplinary committee hearings or decisions from HCRA on their website, and very little information on what has become of the over 600 complaints Ms. Moir says she's received about builders during her first year of operation. Minimal information on HCRA cases as well, on CanLII.org, the online source for court decisions.

The CEO says "most new home purchasers report a good relationship with their builder," which is a head-scratcher next to the admission that HCRA received over 600 complaints. And then the admission that two independent reviews determined "changes were needed" to ensure builder competence and ethics. This has all been addressed in a year of operation, and it's now "a new era"? This article reflects Ms. Moir's opinion on her work as CEO of the new regulatory agency. It should be read as just that.

Barbra Captijn, Toronto

No strategic voting

Every election cycle, we hear the same argument: most people voted against the current government. The flaw in this argument is obvious: most people voted against all of the other parties. Strategic voting has never and will never work. Follow the science.

Bill Havers, Hamilton

Good Samaritans to the rescue

I fell forward in the parking lot of Fortinos, taking my bundle buggy with me. I called for help. Two gentlemen and a woman quickly came to my rescue. Up they lifted me, brushed ice and snow from my clothes and brought my buggy up. There were two children with their dad cheering me on. Wouldn't let me go until they were sure I was OK. Thank you for the help. Only a couple of aches and pains as a result. There are great people everywhere.

Betty Coward, Hamilton

An amazing opinion piece

What an amazing article by Craig Wallace (Jan. 25). It should have been on the front page. It was breathtaking and refreshing as to how well it was put together and I support him 100 per cent regarding those who protest that mandatory vaccines are a violation of their rights.

Rose Oliveira, Hamilton



A colourful display lights up a walkway in Niagara Falls. Writing for Valentine's Day, contributor Thomas Froese looks at the notion of love and its absurdities.

Love and all its absurdities



THOMAS FROESE
OPINION

Today, with Valentine's rounding the corner, let's talk about love and insanity.

First, under the heading "Everything I've Learned In Life, I've Learned From My Teenagers," let me say that there are never a lack of new and exciting lessons. "You know, Dad," my eldest said recently. "Don't take this wrong, but I have no idea how you got Mom. I mean, she's way out of your league."

OK, gentlemen. Husbands? Dads? Should we lean into this? "Absolutely," I told my astute daughter. "Me getting your mother was the heist of the century." What can I say? Strange things happen. People marry up.

Consider the hopeless romantic at a wedding I'd once attended. You want insanity? This guy was a friend of both bride and groom (she was a doctor with a farming background, while he was a financial planner who also farmed). So at the reception, the dude strolled, unplanned, to the podium to share how said groom, Wayne, had once asked him for advice on how to win the bride's heart.

"So I told Wayne, to win her heart,

do this, this and this," said Mister Hopeless. "Finally, you need to sing her the moo-moo song!" Then this dude sang.

For everyone, I recognized the song from an old TV ad about a cow's deep love for a certain steak sauce. "Can you imagine? How much I love you! Moo-moo-moo-moo." Hopeless sang it, complete with the moo-moos. Crazy.

Along with everyone, a couple of hundred wedding guests, I had no idea what might come out of this guy's mouth next.

But later, privately and not surprisingly, he explained that his singing advice to the groom never happened. He'd made it up, on the spot, to impress his rather striking date for the evening. Did I mention insanity?

Now consider Alain de Botton, a sort of everyday philosopher and life mentor, a Swiss gentleman in London who founded what he calls *The School of Life*. Here he is: "We're dangerous. And most of us are on the edge of insanity. The only people that look normal to us are the people we just met." And this. "We're trouble to be around, and also a bit crazy. It follows then that anyone we're going to get together with is also a bit crazy."

Does anyone wonder, then, why relationship tank? We overplay romanticism and understate our foibles. And when the fuzzy feelings

slip-slide away? Are you ever haunted by the feeling that you're hitched to the wrong person?

What helps, besides recognizing that you and your partner are both insane, is coming to a new understanding of what love actually is. Besides serving, it's about learning.

