

# We can say “sesquicentennial.” But can we say “values”?

2017 is a milestone anniversary for both Canada and Humanist Perspectives. Canada turns 150 years old on July 1st. Humanist Perspectives (once known as Humanist in Canada), was created in the year of Canada’s centennial, and turns 50 with this, its 200th issue. Such anniversaries invite reflection upon who we are and where we are going.

For Canada, the debate during the past few years has sometimes been intense. Following Stephen Harper’s defeat by Justin Trudeau in the October, 2015, election, the Conservative Party of Canada has been undergoing a drawn-out leadership race, whose outcome we will know in May. One candidate, Kellie Leitch, stirred up a great deal of controversy, even riling most of her fellow leadership candidates as well as interim Conservative leader Rona Ambrose, for proposing to screen all immigrants and refugees for “anti-Canadian values.” Apparently even proposing such an idea was anti-Canadian. Is that because Canada has no values, or because we have no right to expect that immigrants who will live among us and continue to shape our country should share them? Despite the opprobrium, Kellie Leitch seems to have been on to something. A Forum Research Inc. poll conducted days after Leitch’s controversial remarks and released in September, 2016, no doubt dismayed Torstar, publisher of the very liberal Toronto Star, which commissioned the poll: 67% of those polled thought potential immigrants who hold anti-Canadian values should not be allowed to come to Canada.

Our new Prime Minister, however, seems to be a little less clear on the subject of values. Following his election win, he declared Canada to be the first post-national country and said that there “is no core identity, no mainstream in

Canada.” That would imply no common values. Yet despite our supposed lack of core identity and mainstream, he claimed that “There are shared values – openness, respect, compassion, willingness to work hard, to be there for each other, to search for equality and justice.” Wonderful! So we can have it both ways – no mainstream or core identity but shared values? But what if someone’s idea of equality and justice is very different from my own? A person who supports Islamic sharia law, for example, will have a very different interpretation of “equality and justice” than I do. Trudeau may have noticed that not everyone in what might be called “post-national” Europe is happy with the situation, as the Brexit result – with the UK opting to leave the European Union – revealed. The current turmoil in Europe shows that values do matter – and that conflicts result when newcomers refuse to integrate into the mainstream (yes, there is one, Mr. Trudeau!).

That others understand that there is a mainstream vulnerable to be changed is clear from the Muslim Brotherhood’s Explanatory Memorandum, which explains that organization’s objective: “The Ikhwan [Muslim Brotherhood] must understand that their work in America is a kind of grand Jihad in eliminating and destroying the Western civilization from within and ‘sabotaging’ its miserable house by their hands and the hands of the believers so that it is eliminated and God’s religion is made victorious over all other religions.”

While terrorism is a useful tool for the grand Jihad, the primary method to reset our values is through the infiltration of our institutions and wearing down resistance to Muslim demands. As Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the mastermind of the 9/11 attacks, put it (and he might have been

speaking of almost any Western country): “We will win because Americans don’t realize... we do not need to defeat you militarily; we only need to fight long enough for you to defeat yourself by quitting. ... Eventually, America will expose her neck for us to slaughter.” All Western countries, deracinating their young from their own culture in atonement for the sins of racism and colonialism, de-emphasizing their own values (there’s that word again) while embracing an exuberant multiculturalism regardless of the societal upheavals it brings about, are now exposing their necks to slaughter. This will continue, unless we reconnect with our identity and our values.

And what about our humanist values? Sophie Dulesh’s article provides a condensed history of the evolution of rationalist thought. She notes that enlightenments arose among ancient cultures but that there was backpedaling or a recoil from those values. Sophie suggests that it seems to be happening within our civilization right now. I agree. Take, for example, free speech, a cornerstone of the enlightenment. It is under threat these days, with speakers who are deemed offensive being shouted down, sometimes with threats or violence. Or they are “deplatformed” through pressure on venues to cancel events. And the censorship is not coming from the “Right,” but from that hotbed of “liberalism,” university campuses.

Tellingly, it is more often the “Right” than the “Left” that raises its voice against the stealth infringements of our freedoms. One such attempt is Motion M-103 (Systemic Racism and Religious Discrimination), tabled by Liberal MP Iqra Khalid and passed by the House of Commons on March 23, thanks to the Liberal majority. Motion M-103 calls upon the government to “recognize the need to quell the increasing public climate of hate and fear,” “condemn Islamophobia and all forms of systemic racism...,” and calls for the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage to collect data and report to the House within 240 calendar days. Motion M-103 is based on faulty premises, does not define “Islamophobia” and looks very much like an attempt to implement the United Nations’ Resolution 16/18 put forward by the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation, allegedly to combat intolerance and incitement

to violence based on religion, but in reality an attempt to silence criticism of Islam. (The OIC maintains a deafening silence on the overt discrimination against non-Muslims in Muslim countries, and atrocities committed against them.) As with much subversive activity, both Resolution 16/18 and Motion M-103 use the vehicle of human rights to clamp down on the right to free speech.

Progress is not inevitable. There is no guarantee that we will pass on the freedoms that we have inherited. The devastation wrought by National Socialism seems to have rendered our society incapable of recognizing a totalitarian threat with a different face from a different culture. Almost all Western countries have shown a willingness to accommodate and appease, in the name of multiculturalism and inclusiveness, newcomers whose values conflict with our own. Our freedoms are far more endangered by our inattention to the stealthy subversion of our institutions than by terror attacks or military threats.

At 150, Canada has much to celebrate but faces serious challenges. Tom Campbell’s article is an inspiring story of Canada’s historic role in the fight against slavery. James Bacque’s article reminds us that even those on the right side of history can commit atrocities. Robert Barrigar’s article offers suggestions for addressing a major environmental problem, while Barry Mayhew’s gives us a glimpse into how freedoms we take for granted may be impacted by overpopulation. Leigh Donaldson’s article raises the question of whether the technology that serves us also runs our lives. In its 200<sup>th</sup> issue, *Humanist Perspectives* celebrates half a century of humanism helping to shape our society’s evolution, from abortion rights to the right to die, to eliminating prayer from city council meetings, women’s rights, gay rights, atheists’ rights and more. Humanists will have their work cut out for them in what are likely to be turbulent times ahead. If we want to continue to be able to say what we want to say for the next 50 years, there is one right we must never support: the right to be protected from offensive speech.

—*Madeline Weld*