



Chumir Ethics Forum

Sheldon Chumir Foundation for Ethics in Leadership



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Thinking about Ethical Leadership: **“The Need for Ethical Leadership on Diversity”**

By Janet Keeping, President



Not long ago the media were carrying stories of Hérouxville, a town in Québec which posted the behaviour it expected of immigrants on its website. The Hérouxville “Publication of Standards” gives rise to a variety of thoughts, some quite worrying. One useful result, however, has been to remind us of the need for good leadership on diversity issues.

Many of Hérouxville’s published standards constitute a touching confirmation of gender equality in Canada. We may not need to be reminded that women have the right “to drive, dance and make decisions on their own” in Québec or the rest of Canada. Still, it is hard to object to such statements.

Yet parts of the declaration are not innocuous. For example, the assertion that “In our schools, children cannot carry any weapons, real or fake, symbolic or not” would mean that kirpans (Sikh ceremonial daggers) could not be brought into local schools. But in March 2006 the Supreme Court of Canada decided that a complete ban on kirpans in schools violates religious freedom as guaranteed by the Char-

ter of Rights and thus is illegal. The good citizens of Hérouxville are either ignorant of the law on this question or mistakenly think they can somehow ignore it.

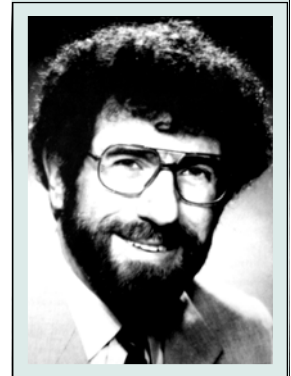
Other parts of the Hérouxville standards are more inflammatory, for example, the statement that “killing women in public beatings or burning them alive are not part of our standards of life”. Does anyone ever profess the contrary? While there have been so-called ‘honour’ killings in Canada, every case has been treated as the extremely serious criminal offense that it is. The Hérouxville statement inevitably focuses attention on certain religious or ethnic groups, rather than on violence against Canadian women in general. In doing so, it feeds into established prejudices against people from places, such as Afghanistan, Pakistan and Nigeria, where ‘errant’ women are sometimes publicly abused, even murdered.

But violence against women is, regrettably, widespread in Canada, and in no way confined to families and groups from such countries.

Perhaps most important is to ask what motivated this declaration. A town Councilor responsible for the initiative, André Drouin, is reported in the Globe and Mail as saying that, in response to “a number of recent culture clashes across the country”, they were only “telling people who we are.” According to

What’s Inside

Thinking about Ethical Leadership Janet Keeping <i>President</i>	1
Letter from Laura, SK Nettie Wiebe, <i>St. Andrews College</i>	2
Dialogues on Democracy: Where Are The Women? Heather MacIntosh <i>Dir. Research & Programs</i>	3
Internet Freedoms in China Daniel Shapiro <i>2006-07 Intern</i>	4
Whither Dialogue? Megan Burrows & Daniel Shapiro	4
Pre-Emptive Strike—Ethical or Not? Heather MacIntosh & Daniel Shapiro	5
Ethics & Humanitarian Interventions Megan Burrows <i>2006-07 Intern</i>	6
Book Review: <i>The Ethical Imagination</i> Janet Keeping	7
Announcements	8



Sheldon M. Chumir

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

him, “immigrants want to be part of Canada... and to do that they need to know what is acceptable and what isn’t. It’s something the federal immigration department has failed to do.”

We can regret that it has come to this and wish that the Hérouxville declaration was better informed by Canadian law. But we also have to acknowledge there may be genuine fear here and a sense of abandonment by senior levels of government. Though some guidance on what Canadians expect of each other may be needed, orientation to Canadian mores should not have to come solely from municipalities.

