

Dysfunctional Richmond? Muslims must speak out

Sir – Many years ago I came across a book based on stark news reports of murders and serious crimes plus tragic accidents in a small Mid West town in the United States, as recorded in the late 19th and early 20th centuries by the local newspaper, which was not unlike a more lurid RTT.

Many of the stories were reminiscent of “old time” American folk songs and blues, highlighting startling acts of vengeance and devastating domestic breakdown.

The US compilation made compelling reading, but it prompted all sorts of questions about how representative such dreadful tales of violence and tragedy were in an otherwise apparently “respectable” community.

Several times in recent weeks I have thought of that book and the issues it raised as I scanned the pages of the RTT with its succession of reports displaying the wickedness, foolishness or sheer bad luck of individuals in our neighbourhood. Is there some sort of permanently dysfunctional stratum of life beneath polite society in Richmond? Can nothing be done?

Take for example last week’s issue of the paper, starting with the front page, “He is vile to the core”, about a man convicted of appalling child sexual abuse.

On the following pages we get, “Teen found guilty of attack on green”, “Intimidators sent to jail”, “Teens targeted in Twickenham”,

“Police issue appeal”, “Teenager on knifing charge” and “MP rape allegation exhumed by traffic”.

Some recent fatal traffic accidents were mentioned in “Near miss caught on dash-cam”.

This constitutes a fairly typical sample of local crimes and accidents in the area, all of them important and worthwhile stories. But sometimes it takes an effort to remind oneself that we live in one of the safest boroughs in London.

It was thus something of a relief to find, tucked away on page 14 an uplifting little report, “Nurse joins cops on beat”.

In what sounds like a tremendous scheme, Richmond police are to be given psychiatric support on the

beat between 8pm and 4am on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, initially for the next three months.

A mental health triage nurse, Rebecca Pattni, accompanied the police on New Year’s Eve and gave psychiatric support on the spot to a “self-harming victim of domestic violence” and a man threatening to commit suicide, bringing them into contact with mental health workers for the first time.

Initiatives like this are to be welcomed, as they may help avert tragic and needless events of the kind recorded over the decades here and in the US by local newspapers like the RTT.

GILES OAKLEY
East Sheen

Muslims must speak out

Sir – I listened to two interviews on radio 4 the other morning.

One was a Jewish rabbi and the other an imam who had been close to the two terrorist brothers, killed recently in France by security forces.

The Jewish community are scared of a worsening in attacks on their people and religion.

The Jewish doctor told the BBC that Muslims are not outspoken enough and are not isolating the disease to enable a cure.

He went on to express his frustration with the apologists who blame isolation, unemployment and poverty. He rightly pointed out that there are many such as these, but they do not turn to terrorism. Then came the imam. I guessed correctly how the interview would develop.

We have heard it all before from moderate Muslim leaders around Europe, previous interviews reveal the same paranoid world view from imams and their congregations.

We hear the same apologists from non-Muslims.

To summarise the interview, it goes something like this – they were lovely guys, huge smiles, he played football with them, but then they “fell into the trap”.

This “trap” it seems is going to Syria and/or Iraq and not listening to (his) warnings, that one cannot be sure quite who one is fighting for (you must pick the right team you know).

The imam went on that these disaffected young Muslims see fellow Muslim men, women and children being slaughtered and raped and that it is seen as the fault of the western governments.

He quickly tells us that he does not excuse the actions of the two, that he is completely French and even: “...dreams in French...”.

The interviewer asks him what western governments should do?

He does not know, he is not a politician... (A learned imam who has not given any thought to what he would like to hear from our politicians? I doubt it).

What he does know, or is prepared to tell us, is that

unless the West does something about their foreign policy “...then there will be bad things happening again”.

I cannot help but feel this was a veiled threat, that one ought to somehow sympathise with Muslims who might feel pressured into direct action again.

So here we have an imam, a clear moderate perhaps, picked by the BBC to shed some light on this radical thinking.

He has – sort of – dissociated himself from the murderers, yet he attaches a little caveat.

The imam is clearly expressing his sympathy and understanding and strongly suggests more atrocities as a result of falling into “the trap”.

Who is he blaming for setting this so called trap?

The West and its perceived ongoing assault on Muslims.

Depressing as this conclusion may be, the fact is, we will never take away the ammunition from those prepared to take up arms against the Judeo Christian cultures of the West. Both moderates and extremists belong to the same Islamic face, they feed each other on different levels, they often do not realise it.

They are family, in a way that Christians or secularists are not.

There must be a resounding call from our leaders to the Islamic community, that they must heal themselves from within and start asking themselves some hard questions, even theological ones.

They must speak out and engage fully in our political process and encourage imams to be honest with us, not wait until after the horse has bolted and the BBC crew turn up.

We must make it clear that we do not owe them anything, and will not make adjustments to our long fought for freedoms.

I find it very hard to believe that an imam who was so very close to these men had absolutely no idea what danger they posed.

Did he warn the authorities?

TOM VENOUR
Hampton

Did charity act correctly?

Sir – Your issue of January 9 carried a full page advertisement for the Richmond Environmental Information Centre that included publicity for the Strawberry Hill Ice Rink. Is it morally justifiable for a registered charity (Charity No 1129804) to use its funds to support a

commercial venture that is having an environmentally unfriendly impact on the surrounding area? This appears to be completely at odds with the aims of the charity as stated on their website.

JAMES HAYES
Twickenham



Borough View

Verna Evans took the opportunity of an unusually quiet Terrace Gardens in Richmond Riverside to take this moody snap. If you have a picture you would like published in our weekly Borough View slot, email it to lettersrtt@london.newsquest.co.uk.

Airport employees are also entitled to their views

Sir – I am not sure how many of those protesting about the Heathrow expansion have actually read the detailed proposals from Heathrow Airport Ltd (Hal).

It is quite clear that about 90 per cent of the new capacity would operate off the new north-west runway and that to the east the aircraft would route over Ealing, well to the north of Richmond and to the west the route would be over Windsor and Datchet.

In fact, in one set of operating proposals the noise in Barnes and east Richmond will be less than now, though

as Lord True recently said it would be good to have the noise maps ward by ward so we could go and look at them at York House.

I hold no particular brief for Back Heathrow, but to be fair their website has said from the start that they were founded with money from Hal and one could speculate how much, but four ads in the RTT do not cost that much nor do mail shots. Also why should airport employees not have a view as they are taxpayers as well.

The Hounslow Chamber of Commerce has come out strongly in favour of the new

runway and I know individual frequent flyers like myself and members of the Richmond Chamber also support the third runway.

The Airports Commission was asked to decide simply where is the optimum place to put new capacity viewed in terms of commercial case and airline support, as they pay for it, and the environmental impact.

It is not an easy choice and Gatwick area residents and MPs are equally vehement it should not be at Gatwick.

Although the Airports Commission was not asked to look at an option of the

impact of no new airport capacity the Prime Minister and Air Transport Minister in June 2015 could do that evaluation before making a decision.

In the past 10 years, while various governments have been dithering, 14 airlines at Manchester now provide connections across the globe via their hubs and money that might have been spent with UK airlines and in Heathrow’s shops and food courts providing UK jobs has gone elsewhere.

FREQUENT FLYER
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