

We need to be leery of human stupidity

by MARK PAVILONS

“Never underestimate the power of stupidity,” Robert Heinlein once warned.

Martin Luther King, Jr. contended that “nothing in the all the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity.”

And the late, great Stephen Hawking said we are destroying ourselves by our greed and stupidity.

Try as we may, no government has been successful in legislating against stupidity.

The dull-minded among us are growing in number. It's like they have a secret club where they're cloning the most deficient humans en masse. Sounds like a great theme for a novel or Netflix movie.

The astute members of society are constantly plagued by these morons and they continue to outpace all expectations.

From warnings on consumer packaging to dumb crooks and dim-witted everyday actions, our brethren keep on bringing us down.

I pause for a moment, with head bowed, asking God for forgiveness in wasting the grey matter he gave us.

I'm not sure if it's the aspartame or radiation leaking from our smart devices, but mindless behaviour is here to stay.

We buy “miracle cures” on infomercials and invest in expensive gadgets that we can't explain or maintain. We look for the toy in the bottom of the cereal box, only to be disappointed.

Edward Abbey once noted that for “real bona fide stupidity, there ain't nothin' can beat teamwork.”

Right on.

Herd behavior is among the main causes of stupidity. Scientific studies have shown how individual humans can be swayed by the crowd to adopt positions which go against all logic.

And our “collective stupidity” is something we all need to be leery of. Sometimes, stupid people are elected to run our communities and our country. More stupid people, who have no obvious power, vote.

Let me definite it a bit better. Stupidity, in our current state of affairs, is not about intelligence or knowledge. It's about using one's cognitive abilities “what God gave you” effectively.

And you can “fix stupid,” by offering guidance, knowledge, common sense and awareness.

Politicians, bureaucrats, experts and spin doctors run our democratic system. They must be skilled, intelligent, hard-working types, right? I am reminded we're talking about people, not dolphins.

Given the barrage of scandals, government waste and freedom-infringing laws, it seems something is off.

Where do harebrained schemes, policies and laws come from?

Our MPs and MPPs are surrounded by competent staff, who research, draft and vet all sorts of documents, speeches and pieces of legislation. They are not supposed to be biased or politically swayed. But I suppose the reality is, when politicians get their hands on well-crafted documents, sometimes their party bias and desire to stay in office rules out. What we can be left with is a watered-down, self-serving democracy that backtracks more often than innovates.

For a profound thought on evil and stupidity: 'Reasons fall on deaf ears; facts that contradict one's prejudgment simply need not be believed' and when facts are irrefutable they are just pushed aside as inconsequential, as incidental. In all this the stupid person, in contrast to the malicious one, is utterly self-satisfied and, being easily irritated, becomes dangerous by going on the attack,' said Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was executed for his role in the attempted assassination of Adolph Hitler in July of 1944. He also noted that, in order to combat evil and stupidity, you have to first recognize them.

An inherent problem with human beings, particularly the dumber of the species, is they don't recognize their own ignorance. Add to that, they underestimate the ignorance of others.

That's a recipe for disaster, to coin a phrase.

Sir Richard Branson, CEO of Virgin Airlines, admitted he was 'dumb' in school, was dyslexic and hated math. He attributes his success to being surrounded by 'highly knowledgeable and extremely competent people.'

That's what anyone in a seat of power would, and should, do.

We only have to look at the current conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine to prompt our collective heads to shake. Doesn't someone, somewhere, know this is all really stupid? No one can argue that losses on all sides 'economically, socially and human lives' are worth it, or make any kind of sense.

Does that mean these countries are led by madmen or half-baked luners? Just what is the end game here? More land, changing borders on a map?

History will judge the actions of all participants.

Back at home, in our comfy abodes, sometimes dopiness slips in, just under the door where the draft comes in.

Social media and the internet are additional methods of infecting the masses with nonsensical ideas. Heck, anyone is allowed to own and use a computer, tabloid and smart phone. 'With great power ... yet people continue to wreak havoc using these tools. They insult, bully, berate and hate with impunity.'

In our society, we allow those with the bare minimum of intelligence to operate a motor vehicle, fly a drone, order on Amazon, raise children, vote in elections and stream reality TV. Some of the reality TV shows make me cringe in embarrassment and I find myself welcoming the Second Coming.

As a herd, we all share in the blame because we empowered it. It wasn't hidden in our deli meats 'we welcomed it with open arms.'

At times, I look at our primate cousins and ponder how we took the right path to evolution. Maybe it's better, and less stressful, to simply pick fleas off of our mates and live off the land.

My friends, do not operate heavy machinery while watching the news and refrain from drinking prior to entering the voting station!