We need brave, principled leadership at the provincial and federal levels to help guide public discussion on what indeed we expect from one another. Such discussion has to reach across boundaries—such as ethnicity, race, religion or sexual orientation—that are too often and too easily invoked to divide us. We need leadership willing to engage in a deep way with the issues presented by our ever increasing levels of diversity to help us find a way to live together in mutual respect.

Janet Keeping

Letter from Laura

Freedom, Democracy.....and Marketing

‘Freedom’ and ‘democracy’ are powerful words, and like any powerful tool, they should be used thoughtfully.

The appeal to ‘freedom’ is powerful because we want to be able to make choices about the direction of our lives. But although we make many choices as individuals (and hence are morally accountable for them), we don’t make those choices in isolation. Our choices affect others. And their decisions affect us.

So if freedom is about making choices, then having more choices equals more freedom, right? Not so fast!

Having a large number of minor items to choose between might give you the illusion that you are

enjoying a lot of freedom. For a shopping example, do dozens of kinds of soaps really enhance your life in important ways? What if the only water you have to wash in is polluted? The variety of soaps on offer doesn’t matter much if all the available water is unacceptable.

The *quality* of options is usually far more important for genuine freedom and well-being than the sheer number of choices available.

That’s why the current debate about abolishing the Canada Wheat Board cannot be resolved with the simple “more choices equal more freedom” equation. Yes, removing the monopoly selling power from the Canadian Wheat Board would allow western Canadian farmers to choose between grain buyers. But taking away the CWB monopoly radically alters the *quality* of choices for all farmers.

That other powerful word, ‘democracy’ comes into play here. Like water quality standards, marketing regulations have great public impact. A few polluters upstream, even if they are soap manufacturers, will ruin the water quality for everyone along the river.

Minimally all the families living along that river should have a say in which of those options is chosen. Likewise, the farm families whose livelihoods and futures will be altered by the loss of the CWB marketing power should have a choice in the matter. That’s the democratic option.

Nettie Wiebe farms in Laura, Saskatchewan, and teaches philosophy at St. Andrews College, Saskatoon.



*Elevators. Laura, Saskatchewan.
University of Saskatchewan Archives*

Dialogues on Democracy: Where Are The Women?

- o Of 308 Members of Parliament, only 20% are women
- o Of 28 MPs from Alberta, only 7% are women
- o Of 83 Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, only 16% are women

The picture overall is one of a significant gender gap in representation.

Numerous studies highlight the barriers facing women's participation, like family and community responsibilities, and child care availability. Political issues like bias in candidate nomination at the constituency level, 'old boys club' mentality, and lack of gender targets limit women's involvement. Anne McLellan commented at an event in Edmonton in January on the "Belinda Stronach effect" – the double standard in the portrayal of Stronach's floor crossing compared with the men who have done the same. "What woman would want to put herself through that?" she asked.

Securing the rights to vote and run for office, recognition as "persons under the law" and inheritance rights were hard fought gains for women. The *Famous Five* showed courage, perseverance, and leadership in their drive to secure these rights.



"Take it from me. Nice women don't want the vote."
Sir Robin Roblin, Premier of Manitoba, 1914.

These accomplishments are the foundation for gender equality in our society – the very pillars that enable women's participation in politics today. And yet, somehow, they have not been enough to ensure equal political representation. What else is needed? That was the question asked at an event in Calgary on February 6th, entitled "Dialogues on Democracy: where are the women?"

The Sheldon Chumir Foundation, Famous Five Foundation, and Winning Women jointly organised an event to explore exactly what else could be done to challenge the status quo in Canadian and Albertan political life. Participants were treated to a play about the work of the Famous Five, the cynicism and questioning of a young activist woman today, and three proposals for change:

1. An all woman's political party

Women in Alberta – not all of course, but enough to make a difference – could work together on a platform that would speak to what we think is really important: daycare, pay equity, support for elderly parents.. the boom, homelessness and poverty.... We could have a specific goal – say 32% women in the Legislature, double what we have now. As a temporary measure, a woman's party could be exactly what this province needs.

