

THE DOCTOR GAME



by DR. W. GIFFORD-JONES

Honesty pill

If a benevolent God granted me one wish this Christmas, would I ask for a cure for cancer? Perhaps a way to erase the terrible loneliness that affects so many Canadians at this time of year? An end to the nuclear madness that could end all Christmases? Or assurance that parents placed love as well as toys in the Christmas stockings of their children? This year I'd ask for none of these things. Instead I'd ask Him for an honesty pill in the Christmas stockings of people of all ages, races and creeds. What the world needs most is a liberal dose of honesty to separate the reality of our complicated 20th century from the prejudices and irrational beliefs we've allowed to encrust our souls.

What a difference this Christmas 1983 will be from Christmases long ago. Pilgrims landing in America feared only the adversities and diseases of nature. Now humans frantically seek protection as much from the threat of their brutal fellow man as from the ravages of physical disease.

As an example this holiday season an elderly lady was rushed to hospital dangerously ill. She had suffered gnawing stomach pains for several months. Finally she collapsed and required emergency surgery to stop a bleeding peptic ulcer. Medical records indicated that increased amounts of hydrochloric acid triggered the hemorrhage.

But the record doesn't state that she had struggled to run a small family store after her husband's death. It had been repeatedly burglarized by young hoodlums. And she lived in constant terror. A state of persistent anxiety had caused the stomach ulcer and eventual hemorrhage.

A young girl lies paralysed in hospital this Christmas because hoodlums attacked her in a convenience store. More and more citizens are senselessly brutalized for no reason.

An honesty pill placed in the stockings of law-makers would prevent these threats to mind and body. It would eliminate the ineffectiveness of our current legal system which too often provides criminals with more rights than honest citizens. It would send perpetual offenders to cut trees or build roads. Not pamper them with revolving door justice.

How much hypertension, ulcerative colitis, coronary disease and nervous problems were caused in 1983 by fear of our fellow man is impossible to calculate. But fear is forcing people in North American cities to flee to the suburbs. Or seek security in condominiums. And architects to design urban buildings without windows. Dishonesty and fear of it eventually destroy the soul of cities and citizenry everywhere.

Consider the effect of an honesty pill on TV ads. Company X might say, "For years we've been deceiving you with claims that our painkiller is better because it's twice as strong. But we didn't tell you it might also injure your kidneys. So if you need a painkiller, buy our competitor's which is weaker. Or don't take any. Perhaps you could learn to put up with a little pain?"

Other companies might suggest, "Stop taking laxatives. What you need is less junk food and more fiber in your diet. Our product ruins your intestines and you'll be hooked on it for life."

The honesty pill would also put an end to another recent shenanigan. Last year British rheumatologists were given an all-expense trip to Venice by a pharmaceutical company to help launch the birth of a new arthritic drug. The junket drew a damning response from the British medical journal "Lancet". It attested that while the public may accept physicians "as bores or imbeciles", they are not willing to accept that they are corrupt. Later claims by the doctors that they retained "virgin intellectual purity" throughout the promotional tour were rejected by the journal.

How would God answer my request? I believe he would say, "Pharmaceutical companies have spent billions developing medications that humans don't need. The same ingenuity can discover an honesty pill. I provided a brain with the capacity for greed, hate, love, jealousy and fear. Do you think I'd be negligent not to provide a part for honesty? It's your job to find it. But remember, time is running out."

What a world it would be if researchers accepted the challenge. We could throw away all our keys. Board a plane without being subjected to radiation. An old-fashioned handshake would replace batteries of lawyers. Politicians would stop feeding us lies. World leaders wouldn't need to spend billions of dollars developing new ways to destroy mankind. Nor allow millions of children to starve to death. And old ladies would no longer be rushed to hospital because they feared their neighbors.

This column completes the eighth year of publication of The Doctor Game. Once again I wish all my readers a Merry Christmas. And special thanks for your continuing support of the W. Gifford-Jones Foundation. May a dose of the honesty pill bring the legalization of heroin for those who must die in pain from terminal cancer in 1984.

The W. Gifford-Jones Living Will can be obtained by sending a donation to the W. Gifford-Jones Foundation, P.O. Box 222, Postal Station A, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M5W 1B2. The primary goal of the foundation is to obtain heroin for terminal cancer patients.

Gregoire to lose pay while in jail

QUEBEC (CP) — The national assembly has voted to strip member Gilles Gregoire of his salary as long as he continues to serve time in prison for having committed immoral acts with seven juvenile girls.

The decision to cut Gregoire off from his \$44,700 government salary is provided for in an amendment to a law governing members' salaries. The law now stipulates members cannot collect their pay as long as they are in jail. Pensions and special allowances are also reduced in accordance with the detention time involved.

Gregoire, 57, a co-founder of the Parti Quebecois in 1968, was fined \$2,900 and sentenced to two years less a day last July. He will be eligible for parole after serving a third of that sentence.

Under pressure from the Levesque cabinet he was forced to resign as a Parti Quebecois member for Frontenac and now sits as an independent despite calls for his resignation from constituents, members of the assembly and the mayors in his Eastern Townships riding.

