

Bill Rea ? Kids will be kids ?cause they're kids

It was an interesting news item that came across last Thursday.

It was reported that a McDonald's outlet in Massachusetts had advertised that a post-secondary degree would be required from people seeking a position as cashier.

Well, as we all know, McDonald's is a food outlet, and that was certainly food for thought.

It was one of the fellows in the office who casually mentioned it in the morning. Like most people who have a brain in their head, my first reaction was to think that my leg was being pulled. I don't think I raised the issue that it was a couple of days late to qualify as an April Fool's gag, but it probably would have been applicable.

I started writing this when I got home that night. Before getting too much into things, I decided to check into this matter a little bit more through the internet. Upon doing so, I learned that the job advertisement contained an error when it came to listing the qualifications (as of this writing, that goof was still the subject of investigation). I have lived far too long not to appreciate the notion that accidents happen. That might explain how I got my post-secondary credentials (I actually have two of them).

But no matter how much in error this story might have been, it did take on a life of its own. That's why it qualified as the proverbial 'food for thought' that I mentioned above.

A natural point to make is this sounded like a dumb idea right from the start. After all, people far wiser than me, in terms of human resources, came up with the concept of being 'over-qualified' for a reason. People with degrees take a job at a place like McDonald's for a reason; namely there's nothing much else available and a pay cheque from McDonald's is better than no income at all. But once something better presents itself, those with degrees take their leave.

I have been in managerial positions long enough to know that one of the least fun parts of the job is filling vacancies in the ranks. So it seems like common sense to me that if you're looking to hire someone, look for someone who's likely to hang around for a while.

It could also be seen as a commentary on the real value of a post-secondary certificate. Even as I was seeking my first degree (while Prince Charles was still a bachelor), I heard comments that the initials BA really stood for 'bugger-all.' I think I heard that first from my father. He might have been right, considering I spent the first two years after getting my degree waiting tables.

The office discussions petered out as we all had work to do, but while I was driving about town on my rounds as the day progressed, I heard a lot of discussion on talk radio. This was before I had heard all the facts, so like so many other people, I was accepting this story at face value.

I was a little surprised at the amount of positive reaction I was hearing to this silly idea. A lot of it was based on a certain criticism of the younger generation. One fellow phoning into the station to which I was listening related a situation that occurred twice, in which he handed young employees a credit card to a particular gas outlet and sent them to get the truck's tank filled. The kids reported they were unable to complete the task because the station they went to on their own initiative wouldn't accept the competition's credit card.

The employer who was making the call seemed to be giving his head a shake, wondering how kids could be so dumb. I was giving my head a shake too, wondering if this guy had ever been a kid himself.

Okay folks, welcome to Being an Adult ? 101. Here's the first lesson, and if I ever get my way, it will be required reading before one is allowed to cash their first Income Tax refund cheque: Kids sometimes do dumb things!

Are we clear on that score? All of them do stupid things on occasion. Granted, some kids do dumber things than others, and others do them more frequently. It is part of the rite of passage of being a kid to do stupid things. What aggravates the hell out of me is there are so many adults who somehow forget that.

I don't think anyone has completely figured out what the problem is. While I'm not an expert, it probably has a lot to do with hormones, lingering effects of puberty, coming of age, augmented expectations and a host of other possible explanations. The best explanation I can come up with is that is the way things are, and if we adults are really as smart as we like to think we are, then we should accept that.

But it is also part of reality that people have trouble remembering they were that way once, and we have been hearing lamentations about that since time began.

Many employers complain about the younger folks they are sometime obliged to bring on. We've all heard complaints that these kids want as much as they can get for as little effort as possible, and the people doing the squawking seem to think that's something unique to this period of history.

Hog wash! Those complaints are so old as to be laughable.

The National Film Board of Canada came out with a picture in 1964 entitled Nobody Waved Good-bye (I think most people in my

age group saw that in school, for reasons I was never able to figure out). But the film had one scene in which the protagonist was being interviewed for a job, expressing his desire to make a lot of money right away. The interviewer excused the kid after listening to this garbage long enough to earn what the actor playing the role was being paid.

I have trouble believing that scene was the original idea of anybody.

Young people are always going to present their fair share of problems, but being bothersome is not confined to one particular age group. I've seen many instances in which kids have left me mystified. But if you've been to enough planning meetings, you will have seen plenty of adults who will have left you shaking your head.

These adults were kids like me. And it's the kids we complain about who will be setting tax rates when we retire.

That's more food for thought