2. Gender quotas in the Legislature and Parliament

Some people see quotas as a form of discrimination. On the other hand... they limit the tendency of political parties to nominate only men, thereby expanding voter options... [Beyond] election outcomes, quotas speak to our underlying democratic values – of fairness, of equality, of the ability for each and everyone one of us to be adequately represented.

3. No taxation without representation – a call for change, a tax boycott, or payment of 'representative taxes.'

How can it be that our tax system treats men and women more equally than our political institutions do? Are our taxes fairer than our politics? If [representative taxes] were implemented, then women of Alberta would pay 16% of provincial income tax and Alberta men would pay 84%. What Alberta man would stand for [this]? Perhaps we should ask what Alberta woman is willing to pay full taxes for only 16% representation.

After a robust series of discussions on these provocative topics, participants came up with creative ideas such as gender criteria in political party funding formulas. The most media-savvy idea, as selected by our resident Political Scientist Doreen Barrie, was a women's one-day strike – no work, no political participation, no housekeeping, no sex – to draw attention to the value of women's work in our society.

Heather MacIntosh

Watch for a repeat performance in Edmonton.

Students Debate Web Freedom in China

Should Western technology companies boycott China until the Chinese government allows unrestricted access to the internet? The decision by Google, Yahoo, Microsoft, and others to cooperate with Chinese authorities' "Great Firewall" censorship program in order to access the rapidly-expanding Chinese market raises several ethical dilemmas. The question is not simply whether companies should put the bottom-line ahead of human rights. What about the problem of 'dirty-hands?' *If* companies can do more good by providing access to information for millions of Chinese internet-users – even with censorship imposed by the communist regime – *should* they compromise their support of internet freedom to do so?

Is there a difference between engaging in an unethical practice and supplying the technology for another to do so? To what extent are companies responsible for how their products may be used? Google's corporate slogan is "Don't be evil." Cooperation with a communist dictatorship which censors its citizens' access to information and imprisons them for criticizing the regime may not be "evil," but it certainly seems ethically suspect.

Be it resolved that Internet companies should boycott China until it allows its citizens unrestricted access to the Web was the topic at The Calgary Junior High Regional Debate Championships hosted by Webber Academy and Queen Elizabeth Jr/Sr High School on Saturday March 3rd in a Foundation-sponsored event. I had the pleasure to serve as a judge at the competition and to give the closing speech. Congratulations to all of the debaters and good luck to the finalists going on to Okotoks.

Daniel Shapiro

Whither Dialogue?



An hour spent watching screaming pundits or partisan politicians on television raises some troubling questions: Have we lost the taste for genuine engagement with ideas and critical

thinking? At what point did we as a society come to feel we could exchange opinion and ideas only with those who are like-minded? What is at stake here?

It is no secret that contemporary ethical and political debate is often shrill and polarized. We do not think this is the inevitable result of substantive disagreement, but rather a failure to pay sufficient attention to the ethical foundations of dialogue.

Nowadays, conversations between the ideologically opposed are often fraught with personal attacks and a general lack of willingness to hear what the other has to say. Discussion of serious issues now appears to rely more on shared convictions than on mutual pursuit of truth. Yet social discourse between sparring – yet respectful – partners was once considered a necessary, and desirable, element of intellectual life.

Meaningful debate is about the ideas put in play between the debaters rather than about hanging on to one's own views at any cost or attacking the other person for holding different beliefs. Engaging in genuine debate or dialogue requires that we enter into an exchange with the understanding that ultimately we may come away from it in some way changed. We may not, but there must be an *openness* to that possibility. Otherwise, all we are doing is engaging in competing monologues.

Megan Burrows and Daniel Shapiro



Silent Auction of Sheldon Chumir's *Kutani Crane Wedgwood China*

For details regarding Sheldon Chumir's *Kutani Crane Wedgwood* collection, or to place a bid, please contact Elaine Wojtkiw at 403-244-6666, or by e-mail at info@chumirethicsfoundation.ca

Deadline for bid — May 1, 2007
Reserve price — \$1000.

