

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Unstated reasons for Canada's presence in Afghanistan

The Editor

Sadly, but predictably, the Harper government has gradually lowered the profile of the formerly very public repatriation ceremonies for dead Canadian soldiers. I'm sure the government will continue to distance themselves from the ugliness as popular sentiment continues to

turn against Canadian involvement. The Conservative party and the Canadian Forces have prosecuted the Afghanistan war, not the Canadian people. As an aside, there are no MPs or Senators with children serving in Afghanistan - the same holds true for U.S. Congress members and Senators. Both nations prefer to employ "mer-

cenary armies of the poor."

I will offer a few reasons for Canada's presence in Afghanistan whose predictability is matched only by the degree to which their publication is muted and otherwise suppressed. All of the points I make are related to Canadian appeasement of the U.S. government and the transnational business interests they serve.

- Canada is in Afghanistan rather than Iraq to appease our powerful U.S. allies. The Afghanistan counter-insurgency, with its lower casualty rate and NATO approval, is more politically viable than the Iraq quagmire.

- Afghanistan is unfortunately located at the centre of a group of oil and natural gas producers such as Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Iran. The U.S. government and the transnational corporations they serve must control access to these resources.

- Afghanistan itself has considerable natural resources and must not be allowed to control its own resources. Hence, the Afghan people are saddled with the inept

and corrupt puppet government of Karzai who was elected only after being "selected" by the U.S. government.

- Afghanistan is located at the centre of three nuclear powers: China, Pakistan and India. There is no love between India and Pakistan and the economies of China and India are expanding at a phenomenal pace. The U.S. government must maintain a military presence in this vital and volatile region. As well, they need a launch pad for attacks on al-Qaeda forces in Pakistan.

To justify and hide the main reasons for our presence in that unfortunate country, the Canadian government continues pretending to believe that that Taliban are a genuine threat to the West. The excellent humanitarian work of Canadian soldiers and aid workers is being used as an emotional smokescreen to discourage dissent and mute critics through a cheap and transparent appeal to emotion.

Morgan Duchesney,
Ottawa, Ontario

Money Point Lighthouse follow up

The Editor

I am delighted to report that the site of the former Money Point Lighthouse at the northern tip of Cape Breton has been cleaned up. The debris is gone. Sturdy foundations remain to remind a visitor of what was once at the site. A working, if reduced, automated light is perched on the rocks.

I am pleased, without embarrassment, to invite all hearty hikers and boaters to

enjoy our scenic destination.

I thank the Honourable Gail Shea, Federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, and her regional staff for their prompt response to my request for the clean up. I also thank our MP Mark Eying and our MLA Keith Bain for the contacts they made and any behind the scenes help they were able to give.

Sincerely yours,
David Rasmussen, Bay St. Lawrence

Doctors support tanning bed legislation

The Editor

Nova Scotia has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the country and on Nov. 22 Health Promotion and Protection Minister, Maureen MacDonald introduced the Tanning Bed Act to help combat our high rates.

The proposed legislation is a progressive Act that takes a preventative approach to health care in this province. The Act will restrict access to tanning beds for anyone under the age of 19 years in Nova Scotia, and require point of sale warnings outlining the risks associated with tanning bed use for adult users.

At Doctors Nova Scotia's 2010 annual conference, physicians passed a motion to lobby government to ban access to tanning beds for youth in this province. The motion was based on 2009 clinical research that definitively determined that tanning beds are carcinogenic to humans and cause cancer.

There have been additional studies that have concluded that use of UV-emitting tanning devices, before the age of 35, increases an individual's risk of developing cutaneous melanoma by 75 percent and that there is an escalating risk with total hours, sessions or years of tanning

bed use.

Physicians have been champions for this legislation because we see the effects of tanning in our offices. We treat melanoma and cancer, and see patients developing unhealthy behaviours that could lead to a variety of serious health issues.

When speaking with patients, particularly young women, many are unaware that tanning beds cause cancer. In fact, sometimes patients suggest that they need to use tanning beds to protect their skin from sun damage.

