

# Try staying at home, you bum



KIRK  
ZEMBAL

thetical—they're working beside you and me. And in polite terms, they're messing stuff up.

I'm not unsympathetic by any stretch—I can fully understand everybody wanting to participate. I just believe, and I imagine most would agree, that societies are meant to absorb a bit of slack in the economy.

**You have to trust the person working next to you, and when that person was considered unemployable a few years ago, there might be a problem.**

The reason we have social services is to take care of people who are unable to provide for themselves. And therein lies the rub: if given the chance, why wouldn't someone take the opportunity to provide for themselves, even if doing so endangers the rest of us?

I'm not being alarmist or melodramatic either: having an unemployment rate below full employment endangers us.

It means that people with chronic

alcoholism, drug addictions, socialization problems, and a whole host of other unemployable qualities are being begged to dust off a long-forgotten trade or practice—something they have no business practicing.

That, combined with our current breakneck pace of development, means that we're going to be faced with an entire gamut of problems to correct.

These will manifest themselves in the forms of shoddy construction, crumbling infrastructure, inefficient processes, a knowledge base full of gaps, and, most worrisome, a climate of unsafe work practices.

Ask around, and you'll hear that the amount of errors in home building has skyrocketed in the last couple of years. You'll hear that contractors are unwilling to offer warranties. You'll hear that people are scared to go to work.

You have to trust the person working next to you, and when that person was considered unemployable a few years ago, there might be a problem.

Here's hoping that Honest Eddie Stelmach does the right thing and helps get the less fortunate off the streets—and more importantly, off the jobsite. Because his predecessor's always helpful, "Get a job, you bum," stance will end up doing us a hell of a lot more harm than good.

With unemployment currently pegged at 3.5 per cent, people are understandably jubilant, flushed with cash and loving life. Sure there are hiccups, but nothing that a little money can't fix—and money we have. Lots of it.

How could you go hungry when there's so much work out there? But most experts would say that our economy reaches full unemployment at around 5 per cent.

This means that at 5 per cent unemployment, everyone who's capable of work would have a job. And we are below that by over a full percentage point.

To this layman, that would mean that for every 100 people in the workforce, there's one person who should be technically incapable of performing work.

In even more simplistic terms, that hypothetical person shouldn't be working. Anywhere. For the simple reason that this person is not hypo-

# Freedom of speech going up in smoke



JACALYN  
AMBLER

**"A lot of lip service is paid in this country that it's a place of freedom. But in our rush to defend it, we sometimes lose sight of what it actually means. We are so used to thinking of it as simply 'good' that we lose sight of its intrinsic value, which, simply put, is nothing."**

a subsequent call to King's mother during which the student claims he was accused of soliciting drugs.

A walkout in order to protest this unjust treatment was organized by King, his peers, and several members of the Saskatchewan Marijuana Party; this was met with a school lockdown.

When King and his brother remained outside, they were suspended—not, allegedly, for voicing their opinions, but for failing to follow school rules.

While the legal justifications for the school's actions are questionable at best, it's their softer, societal implications that should pose more concern.

Don Rempel, the school division's acting director, went above and beyond discussing the lockdown during his public statement. He passed judgment on the entire concept of Canadian public education, arguing that "public schools are not public places ... where students can gather and talk about any issue that they wish."

This is bound to be somewhat surprising news to the many teachers and other school employees who have been giving up their nights and weekends thinking that they were serving that exact purpose: to provide a safe forum where students can learn from both educators and from their peers in a relatively risk-free atmosphere and arm themselves with that information when it comes to making real-world choices.

With his comments, Rempel has bluntly opposed the validity of this *raison d'être*, and perhaps this opposition should serve as pause for reflection. After all, a lot of lip service is paid in this country that it's a place of freedom.

But in our rush to defend it, we sometimes lose sight of what this actually means. We are so used to thinking of it as simply "good" that we lose sight of its intrinsic value—which, simply put, is nothing.

The liberty to speak freely doesn't really, in itself, provide society with any benefit. It's not the magic stuff that good societies are made of or something that we keep around as insurance in case we someday need to speak out against something bad. Having it around to use someday, just in case, doesn't produce better citizens or a better country.

It's not the right itself, but its product—discourse—that generates the positive societal change that has come to be associated with countries that are seen as "free." The dialogue of the many is supposed to produce the best solution for all—or at least enlighten everyone a little in the process. And the first place that that dialogue should be protected and fostered is in the classroom.

The country's debate over marijuana legalization is not the issue at stake here, nor is the drug itself. Mr King denies that he has ever even seen marijuana, and whether or not he has used it is beside the point.

It wasn't any action on his behalf that had the power to produce such repercussions, even though it was said in the attempt to open an honest, frank, and politically aware discussion with fellow classmates.

These efforts are the embodiment of the often professed Canadian ideals of awareness and tolerance. Saskatchewan as a province, and Canada as a country, should be proud of producing such a student, and ashamed of silencing him.

There are only a few truly great movies about college. One of these is *Animal House*, the 1978 frat-party classic that provides a shining example of National Lampoon before they started sucking.

Recently, however, a viewing of an edited-for-television version of the movie gave me a somewhat unpleasant surprise. While it appeared mostly uncut, one particularly memorable scene—the one where a college professor smokes a "marijuana cigarette" with some of his students—hadn't made it.

It was difficult to see why that particular scene was more worthy of editing than much of the film's other questionable content. But it's understandable why some consider unambiguous drug content unfit for cable consumption, arguing that a safer and more controlled educational environment should be ensured for a youth's first exposure to the questions associated with illegal substance use.

Apparently, the good people of Wawota, Saskatchewan aren't among those who share this sentiment. Recently, Kieran King, a 15-year-old honour student and one of the town's 616 residents, experienced this position firsthand when he made the mistake of bringing up our country's cannabis conundrum in the school lunchroom.

By all accounts, King's offence was nothing more serious than sharing some statistics on the drug which he found on the Internet, as well as his opinion that marijuana should be legalized in Canada. This excess of information apparently offended a fellow student, prompting a complaint to the school's principal and

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