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Bill's Bulletin Board

By Bill Rea

I come at this topic from a couple of different directions. I am a reformed smoker, who makes no apologies for the roughly 15 years that I did smoke. I enjoyed it at the time, but other issues, namely financial and health related, prompted me to quit, and that is a decision I've never regretted either.

But I also have strong memories of being a kid in a car with a smoker, namely my father, and this was in the days when a father who chose to put his foot down could get just about everything he wanted. My dad was such a man.

I also have problems with government intruding on our lives any more than is necessary.

What this is all boiling down to is I really don't know what to think about the private member's bill that Sault Ste. Marie MPP David Oraziotti announced he was introducing at Queen's Park last week. He's calling it the Protecting Children and Youth from Second Hand Smoke in Automobiles Act, and it would give law enforcement officers the authority to pull over anyone smoking in a vehicle when passengers under 16

are present. Those responsible could be fined.

As is the case with everything else in life, this is one of those issues that comes smack up against the reality that times change, and what was acceptable years ago is taboo today. I was reflecting not too long ago that when I was being interviewed for my first newspaper job more than 23 years ago, one of the selling points the editor mentioned was that everyone in the office smoked, so my nicotine habit would present no problems. Can you imagine a line like that coming up between prospective employer and employee today? Smokers have been in a minority in my workplaces for some 15 years, and those who do smoke have had to go outside to indulge.

So the fact that my dad used to smoke in the car with his kids was certainly not that big a deal 40 years ago. Indeed, it was common, and even socially acceptable. Besides, he smoked at home all the time, so we were used to it.

It was a bit of a burden on long trips, such as four or five hour drives up north for summer holidays, and then back home again two

weeks later. In fairness, it was dad who was doing the driving, and I've done enough long trips to know that some diversion comes in handy. The real problem was he didn't like drafts blowing on his neck when he drove, so all the windows had to remain closed, by the decree of the guy who had to clout to make such decrees in those days. In other words, there was no ventilation.

And again, in fairness to the man, had he known at the time what is known now, I'm sure those long trips would have been a lot more pleasant for the kids in the back seat. In those days, there were only suspicions that smoking was bad for you, and anyone making suggestions about the harmful effects of second-hand smoke probably would have been laughed at.

So yes, this little kid who did a little bit of suffering all those years ago can go along with the spirit of what Oraziotti is trying to accomplish.

But there are the other ends of the argument. One of them involves the right to do as one pleases. In my days as a smoker, I used to grumble a bit as the restrictions imposed on my habit (which was still considered socially acceptable) grew. And the sanctimony of some non-smoking advocates, combined with the obnoxious social arrogance of others, did a lot to turn me off to much of what the movement stood for.

True, that point gets harder to defend as more becomes known about the impacts of second-hand smoke. On the other hand,

smoking is addictive, meaning some sympathy and understanding is owing to people who smoke.

There is also the part of the argument which asks at what point is the state obligated to stop telling us what we do in our own space.

I can go along with an officer of the law enforcing rules on how a car is driven, relating to such matters as speed, direction and even the condition of the driver. I could even see a cop pulling over a driver who is obviously distracted. A guy who's concentrating on a girly magazine instead of the road is not someone I want to be sharing the highway with.

But I don't think it's the job of traffic enforcement officers to be health inspectors too. They have enough to do.

Besides, what's next? Do we now look at banning smoking in private homes? Granted, a valid case could be made for that. My, but won't that go over well?

I know one great way to protect kids from second-hand smoke. Ban the sale and distribution of tobacco. I'm tired of seeing this whittling being done, apparently in the public interest. Maybe it's time for some serious cutting.

Failing that, maybe it's time for some serious leaving alone.

Kicked upstairs

As has been so eloquently said by so many before me, nothing in life is permanent, and that is especially the case with our respective work situations.

Companies usually are in a state of some flux, and

such is the case with the firm to which I have been selling my services for the last couple of years.

The actual internal maneuverings and adjustments are not too important for discussion in this forum at this time. For the moment, suffice to say I was elevated about a month ago to the position of managing editor for the whole Simcoe-York Group of Newspapers. That has now been combined with a vacancy that has developed in our Caledon operation. That means extra demands on both my time and energies.

Now I am not leaving King, at least not completely. I suspect some of you will be breathing great sighs of relief at that news, while others will be gnashing your teeth in frustration, wondering in the privacy of your own thoughts, "What do we have to do to get rid of that Rea jerk?" I've been encountering people harbouring such thoughts since the day I entered kindergarten.

But in the weeks to come, there will probably be other employees of this company filling in for me at various events around the township.

So be assured that I'm still around, and things will continue pretty much as they have been with the Sentinel.

It's not a case that I'm growing up, or anything that radical. Think of me as the kid I've always been. Now, I just have a much bigger back yard in which to play.

I'm going out to play now. Call me.

Editorial

Even without answers, it was a good meeting

It seems almost contradictory, but Monday's five public meetings on proposed subdivisions in King City produced a number of positive results, even if it came up short in the answer department.

Indeed, it was clear from the start that there were going to be no answers provided, at least not that evening. The whole session was geared toward letting members of the public raise their issues and pose their questions. There were numerous assurances that these matters will be addressed in reports that will come forward in due course. That's fair enough, as long as those promised reports are produced fairly soon. We have to accept the fact that since we're heading into the holidays, it might take a little while longer.

But it was also refreshing to see that most of the peo-

ple at the meeting were willing to listen to the concerns of others. True, there was a bit of heckling and a couple of side comments. It would have been nice if the people at the meeting could have been spared such gestures, but they are part of the process too.

There was a lot of passion as well, with a couple of people questioning the wisdom of dealing with all these development proposals is such rapid succession. The fact is these developments have been in the works for some time, and they have been moved forward by the installation of sewers in the village (evidently still a sore point for some in the community).

It is not realistic to assume that King City can avoid some development, and in the midst of comments made in opposition, there were a number of peo-

ple who have been active in the issue for years making constructive suggestions and

raising issues that can and should be addressed.

Such cooperation can go

a long way toward planning the type of community most people in King City want.

Letter to the Editor

Support this year's Nobleton Christmas Drive

HO!HO!HO!

It's time to spread some cheer around to local families in need this holiday season.

In keeping with the Christmas spirit, the Nobleton Christmas Drive, now in its 11th season, is active again to ensure that all children in our community have a happy Christmas.

The Christmas Drive supplies families in need with a turkey dinner and gifts for the children. If you would like to help out, monetary donations, big or

small, are gratefully being accepted.

Donations may be dropped off in an envelope marked "Christmas Drive" to either campus of Nobleton Public School. Tax receipts are available for donations of more than \$25.

At this time, we would like to gratefully acknowledge the gracious support from our community last season: Nobleton Lion's Club; Nobleton — Kleinburg Rotary Club; Nobleton Old Timers Hockey League; Nobleton

Volunteer Firefighters; Nobleton Women's Institute; King Learning Center; staff, students and parents of Nobleton Public School and St. Mary Catholic School; Studley Family; Krula Family; and Kelly Ritson.

If you have any questions, or know of a family in need this Christmas, please contact Mary Buchanan, at (905) 859-5456.

Thank-you for helping us put smiles on children's faces for the past 11 years!

In the Spirit,

The Elves.

Nobleton Christmas Drive