Rainbow graphic must go

OTTAWA (CP) — A blow for blandness was struck last week and the loser was sky blue and rainbow.

The city's design committee ruled that a shopkeeper in the popular Byward Market district must remove the painting of a rainbow against a sky-blue background that covers the front of his building.

But owner Reid Moseley, who paid \$1,000 for the painting, says he'll appeal the decision, the first of its kind made by the committee, which decides whether building designs and signs are suitable.

"I kind of like it, too," committee chairman Des Underhill said after the vote that killed Moseley's bid to keep the one-storey graphic.

But Underhill, the city's chief architect, said: "We were worried about possible proliferation. We wouldn't want everyone doing it."

The unelected nine-member committee, made up of city staff, planners, architects and community members, received a complaint about the rainbow in the fall.

Moseley, who says he has received letters praising the work, can't understand the fuss.

"If they were throwing tomatoes at it, I'd take it down immediately. But there's only been one complaint."

The store owner, who has run the import shop since 1978, said he started the painting this summer in good faith.

He thought he got a permit from the city to paint the building, but the permit simply allowed him to erect scaffolding.

After someone complained, city officials told building owner Jack Steinberg he'd either have to get the graphic approved or remove it.

Moseley, who holds a lease on the shop until 1990, appeared before the design committee in November, but it told him later in a letter the painting "has had a drastic impact on this street where (the city wants to) enhance the heritage aspects of the streetscape."

The committee is concerned that this type of alteration will set a precedent for similar alterations in the market area.

Architect Barry Padolsky, a committee member, says Moseley's graphic should stay.

"The (rainbow) graphic has a sense of humor to it; it's part of the lovely chaos that people like so well in the market. We have to be careful there's not too much regimentation."

He says the building has not been designated a heritage structure, and several other nearby buildings have similar graphics. One has a huge bird painted in the Inuit style and another has a cat in a window.

WITNESS SILENT FOR 70 YEARS

'Mob lynched an innocent man'

ATLANTA (AP) — A witness who said his conscience forced him to come forward after 70 years says parole officials will have to live with their refusal to pardon a Jewish merchant who was lynched in 1915 after being convicted of murdering a teenage girl.

Alonzo Mann, the witness, was present last week when the Georgia Board of Pardons and Appeals refused to pardon Leo Frank posthumously, saying it was impossible to determine the truth after 70 years.

Three Jewish organizations sought the pardon, saying Frank may have been innocent in the slaying of 13-year-old Mary Phagan on April 26, 1913. Gov. Joe Frank Harris said the evidence supported a pardon.

Frank was dragged from his cell by a mob and hanged from a tree near Phagan's home. The 1915 lynching was a catalyst for the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan and led ultimately to the formation of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

"I have had to live with this for 70 years," said Mann, now of Bristol, Va. "Now the pardons board will have to live with what they have done."

Mann, who like Phagan worked in Frank's downtown Atlanta pencil factory, said in an affidavit this year that he saw a fellow worker — not Frank — carrying the girl's body. She was beaten and strangled and dumped in the factory basement.

"Frank deserved a pardon," Mann said, adding: "My conscience is satisfied. I did the best I knew how, and that's all you can do. The pardoning board is wrong."

Mann said he remained silent after the incident on the advice of his family. Mann also said he did not know who committed the crime. "All I know is what I saw," he said.

Dr. Marvin Goldstein, president of the Atlanta Jewish Federation, said: "This decision will continue to linger as a dark cloud over our society and the Jewish community of America."

James Phagan, 55, a nephew of the slain girl, said: "I'm satisfied that justice has prevailed."

But Mary Richards Phagan, the victim's sister-in-law and the only family member to contend Frank was innocent, said: "I am surprised. What's the matter with those people?"

The board, which has never pardoned a convicted murderer, said that while Frank's lynching was "a stain upon the state of Georgia, 70 years have passed since the crime was committed, and this alone makes it almost impossible to reconstruct the events of the day."

Frank was lynched after then-governor John Slaton commuted his sentence to life in prison. A mob stormed the governor's mansion and then took Frank from a Milledgeville prison at gunpoint. They drove him 145 kilometres and hanged him in an oak tree near Phagan's home in Marietta.

Efforts to reopen the case came after Mann, who was a 14-year-old office boy in Frank's factory when Phagan was slain, offered new testimony in the case in 1982 interviews with The Tennessean, a newspaper in Nashville, Tenn.

In an affidavit filed with the pardons board this year, he said he saw Jim Conley, who swept floors at the factory, carrying the girl's body and that Conley threatened to kill him if he told anyone about it.

Conley, who originally was arrested on a murder charge, was a key witness against Frank at his trial. Conley was convicted of complicity in the murder and sentenced to one year in jail. He died in 1962.

Lawyer Dale Schwartz, who worked with the Jewish groups that sought the pardon, said he knew of no further appeal that could be made, but he added: "We will not rest until history exonerates Leo Frank officially."

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