

LETTERS

Gap is becoming an abyss

Not long ago, there was an announcement that Enbridge could increase natural gas prices by as much as 23 per cent. That is a crushing increase. At the same time, there has been talk of shipping liquefied natural gas to Europe to offset their losses in the Russian supply. I would like to see that 23 per cent increase, which our provincial government approved, justified. It couldn't possibly be a supply problem as it appears that there is enough supply to ship it abroad. Consumers are being gouged in so many areas that are essential and no level of government sees fit to address the problem. Meanwhile, the gap between the haves and have-nots is becoming an abyss.

Pat Stevens, Grimsby

The threat of gridlock

Condominium construction is happening everywhere you look in Hamilton, especially in the downtown core. One development on Wilson Street will see the building of three, 31-storey condo towers. This development alone will result in the addition of 931 new condo units. The United Nations world population forecast predicts that Hamilton's population will increase by 236,000 people by 2051. With this population explosion comes an increase in traffic volume. This increase may well result in gridlock.

I hope our current city council keeps this in mind when planning to change some major streets from one-way to two-way traffic in an attempt to make the streets safer. One-way streets in Hamilton were first introduced in 1956 to facilitate the flow of traffic and they did just that. It would be interesting to know if the introduction of one-way streets at that time resulted in an increase in pedestrian/motor vehicle accidents.

It is a given that converting one-way streets to two-way streets combined with the anticipated population increase will result in traffic congestion. However, it may in fact reduce the number of pedestrian accidents. I trust that the city will consider any and all potential solutions.

Al Knapp, Hamilton

Library and a museum ... ZZZZ

Regarding: 'Mayor in favour of Hamilton museum at Discovery Centre': I like our mayor, but this backward type of thinking is exactly what we do not need! This city needs to step up with ideas to attract not put one to sleep. When I think of the many waterfront conversions in cities I have visited around the world, the theme is to draw and entertain people. Cities like Vancouver (Granville Island), Pittsburgh, Penn. (great warehouse river area conversion), and even Lisbon with its beautiful aquarium legacy. To our old and tired electorate ... people want to get away, have fun and be entertained. A library and a museum? Really?

Greg MacDougall, Binbrook

NATO needs more muscle

Regarding 'NATO's new strategy is dangerous' (July 18): The writer suggests that NATO's new strategic concept adopted at the recent Madrid summit and aimed at showing a little more muscle may be dangerous to world peace given the precarious political climate that exists in the world today. Does that mean that the one that has been in place since the end of the Cold War (the "Kumbaya" model) has been a success? It certainly hasn't curtailed the territorial ambitions of dictators like Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping. Instead of the Golden Rule dominating western thinking, maybe it is time for the Platinum Rule to prevail: "Don't do unto others what you don't want them to do unto you."

If more of the bullies of this world understood that what goes around comes around, that there will be serious consequences for their actions, they might think twice about pouncing on the little guy or think they can always get away with an end run around the defensive guards.

David McInnis, Ancaster

Planning for war

This author has a point. If we only plan for military conflict, that is what we will get. Where is the plan for peaceful resolution?

Mary Havlock, Burlington

Ask them if freedom is free

Someone should buy this PhD candidate a plane ticket to Vinnitsya in Ukraine so she can speak to the parents of the child killed by a Russian airstrike. She can ask them if they approve of NATO increasing its rapid-reaction force or upgrading its first-strike capability against Russian targets. Most importantly, she can ask them if they think freedom is free.

Phil Beard, Dundas

NATO is hardly innocent

Although I abhor Russia's war on Ukraine, The Spec can be lauded for its balanced reporting with such articles as "NATO's new strategy is dangerous." The writer quotes a Dr. John Mearseheimer who is known to blame NATO for Russia's aggression. We also know that JFK did not permit the Soviet Union to park missiles on Cuban soil or anywhere in the Western Hemisphere. The situation for humans looks grim.

Antonio Mula, Hamilton



THOMAS FROESE

Commenting on apologies and Pope Francis' visit to Canada, Thomas Froese writes, "The road to 'I'm sorry' is something entirely different. It's more of a path. Narrow. Less travelled. And running right through where you (or I, or the neighbours) have to pass."

The challenging road to apology



THOMAS FROESE
OPINION

My teens call me "Papi" and "Paps" these days. "Good morning, Papi." I don't mind. It's from "Papa," the origin of "Pope." But I'm not Catholic. I'm just a dad who's happy to find some heart and courage and brains, happy to get the kids further along life's yellow brick road in one piece.

My neighbour is a devout Catholic. He's also more experienced in fatherhood. So, not long ago I asked, "How'd you deal with this?" He said, "You know, Thom. It's been a journey."

Who's not on one of those?

Consider the 35-year-old who divorced her hopeless mother. She wrote the book, "Divorcing a Parent." The daughter didn't see her for three years. Then one day the phone rang. It was her mom. "I'm sorry," she said. Like magic older than time, the words changed that daughter's life. Healing began.

If the research didn't tell us, which it does, then the stories would shout the news. Forgiveness, both giving and receiving, is crucial for our well-being. "Sorry" may be the hardest word, even the cheapest word, if spoken as a glib social nicety,

or because of some relational manipulation. But say to someone you've hurt, "I'm sorry," with the right spirit, and the right gesture, and watch the walls come down.