Pre-Emptive Strike—Ethical or Not?

The Sheldon Chumir Foundation for Ethics in Leadership organised an Alberta speaking tour with Alan Borovoy, General Counsel of the Canadian Civil Liberties Union, in January. In a presentation to the Peace Studies Consortium at University of Calgary, he argued for the necessity of pre-emptive strike under certain prescribed conditions. In his recent book Categorically Incorrect: Ethical Fallacies in Canada's War on Terror (2006, p. 39) he contends:



To require a threatened nation to wait until an attack is imminent is effectively to confine tomorrow's victims to the doctrine of posthumous self-defence.

Alan Borovoy argues that in the absence of international rule of law, democratic nations like the United States and Canada can be justified in taking pre-emptive military action to protect democratic institutions and to defend their people from future attack.

Heather MacIntosh and Dan Shapiro discuss.

H: How can we consider pre-emptive strike ethical? In what way is an attack morally justifiable? I just can't agree.

D: Do you believe in self defence? Is a nation justified in using force to defend itself from foreign aggression? I believe it is.

H: Self-defence is one thing. That is not, in my view, the same as striking first.

D: Well, then aren't you condemning us to Borovoy's "posthumous self-defence" just because we're afraid of being the aggressor?

H: For me, it's like self-defence in a murder case, Dan. Murder is wrong. I will kill the person threatening me or my children if I truly believe I have no other choice. Still, I have killed someone, and I have to appear in court and explain my actions. I'm not let off the hook in ad-

vance because it is self-defence. So I don't believe the pre-emptive doctrine should ever become an acceptable precedent.

D: But remember, Alan Borovoy argued that in the absence of international law there is no reason to think that democracies are *not* justified in thwarting impending danger. For the sake of argument, imagine that we could be certain of an imminent attack. It would be foolish not to act. It would be unethical for a government to fail to protect its people in that kind of situation.

H: I agree that a government must protect its citizens. But, we can't be completely sure that another country is about to attack us. We could be starting a war unnecessarily.

D: Okay, well it's true we can't be 100% certain of others' intentions, but isn't the risk of waiting sometimes too great? Heather, I think we agree to disagree.

Let's give Alan Borovoy the last word:

I am not minimizing here the dangers of pre-emptive action. All too easily, such a policy can be used to advance the most imperialistic of agendas. Without question those nations that would pre-emptively intervene in other nations must be subjected to the most exacting scrutiny. But in this dangerous world of rogue states and weapons of mass destruction, situations could well arise in which the failure to move pre-emptively could be even more dangerous than doing so. Unfortunately there are no simple tests or ready-made formulae that can be invoked to resolve these issues when they arise. There is no substitute for a careful value-balancing, risk-weighting analysis as challenges occur (pp 62-63).



Photo credit: Alberta Debate and Speech Association

Ethics & Humanitarian Interventions

Within the confines of our own borders, in emergency situations we tend to believe we have a responsibility to protect or rescue victimized people. What of those people in emergency situations beyond our borders? Do extreme crises oblige us to intervene on their behalf? And do crisis situations justify forceful intervention?

Until quite recently, the default position in international crises of this nature has been non-intervention, where state sovereignty trumps all but the most egregious human rights violations. Critics have stated that we will tolerate brutal regimes and human deprivations until conditions become so severe that only the military can rescue the victims. Our response can be quite different if the crisis is due to natural disaster rather than conflict - consider, for example, our response to the 2004 tsunami.