This legislation is an important first step in raising awareness about the dangers of tanning beds for users of all ages, as well as an opportunity to educate Nova Scotians about the importance of general sun safety. By focusing this legislation on youth, hopefully we'll be able to change behaviour and prevent unhealthy tanning habits from forming.

As a mother of two boys and a physician, I'd like to commend the government on this progressive Act. I'd encourage all Nova Scotians to learn more about sun safety and the dangers of tanning beds.

Jane Brooks, MD, PhD, CCFP
President, Doctors Nova Scotia

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Mail to P.O. Box 629, Baddeck, Nova Scotia B0E 1B0



The Victoria Standard

The Victoria Standard is published fortnightly by Bras d'Or Graphic Marketing Services.

Editor and General Manager: James Morrow

Copy/Design/Subscriptions: John Johnson

Advertising/Sales: Jim Ryan

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Chuck Thompson's "Along the Trail"

"Tis the season"



Tis the season of the 'Big HO'. The big ho of maddening crowds, spiraling costs, burning plastic from overused credit cards, and clogged arteries from all the rich food ingested and inhaled for the two or three week pig-out. I'm sure when the calendar turned over to December my belt opened a notch.

Oh, all this is called Christmas.

And that's the easy part. The reign of terror for the unhandy man begins with the annual selection and sacrifice of some poor fir tree happily swaying in the crisp winter breeze until, WHACK, WHACK, "TIMBER", AND DOWN SHE COMES!

That would be me. Since I have been a child it has fallen upon me to be the Daniel Boone of the family and trudge off to the woodlot to pick out the poor creation of nature that will adorn our family room for three weeks before being discarded to the landfill or piled on the strawberry plants to ward off killer frosts.

Being back in Middle River and having about thirty acres of prime fir I figured this year's expedition to be a piece of cake.

Shows you what I know.

I trotted up to the wood lot and squinting up in the driving rain picked out what I thought was a quality tree. So I sawed and hacked down a large tree and chewed off the perfectly formed top to showcase the living room. Except by the time I finished cutting and trimming down to size there was just about enough tree left to hang three bulbs if I used very small bulbs.

"Tree, meet the strawberries!"

So, in another driving rain, I slogged back up the slippery slopes and repeated the process with the same result. I figured one more tree and I would be running neck and neck with New Page in the biomass industry.

Finally, I got a fine specimen that

did not end up as strawberry cover and began the delicate art of erecting and steadying said tree. I bet I have more tree stands than Stone's has pills. Plastic, wood, metal, round, oval, oblong, all have been tried as the years passed. And none worked very well. So I was not expecting a great deal when we unwrapped the latest all singing, all dancing, state of the art tree stand. It only took me a long week-end to get it together and gently but firmly install the noble fir in the latest creation of the Chinese industrial heartland.

It was looking pretty good if I say so myself. I kind of stood back, leaned from side to side and pronounced the whole thing "OK". As I was ascending from the basement with the decorations I noted with admiration how the newly felled fir was leaning into the sun. Just as the tree caromed off the newly polished hardwood floors I realized two inescapable facts:

1. Sunflowers, not firs lean into the sun.
2. It was seven o'clock at night.

So, it was twist and shout for another hour before the tree finally nestled in the stand. I would like to say straight but it looks more like the Tower of Pisa with branches.

Flush with success, I wrestled a stunted spruce into place against the outside railing to add a festive touch against the penetrating darkness of MacLennan's Cross. It too looked good until a quick swirl of Northerly wind sent it cart wheeling off the deck. It too will soon meet the heavily packed strawberry patch.

On the other hand I saw with my very own eyes what Christmas means to those who can use their hands and heads. The Middle River Tea and Sale, soon to be thirty years old, raised nearly \$2500.00. Think of that, a school with less than 20 kids and moms and some pops, baked and cooked and sold enough goods to raise that kind of cash at a time of year when everyone has their hand out. Kind of gives you a good feeling after all, does it not?

Have a great HO!

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