I suspect that some Catholics — there are 1.2 billion worldwide — might want to divorce their church now and again. It's easy for any church, like any institution, to think more of itself than it should. Just like any person. Most of us (and this is embarrassing) aren't clever enough to hide our own pride. A reader once wrote me, starting with, "I read your arrogant article." Thank you.

In either case, Pope Francis now has something to say.

Francis is Pope No. 266. I was near him once in Istanbul. Historically called Constantinople, Istanbul, even in today's Islamic Turkey, remains the seat of the Orthodox Church.

Francis was there to build bridges. By chance, I was there, also near the renowned Hagia Sophia, Greek for "Holy Wisdom." "Papal Papal!" This, from onlookers who weren't even Catholic.

It's when Francis visited East Africa, though, that he changed my life. For one youth rally, some 150,000 Ugandans gathered, like for some rock star. But those African roads, my family, who then lived in Uganda, travelled those bumpy and dusty roads for the kids' daily

school commute, a horribly onerous daybreak ride of an hour, plus. Then, to prepare for the Pope's visit, the Naminongo Road was paved. Smooth. Finally.

Now Francis' apology, this one on Canadian soil, to Canada's Indigenous people for the Catholic role in residential schools that past governments created to, at worst, "take the Indian out of the child."

These schools do have success stories. "Nobody's interested in the positive, the joy in that school," Cree storyteller and celebrated Canadian Tomson Highway once said of his own experience. Still, for too many others. Broken.

The Pope is scheduled to arrive in Edmonton Sunday. It's something, Papal apologies don't grow on trees. It took 359 years for a Pope — it was John Paul II — to apologize for the so-called "Galileo incident" when Galileo was arrested and banned for teaching that the Earth actually orbits the sun.

Now, a different road is being paved. It brings us closer to home. Closer to the mind of God. Closer to each other. So it's a good time to be still. With a listening ear. An open heart. Turned away from voices of anger and cynicism and naval-gazing that can easily fill the chatter of our time.

Of course, there are always other roads. The road to hell, for example, is said to be wide. The road to "I'm sorry" is something entirely different. It's more of a path. Narrow. Less travelled. And running right through where you (or I, or the neighbours) have to pass. It's a good place to go. Well just grow old.

THOMAS FROESE WRITES ABOUT NEWS, TRAVEL AND LIFE. FIND HIM AT THOMASFROESE.COM.

American education is being dismantled

HENRY A. GIROUX

The crisis of education in the United States presents not only a danger to American democracy, but also the ideological and structural foundations blocking the emergence of a fascist state. An unimaginable catastrophe characterizes how American education is being shaped by far-right Republican party.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the policies of Florida Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis, who is on the forefront of transforming education into a feral propaganda tool for producing what is euphemistically called "patriotic education." Coercion, conformity and toxic forms of religious, political and economic fundamentalism now threaten to destroy education as a democratic public sphere, however weak it may be. Institutions of learning at all levels in the red states are becoming laboratories for what I term the Nazification of American education, replicating pedagogies of repression that were at work in Germany in the 1930s.

DeSantis has put into place a range of reactionary educational policies. These include banning books and critical race theory, requiring educators sign loyalty oaths and forcing teachers to post their syllabi online. He has also instituted legislation that restricts tenure and allows students to film classes

without consent, and much more. DeSantis justifies these acts of repression by claiming that "Florida schools have become socialism factories" and that students at all levels of education should not be subjected to classroom material that would make them uncomfortable, as if the ultimate measure of knowledge and truth is comfort.

Education under the Third Reich offers significant insights into how repressive forms of pedagogy become central to shaping the identities, values and world views of young people. For Hitler, matters of indoctrination, education and the shaping of the collective consciousness of young people was an integral element of Nazi rule and politics. As Hitler wrote in "Mein Kampf," Germany needs an "educational regime (where) young people will learn nothing else but how to think German and act German... And they will never be free again, not in their whole lives."

Nazi education was designed to mould children rather than educate them. Races deemed "inferior" and "less worthy" were banned from schools while any positive reference to them and their history was expunged from history books and other curricula materials.

The Nazi educational system was deeply anti-intellectual and created models of pedagogy that undermined the ability of students to

think for themselves while forcing teachers to indoctrinate students with Nazi ideology.

The model of Nazi Germany's educational system has a great deal to teach us about the ideologies that produced a society wedded to the related doctrines of racial purity, the banning of books, the suppression of historical memory, ultranationalism and the cult of the strongman.

Under DeSantis, white supremacy, systemic racism and the indoctrination of youth have the official power of the state on their side. DeSantis attacks youth considered unworthy (LGBTQ youth), embraces lower academic standards and subjects faculty to political litmus tests through "viewpoint diversity surveys" aimed to "gather evidence" on non-compliant faculty.

He also censors books that do not follow his ideological proclivities, forbids teachers to talk about racism, supports textbooks as crucial tools for spreading propaganda to students and monitors teacher's classroom actions.

While the times we live in seem dire, it is worthwhile to take heed from Helen Keller who in a letter to Nazi youth stated: "History hasn't taught you anything if you think you can kill ideas. The tyrants tried to do so often in the past, but the ideas revolted against them and destroyed them." This is a warning that Americans and Canadians should take seriously before they and their children are no longer allowed to think critically and act courageously.

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