

Letters to the Editor

Canada is de-industrializing

Re: "Simple debt solutions," Dennis Combs, Feb. 26 *Mountain View Gazette*, p. 6.

In his letter of Feb. 26, Dennis Combs offers us what he sees as some simple ways out of the provincial debt crisis but the problem of debt is not restricted to Alberta.

The growth of debt led to the present world financial crises and the collapse that was sparked by the banking crash of 2007-2008; however, its effects have produced different outcomes in countries and regions.

The crises are one of overproduction, that is to say there are more things being produced than can be sold at a profit.

To overcome the limits of a market where consumers cannot afford to buy, the banks extended unheard of amounts of credit that in the end could not be paid back.

Governments subsequently bailed out the banks and this has left enormous amounts of

state debt. The repayment of this state debt is the reason for the present measures of austerity that are punishing those with lower incomes and exacerbating the problem by further cutting demand in the marketplace.

The debt situation in Alberta and the rest of Canada, although not yet as serious as in a country like Spain, is essentially the same.

To argue, as Dennis does, that immigrants to Canada are a part of the problem as a cost to society ignores the fact that all working people, including immigrants, produce commodities and are, in fact, the source of all real wealth. Further, if there had been no immigrant workers there would be no Canada and no economic powerhouse of the United States.

As a step toward alleviating the debt crisis Dennis recommends that prison inmates be put to work in production of goods—he suggests concrete blocks. This would only lead

to a drop in the level of wages paid to workers in that particular industry, further cutting demand for goods in the marketplace.

The law is like a spider's web; it catches the small and weak while the strong tear it down. The fact that we have the institution of prison is nothing more than a reflection of the society in which we live. People are not born as criminals, but conditions determine consciousness and crime is part and parcel of the present economic system.

Dennis calls for what he describes as an overdue industrial revolution in Alberta.

However, the only recent industrial revolution that has taken place is in China, which is now being adversely affected by the same competition and the lack of markets that have led to de-industrialization in many advanced countries.

Canada is in fact de-industrializing; it is fast becoming a raw material and financial services

economy producing less and less real wealth.

Dennis refers correctly to the higher oil royalties in Venezuela and it is true that the democratically elected Chavez (now Maduro) government, with an oil-based economy like Alberta, has taken steps to redistribute wealth. They have reduced poverty by half and extreme poverty by 70 per cent and millions now have health care for the first time. College enrolment has doubled and illiteracy, according to UNESCO, has been eliminated. Many thousands of good quality houses have also been built for working people and the poorest in that society.

However, if they do not move to a democratic, planned, socialist economy, under the control and management of the working population, they will continue to be plagued by high inflation, crime, shortages and economic instability.

*Keith Norman Wyatt
Innisfail*

Where is Alberta Advantage?

(Re: "Councillors scheduled to consider fracking-related resolution", March 19 *Mountain View Gazette*, p. 26)

It is quite incredible, and commendable, that our rural municipalities have to take on the role of an industry watchdog because Alberta Environment is not taking this role seriously. Mountain View County has joined the voice of the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties in asking for more control and transparency in fracking operations.

I am an engineer working primarily in the oil and gas sector and have seen Alberta Environment and the ERCB make a real effort to control fresh water use in parts of the industry such as steam generated (SAGD) recovery plants but this does not seem true at all for the fracking world. A fracking operation that was completed along the Bergen road last year had three massive temporary water storage tanks that I estimated held 5,000,000 litres of water. The cumulative use of fresh water by the large number of fracking operations could now be as significant as the reductions imposed on the larger SAGD plants.

It is also interesting to note that there have been several studies done on a large number of fracked wells in the U.S. and Canada and most of them decline in production rapidly after a couple of years. That means there are many environmental risks being taken for a questionable economic recovery. More and more people are asking, is this still the "Alberta Advantage"?

*D. Vinish
Didsbury*

Wild Rose Report Public safety a must

BLAKE RICHARDS

Canadians are sympathetic, caring and fair-minded.

Our justice system has safeguard after safeguard in place to protect the innocent from incarceration. There are even provisions that allow accused criminals to be found Not Criminally Responsible (NCR) for their actions in cases where the court believes the perpetrator has a mental disorder that renders him or her incapable of appreciating the nature of their crime or to know that it was wrong.

In such cases involving violent assault or death, those found NCR can be released when provincial review boards – not courts – determine it is appropriate.

Currently these provincial boards have the power to unconditionally release killers like Vincent Li, who stabbed, beheaded and cannibal-

ized a total stranger sitting next to him on a bus, or Allan Schoenborn, who stabbed to death his 10-year-old daughter, as well as his eight-year-old and five-year-old sons.

It's tough to fathom such gruesome crimes committed by mentally disturbed individuals. Explanations are impossible.

At the end of the day, all we can do is work to ensure such killers pose no further risk to victims, society or themselves. Such accused must never, ever be released unless we are absolutely certain they are fully treated and rehabilitated.

Our government has introduced a new law, the Not Criminally Responsible Reform Act, to do just that.

The top objective of this law is to put public safety first. The bill explicitly states that public safety will be the paramount consideration in the decision-making process relating

to these cases.

The law will also create a high-risk designation for NCR accused who commit violent acts, causing death and serious injury. Once the courts make this designation, such a person cannot be considered for release until this designation is revoked by the court.

Finally, our new law will ensure that victims' rights and views are considered in cases regarding the NCR.

Victims must be notified when the NCR are discharged. In addition, victims will be able to seek orders blocking communication between themselves and the NCR individual.

As I have written numerous times previously, I believe the justice system must do more to consider the rights of victims, and this is just one of many steps our government is taking to make that happen.

- Richards is the MP for Wild Rose.

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