

## Bill Rea ? Too many jokes go too far

It worries me that we will have to put up with a certain amount of foolishness inspired by American President Donald Trump for the better part of the next four years, if not the better part of the next eight years.

The latest incident occurred last week when Johnny Depp made a sick and stupid ?joke,? asking, according to accounts I have read, ?When was the last time an actor assassinated a president?"

Most people are aware, of course, that actor John Wilkes Booth assassinated Abraham Lincoln in 1865. Is that really an appropriate subject about which to be making jokes?

When there is an assassination or attempted assassination just about anywhere in the world, people in the western hemisphere get upset. In October 1981, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat was assassinated, and there was much mourning, including in this part of the world. I remember talking to my father, who seldom allowed himself to get too wrapped up in international affairs, the evening of Sadat's death, and his commenting that it was a sad day. I agreed.

Earlier that year, Pope John Paul II was wounded in an assassination attempt, and there was much worrying throughout the world, including in the United States.

Americans react very strongly to the idea of assassinations abroad, so they are certainly going to get very uptight at the thought of such an act at home, and Depp should have realized that. People who are old enough to remember the assassination of John F.

Kennedy (I'm in that group) know very well there was a universal sick feeling in just about everyone's stomach at the time. And those people who were still around in March 1981 felt similar flashbacks when they heard Ronald Reagan had been shot.

And we are also living in a time in which people are worried about terrorists, and individual fanatics committing random acts of violence. We're hearing about them just about every day. And they have been going on for some time. There were many innocent, sublime people who just happened to be going about their business in the World Trade Centre early in the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, and there have been plenty of other examples since then. These occurrences have become too common for the authorities to just shrug off. They have had too many examples all over the world, including on Parliament Hill in the fall of 2014, and in England much more recently.

The point is clear. There are some things that too many people take too seriously to make jokes about.

Donald Trump has been the inspiration of a lot of jocular talk, which could qualify as appropriate, inappropriate or questionable.

There have been a lot of jokes at his expense, but that goes with the job he successfully sought last year. Alec Baldwin is revving an already successful career with his imitations on Saturday Night Live, and lots of other comedians are making hay at his expense.

There's nothing wrong with that. Indeed, as I indicated above, that goes with the territory. In fact, I believe that one thing a successful politician needs is a thick hide and a sense of humour. And if they're going to be in a position of power in what is supposed to be a free society, they had better get used to the idea that they are going to be the butt of lots of jokes. As far as the comedians are concerned, they're fair game. It's one of the prices they have to pay for the nice lodgings they get to occupy while they're in office.

But some jokes go too far, and making fun out of threatening a man's life is going too far.

The problem is this was not the first example of such suggestions being made. Indeed, I was hearing them as early as the morning after Trump was elected in November. I heard from people wondering how long it would be before someone tried taking a shot at him. There have been a number of celebrities who have found themselves in hot water for making remarks aimed in that general direction.

It is true that Depp has issued an apology for his remarks, and I believe that apology should be accepted, although I fear there are going to be a lot of people who make him carry that baggage for some time. I don't believe there is anyone reading these words who has not been guilty in the last week of making an inappropriate remark. If we want to be forgiven for such indiscretions, we had better be prepared to do some forgiving ourselves. I believe the Lord's Prayer addresses that issue rather concisely.

But comments like these are a little too serious to just shrug off by assuming someone is trying to be funny. The United States Secret Service, the agency which is charged with protecting the President, his family and host of other people, can't just ignore these things. A possible threat to the President's safety is a serious matter, especially since there are a lot of people in this world who would really like to see harm come to Trump. Terrorists who take a bow when they kill innocents in London or Manchester would not stop if they got a chance at the President.

Of course, part of the problem is there are a lot of people who are not pleased with the fact that Trump is President. That little bit of reality doesn't fill me with delight either, but facts are facts. The guy won the election, and he's likely to be in office at least until January 2020, if not until January 2024. If he won one election, it means he can win two. The rest of the world just has to get used to

the idea.