So many a stable person, sure. But even steady people can show strange behaviour. So be generous in how you interpret it. Remember, like you, your partner is an idiot. (Although a very lovable idiot.) Realize, also, you'll feel lonely sometimes. It's OK. Really. Your partner isn't meant to fill every need. And if this leads to unhappiness? Even pessimism? As a healthy reset, this can help, too.

Does this sound very romantic? No? Good. This, all from de Botton.

I, for one, don't disagree. And, by the way, I happen to be the guy. Mister Hopeless? From the wedding podium? That's me. "Can you imagine? How much I love you?" It's true. Deeply. Madly. There I stood. Here I still stand, hopelessly insane, no doubt, now long-married to my date of that summer evening.

This Valentine's, my bride and I toast these memories. We were engaged on the first Valentine's Day after the moo-moo song. There was the newspaper front page. The radio station. The town crier. The theatre crowd. But that's all another story.

Yes, some years on, we're content to simply celebrate the long and winding road of our absurdities, still on the way, the journey, travelling learning. Maybe like you.

Which is all to say, Happy Valentine's, babe. I'm still crazy for you.

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Ideacide: Left-wing censorship a danger

RHODA E. HOWARD-HASSMANN

For the second time, Henry Giroux has angued in *The Spectator* that U.S. Republican attempts to ban from schools books that refer to slavery or racism constitute an extremely dangerous trend. I agree with him: I am very worried that the U.S. will soon become a fascist state.

Sadly, however, although Republicans are the chief threat to freedom of thought and speech in the U.S., there is also another trend coming from the cultural left, in both the U.S. and Canada. It is "ideacide," attempts to censor ideas put forward by people on the political right, or even people defending traditional liberal ideas.

Tomás Hudlický, a distinguished professor of chemistry at Brock University, has been bullied and shunned for opposing equity efforts based on group membership, rather than equality of individual opportunity. He has been vilified as an "old white male." In fact, he was a refugee from Communist persecution in (then) Czechoslovakia.

In 2019, a Coptic Christian immigrant from Egypt was expelled from the University of Manitoba medical school because of his pro-life and anti-gun-control views. In August 2021, a judge ruled that the university had violated his charter rights to freedom of expression. I disagree very strongly with this stu-

dent's views, but it's a dangerous precedent to expel someone from public university for holding views many Canadians share.

In May 2021, Prof. Rima Azar of Mount Allison University was suspended and banned from campus for blog posts that questioned the existence of systemic racism in Canada and called the Black Lives Matter movement "radical." She said she immigrated to Canada because it protected freedom of expression.

In September 2020, Ottawa University suspended Verushka Lieutenant-Duval, a (white) francophone adjunct professor of linguistics. She had used the full "N-word" when explaining how minority groups sometimes "re-appropriate" slurs for their own ends, for example in the Netflix movie "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom." There was absolutely no racist intent in her stating the full word. Yet although she was later reinstated, she experienced harassment and threats of violence on social media.

This last case made headlines in Quebec, resulting in a government commission to examine academic freedom and responsibilities. Some of the witnesses were anglophone professors from Ontario, testifying anonymously because they were afraid of repercussions from their universities if they testified openly.

In January, the Waterloo school board shut down teacher Carolyn Burjoski because she was con-

cerned that books for children about gender transition made it seem too easy and "cool" transition. Many people, not only Burjoski, are concerned about the serious medical effects of gender transitioning. Yet, she was told that her comments violated the Ontario human rights code. They did not. The human rights code prohibits discriminatory acts, but does not prohibit any speech.

None of the views expressed by the individuals I've mentioned is outside the range of permissible expression in Canada. Equality of opportunity for individuals is still Canadian and Ontario law, despite exceptions for special programs for under-represented groups.

Not every use of the "N-word" is racist. Canadians are not forbidden to question whether systemic racism exists. Nor are they forbidden to oppose abortion or gun-control laws. Instead of permitting these individuals to express their views, their cowardly university and school board administrators capitulated to popular opinion advocating censorship.

Ideacide is a gift from the cultural left to the much more powerful political right. Censorship and condemnation of anyone who proposes ideas that vary from the cultural left's approved views make it much easier for the political right in turn to censor material that is important for scholars, students and the public to discuss.

This hasn't happened in Canada yet, but we should certainly worry it will.

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