



AUGUST 4, 2016

Complacency puts our liberty at risk

We often don't appreciate what we have, until it's gone. Good health. A job. A loved one. A good marriage. We also fail to appreciate something when we can't see its polar opposite. Good health is harder to appreciate if you never see someone who is sick or handicapped. Financial stability is harder to appreciate if you never meet someone who is poor, or unemployed.

It's no different for freedom. We're used to living in a free land, and our resulting complacency has become the largest threat to our liberty. We take for granted the right to express our opinions (even if unpopular), and put our beliefs (whether religious or not) into practice as we (not government authorities) deem best. We take for granted the freedom to join the groups and communities of our own choice, even if others may dislike or disagree with our voluntary associations. We have never been imprisoned for our speech, or our faith, or our associations. Apart from excessive taxation, we generally enjoy the rewards of our own hard work, without fear of government confiscating our property. Parents assume that they still have the right to raise and educate their own children, safe from activists and ideologues who seek to indoctrinate other people's children.

External threats to our freedom seem to have subsided. Before 1990, we faced aggressive communist enemies who said that they wanted to turn the whole world into a "workers' paradise." We could see the walls and barbed wire fences they built to prevent their own

people from escaping to freedom. We learned of the slave-labour camps, the imprisonment of writers who dared to criticize the regime, the aggressive persecution of religious believers, and the poverty of people who could not buy toilet paper. We knew that Hungary and Czechoslovakia were forced to remain communist by Soviet tanks. The contrast between freedom and tyranny was more obvious when the six o'clock news showed it to us every night.

Today's Russia and China do not pose the same direct threat to our freedom that Soviet communism once did. Islamic regimes are not in a position to impose their will directly on Western democracies through atomic bombs or other military force.

Canadians have therefore grown complacent about understanding what a free and virtuous society is all about, and why it should be defended. Today, freedom is threatened from within.

Witness the hostility towards free speech that is routinely displayed by university administrators, and by student politicians who use student unions to censor and silence unpopular ideas on campus. They ignore the fact that freedom of expression means the right to proclaim, by peaceful means, ideas that are deeply offensive and disturbing to the majority. So angry student mobs intimidate, shout down, disrupt and obstruct the meetings and events of those whom they oppose. University presidents routinely condone this fascist behaviour, and even facilitate it.

Witness the aggressive assault on parental rights in education, as governments and special interest groups indoctrinate children into accepting

feel-good notions of hedonism and relativism, rather than teaching students how to think. Witness the assault on the family through public policies that actively promote divorce, welfare dependency and fatherless homes.

Many lawyers – and some judges – are attacking freedom of religion and freedom of association, by forcing a private Christian community (Trinity Western University) to repudiate its own beliefs about sexuality and marriage. They do so in the name of a vague and ill-conceived notion of "equality" that should never be applied to private, voluntary associations.

It's often been said that a frog, when tossed into a pot of boiling water, will immediately jump back out. But a frog in a pot of cold water, when the pot is placed on a hot stove, will remain there comfortably, until the frog is slowly boiled to death.

The frog represents our freedom. The water represents Canada's political and legal culture, gradually but surely getting hotter and hotter. Intolerant anti-freedom ideologies (the stove) produce the heat that will eventually kill the frog.

Whether its enemies are external or internal, freedom must be defended. Actively. Intentionally. Uncompromisingly. Sacrificially. And with pride, not apologies.

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