

What's your policy?

by BRIAN LOCKHART

When I was a kid in elementary school, I had a neighbour who was a couple of years older than me.

He was in Grade Six, which, of course, made him one of the top dogs in the school.

At the time, a beer brand, Red Cap Ale, was having a major advertising push. Their brand was showing up in print ads and TV commercials all over the place with a spiffy jingle.

Guess what their log was? Yes, a very distinctive red cap.

My older and wiser neighbour had a Red Cap flag for some reason ? I'm not sure where he got it. It was a full-size flag with the company's Red Cap logo.

On April Fool's Day that year, he proudly took his beer flag to school first thing in the morning and asked the school janitor to run it up the flag pole.

The janitor, a very friendly fellow to all the students, complied and ran that flag up the pole right underneath the Maple Leaf.

We all got a good laugh out of this prank on a day when pranks could be expected. I'm sure more than a few passing motorist got a chuckle out of seeing a well know beer brand being flown proudly over the local elementary school.

In 2021, that same prank would probably result in a Board of Education inquiry, a principal in big trouble, a janitor being fired, my friend being expelled, and counsellors called into to speak to students who were traumatized by the site of a big red hat on a flag.

Recently a high school kid in Bradford was suspended for three days after having the audacity to fly a flag from his vehicle ? his OWN vehicle.

It is a black and white version of the Maple Leaf with a blue stripe through the middle. It represents law enforcement and an officer's daily walk between life and death.

The kid has several family members in law enforcement and he has flown that flag from his truck since June of this year as a show of support for those in policing.

For some reason, a single person at a football game who saw the flag made a complaint to the school.

The result of the single complaint was the principal telling the kid he had to remove the flag.

Since when does a high school principal's authority, or the school board for that matter, extend to telling people what they can, or cannot do with their own property?

The principal should have used common sense, and filed that single complaint in the round file rather than cause problems for a kid who was minding his own business.

The result was the kid being suspended for three days for ?opposition to authority? after refusing to remove the flag.

When asked why this student couldn't fly a flag in support of law enforcement, they were told it was ?against school policy.?

When asked to see that school policy, the reply was the sound of crickets ? because the ?policy? doesn't exist.

Anyone who has worked with any kind of ?policy?, whether it is in a public institution, a private corporation, small business, or government agency, knows that ?policy? is only brought up if it benefits the institution that created it.

If a situation arises where something in that policy is detrimental to the institution, you can bet the policy will be buried pretty fast.

Fortunately, the offending student received a lot of support from both family and friends. In fact, a lot of people bought the same flag, attached it to their vehicles and they held a parade in support of the kid.

The question is, what kind of society have we become when a high school principal sees fit to mess up a kid's life based on a single complaint from a stranger, who the kid does not even know?

He wasn't flying a Japanese Rising Sun battle flag, and he wasn't flying a swastika - it was a flag in support of the people who patrol the streets and maintain the peace.

If anyone should be suspended, it is the person who complained about the flag.

Schools do fly different flags occasionally during the year. Maybe the next time I see a flag on the pole other than the Red and White, I'll call the school board and express offence ? just to see what happens.

As for Red Cap Ale ? is it still out there?