“...the issue is not one of a right to intervention, but rather of a responsibility... to protect our fellow human beings from extreme abuse wherever and whenever it occurs.”
Kofi Annan

However, successive humanitarian disasters in Somalia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Rwanda, Kosovo and now Darfur, have concentrated attention not on the immunities of sovereign governments but their responsibilities, both to their own people and to the wider international community. There is a growing acceptance that while sovereign states have the primary responsibility to protect their own citizens, when they are unable or unwilling to do so that responsibility should be taken up by the wider international community. Yet, there is no clear consensus on which criteria such interventions should be based upon.

The American model calls for interventions where individual rights are violated. The Europeans intervene when a country's own laws have been violated. The Australian approach uses diplomatic pressure/coercion to extract state permission to intervene, as in the case of Indonesia/East Timor.

In September 2000, Canada launched the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, involving 11 countries. The Commission's final report¹ asserts that all States have a responsibility to protect their own populations, but where gross human rights abuses are occurring the international community has not only a right, but a responsibility to intervene that goes beyond considerations of state sovereignty. At the Sheldon Chumir Foundation's "Celebrating Human Rights" gala dinner in December 2005, speaker Georgette Gagnon argued passionately for Canada to fulfill this responsibility.

Since then, Canada has advanced a three dimensional approach: defence, diplomacy and development. Canada's commitment to human security focuses on landmines, the plight of war-affected children and the internally displaced, the strengthening of human rights field operations, and the deployment of military forces in extreme situations to stop atrocities and war crimes.²

If we as a nation genuinely hold the conviction that we have a responsibility to intervene in situations of extreme crisis, why has our response to our own call for action in Darfur been so slow and inadequate? And if we are true to our stated ideal, we should likewise raise the cry that something must be done in the Democratic Republic of Congo, or Myanmar (Burma). There is an inconsistency in our call for an international "responsibility to protect," and our limited response to conflict-based crises. And which best represents our espoused national ethics – our actions, or our policies?

Megan Burrows

1 <http://www.iciss.ca/about-en.asp>

2 http://www.humansecurity.gc.ca/freedom_from_fear-en.as

The article above was motivated by a session Megan attended at the 2007 International Congress on Ethics, held in Ottawa, February 5 – 7, 2007.
<http://www1.ice-cie.ca/info.html>

The Sheldon Chumir Foundation is collaborating with CIDA's new Office of Democratic Governance in exploring the connection between ethics, ethical leadership and democratic governance abroad. The Foundation is also looking into the role of the press in contributing to global democratic development by nurturing political leadership or leadership in public institutions, such as health care or education.

Book Review: “The Ethical Imagination” by Margaret Somerville

It was initially thrilling to learn that the 2006 Massey Lectures would be devoted to ethical issues. But the lectures themselves – delivered by Margaret Somerville of McGill University and published in The Ethical Imagination by House of Anansi Press – fail to enhance our ability to deal well with ethical problems. **Indeed, taken seriously, Somerville’s lectures could make matters worse for at their heart lies the seductive, but false, idea that what is natural is good and thus ethically imperative.**

Somerville tells us she is engaged in the search for a “shared ethics”:

Finding a shared ethical base in a pluralistic, multicultural, global society is not optional; it is crucial to our survival physically and morally. The challenge is to find consensus in diversity and difference (p. 20).

Her goal, it seems to me, is a laudable one but her method of pursuing it full of mistakes. A major problem is her claim that we give ‘the natural’ ethical preference. She does not go quite so far as to make the naturalistic fallacy – what is natural equates with what is good – for this is too easily refuted: there is nothing good about death from ruptured appendix or in childbirth, no matter how ‘natural’.

Instead she advocates only that we *presume* that what is natural is ethically right until proven otherwise. In some contexts this is indeed wise advice, if nothing new. We should be very wary of certain innovations, for example, the introduction of new chemicals. Not because in general what is natural is good, but because the unnatural, if you will, has turned out so often to be bad and sometimes catastrophically so. Recall Thalidomide, a drug for morning sickness in pregnant women, which caused birth defects such as missing limbs.

