

Rye Remarks

by BROCK WEIR

Commuting sometimes gets a bad rap ? but it needn't. Depending on how you commute, there are some opportunities to be had.

If you're not driving yourself to work, an hour or so on the bus or train can give you some time to plan for the day ahead, or unwind from the day that was. It gives you some time to polish off a book, catch up on emails, or simply to catch up with loved ones around the world, as I've seen so many on video calls doing just that.

When I became a more regular commuter in February of 2024, I dreaded the prospect, but soon came to enjoy the time with a good book, getting the day in order, or, on the occasional mornings that began at an ungodly hour, catching up on a few missed winks before the day began in earnest.

As anyone who takes transit can attest, however, mornings and evenings are not always quiet hours that allow for contemplation. Sometimes, it involves having what's sometimes described as the ?theatre of the living? unfold before your eyes.

On one of my first commutes from where I'm now living, my quiet time with a new novel was once interrupted by some sort of domestic squabble at the back of the vehicle. While the couple in question seemed to be enjoying their verbal sparring, which was occasionally punctuated by a thwack with a backpack in either direction, it was, of course, disruptive.

Attempts to kick the brawlers of the bus were unsuccessful, so they decided to shuffle the rest of us onto a waiting vehicle while transit officials stayed with the loving couple until police arrived.

Outside of the commute, the GO Train ride home after spending some time in the city can be equally vivid.

While I'm yet to see a couple have an all-out war in the Quiet Zone, I have, despite my best efforts, been privy to heated divorce negotiations, thanks to a boom-voiced lawyer sitting adjacent to me, and even a young boy who took the opportunity of the long ride to finally ask his parents where babies came from. Unfortunately, this question was voiced just moments before we arrived at my stop, so while I didn't get to hear what passes for ?facts of life? talk these days, I hope the kid got the info he wanted!

Another curiosity unfolded earlier this year when I had to take the train back from Toronto on the same evening the Toronto Maple Leafs were eliminated from the playoffs.

Hopes, as we know, were high amongst the more sports-minded of us, as they are every single year, and it looked like the team was set to go the distance ? until being felled in that evening's hurdle.

Needless to say, blood was boiling within some of my fellow passengers, many of whom were swathed from head to toe in blue and white Leafs swag, and there was no shortage of colourful commentary on the ride back, including how only they ? whoever happened to be speaking ? knew what would have righted the ship and taken the home team to the next level. Because, of course.

Same old, same old, but what really stuck with me was their vehemence, one ripping off his jersey upon getting off the train in York Region and stomping it into the pavement, and another threatening to burn his own jersey, in an effort to stick it to? someone.

The players? They probably had bigger fish to try.

Management? See above.

MLSE? Well, they've already made a tidy profit from the garment, so chances are they probably wouldn't care.

If the jersey-bearer in question eventually took a match to his shirt, I hope he (a) he took it off first and (b) felt like his point was being made because it probably cost him upwards of a hundred bucks.

I wonder how much Premier Doug Ford's now infamous bottle of Crown Royal cost him?

Last week, the Premier caused a stir when, during a press conference in Kitchener, he dramatically poured out a large bottle of the Canadian rye whisky to protest the decision of their parent company, which operates plants out of Ontario, Quebec and Manitoba, to close their Amherstburg facility.

'This is what I think about Crown Royal,' he said, as he poured the liquid with an arm stretching out in front of his podium, bearing the oft-seen 'Protect Ontario' banner.

The sound of the trickle against the pavement, coupled with applause from people standing behind him, didn't really speak to what he thought about the company in and of itself, but a recent report from CBC filled in many of the blanks.

'They're sitting around, just absolutely as smug as they come' they're hurting Ontario residents,' Ford said of the company following an unrelated announcement,' the CBC reported. 'A message to the CEO in France: you hurt my people, I'm going to hurt you. You're gonna feel the pain in February when these people don't have a paycheque.'

'I encourage all Canadians, all Ontarians, stand up for the people, because you don't know if you're next,' Ford said, adding the company was 'a few fries short of a Happy Meal,' and 'dumb as a bag of hammers' for the decision.'

While it is important in the middle of a trade war for Canadians to let their wallets do the talking, in our interconnected country, it's a nuanced conversation as the company in question will keep its plants on either side of Ontario operational, with their headquarters remaining in the GTA. A call to boycott the product might feel good in Ontario, but do we really want to potentially harm workers in Quebec and Manitoba as well? We're all in the same trade boat here, after all.

Pouring out the bottle of rye was certainly a headline-grabbing move, but I couldn't help but think that as far as sending a message to the powers-that-be goes, it was about as effective as the young man on the train stomping his Leafs jersey in a fit of pique or the one who was threatening to set his ablaze.

They shelled out their dough for the jerseys, presumably the Premier or a well-wisher spent upwards of \$60 for the potent potable, and the money spent is still on the companies' bottom lines.

There were valid points made at that podium which were, from my perspective, sacrificed for the visual.

The entire country is fighting the same trade war.

It's a trade war that doesn't seem to be going anywhere, let alone showing any signs of letting up.

It's a fight that's certainly worth fighting, but, if we want to get anywhere, we need more than strongly-worded letters, slogans and stunts.

The 'Elbows Up' sentiment at the Federal level and photo-ops at the Provincial level can only take us so far. Hopefully, as Parliament and the Legislature gear up for the fall session, we see real action resume.