Where Somerville’s ideas could present real danger is on social issues. In her discussion of social innovation – such as same-sex marriage – her reasoning breaks down and prejudices show through.

There is space here only to give a flavour of how she treats the issue:

Marriage is a compound right: the right to marry and found a family. Opposite-sex marriage establishes as the norm and institution-

alizes the inherently procreative relationship between a man and a woman, and in doing so establishes children’s rights with respect to their biological parents and families. Because same-sex marriage is not an inherently procreative relationship, recognizing it necessarily negates that norm, and with that, children’s rights in this regard. If we want marriage to continue to establish and protect those rights of children in general, marriage cannot be extended to include same-sex couples. (Unlike same-sex couples, infertile opposite-sex married couples, or ones who don’t want children, do not transgress the general norm) (pp. 102-103).

The result that Somerville wants to achieve is that same-sex marriage is wrong but marriages of forever childless heterosexual couples are just fine. She accomplishes this result by telling us that the crucial quality of heterosexuality is that it is “inherently” procreative. But why “inherently”? If procreation is what it is all about, then why not reserve marriage for the real thing, that is, for *actually* fertile couples? Apparently there are cultures in which this is the rule, where people must have at least one child before they get married.

But this approach would rule out “infertile opposite-sex married couples, or ones who don’t want children”, which she insists “do not transgress the general norm”. Hers is not an intellectually defensible position. And since it discriminates against gays without – even on her own theory – justification, we really must reject it.

This is far from the only serious deficiency in the book. Her deep desire to base ethics in religion is not well disguised and leads her to views on, amongst other issues, abortion – views which were long ago widely rejected. Although she realizes that in a highly diverse society religion cannot be the basis of a shared morality, it appears she would be happier if it could. And her discussions of what ethics is about and her categorization of ethical theories and theorists are both bizarre and misleading.

This book should carry a warning, like those on cigarette packages: Reading this may endanger your ethical health.

Event Announcements

MARCH

Race and the South African Media

Melissa Levin, 2005-06 Media Fellow,
University of Kings College
6350 Coburg Road, HALIFAX
March 14, 2007, evening

For further information, please contact Elaine at (403) 244-6666,
or by e-mail at info@chumirethicsfoundation.ca

Sheldon Chumir Memorial Lecture: *Multiculturalism and Citizenship*

Panelists: Daniel Weinstock and Avigail Eisenberg
Room 141, Talbot College
University of Western Ontario, LONDON

Academic Event: March 16, 2007, 4:00 p.m.

Public Event: March 17, 2007, 2:00 p.m.

For further information, please contact Elaine at (403) 244-6666,
or by e-mail at info@chumirethicsfoundation.ca

Radio Frequency Identification Devices (RFIDs)

Panelists: Jacquelyn Burkell, Ian Kerr and Valerie Steeves
York Centre for Practical Ethics, York University, TORONTO
March 23, 2007 12:45-2:30 p.m.

A light lunch will be served from 12:00-12:45 p.m.

For further information, please contact Vicky Carnevale (416) 736-2100 x33824 (vcarneva@yorku.ca)
Or ycpe@yorku.ca

APRIL

OutRights Human Rights Conference

Partnership event with AIDS Calgary
April 2 & 3, 2007, 8:30 a.m.– 5:00 p.m.
The Calgary Westin Hotel
320 – 4th Avenue SW, CALGARY

Registration: \$270. For further information contact info@calgary2007.com

SCF Presentations :

1) ***Ethical Leadership on Diversity***

April 2, 10:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m.

2) ***Ethical Leadership on Reform of Alberta Human Rights Law***

April 2, 11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m.

JUNE

Sexual Harassment and the Calgary Stampede

June 19, 2007

Kahanoff Centre, 2nd floor, 5:30 -7:30 p.m.
1202 Centre Street S. CALGARY

For further information please contact Elaine at (403) 244-6666,
or by e-mail at info@chumirethicsfoundation.ca

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