

## Time to think about Olympic boycott?

It's been more than two decades now since then prime minister Brian Mulroney won the respect of much of the western world by pushing the reluctant Commonwealth and U.S. leaders to impose a boycott against South Africa's racist apartheid regime.

It is easy to forget now after all this time - and long after the death of that abhorrent regime - that Mulroney took considerable political heat for it. It is also easy to forget that whatever you may think of Mulroney - and whatever he may or may not have done in other areas of his political career - his steadfast support for South Africa's oppressed black majority was a point of legitimate pride for Canada.

Fast forward now to current Prime Minister Stephen Harper - like Mulroney, a Conservative - and his gutsy and honorable decision this week to offer a red-carpet welcome to Parliament Hill of the Dalai Lama, Tibet's exiled spiritual leader.

Following the lead of U.S. President George Bush - who, despite what you usually read and hear about him in the predominately left-leaning media, actually does get some things right - Harper in effect thumbed his nose at the rantings and ravings of the dictatorial Chinese government and welcomed the Dalai Lama with full honors.

It is interesting to note that while China, as you'd expect, claims this action will "gravely undermine" the relationship between itself and Canada, Harper replied that he wasn't about to sell out Canada's push for human rights in China in return for the "almighty dollar."

What is really telling about this - and about Mulroney's strong backing of freedom in South Africa back in the 1980s - is that the Conservative leaders' actions come in sharp contrast to those of the Liberal governments which have run this country throughout the intervening years.

Indeed, the Liberals consistently talk a good game about the pursuit of freedom - and accuse Conservatives of being no-account bigots on that score - yet it seems to be the Conservatives, not the Liberals, who are not subjected to the bully-boy tactics of their international critics, regardless of how much money is tied up in inter-governmental trade.

Even Ontario Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty, a true Liberal apparently, decided against hosting a function in Ontario for the Dalai Lama. And while Paul Martin did meet briefly with the Tibetan leader in 2004, it was a brief meeting held in the private home of a Roman Catholic archbishop, far from the prying eyes of the media or the Chinese.

China, as everyone knows, is one of the world's worst human rights abusers. Yet we continue to trade with them - and they continue to flood our markets with junk, much of which has had to be taken back to the store for various reasons of late - and no doubt we'll be all aflutter when they host the next Olympics.

Yet Liberals - unlike the NDP it must be said - continue to be reluctant to meet the Dalai Lama for fear of upsetting the tyrants who run China with an iron fist. China, assuming the rest of the world knows nothing about their bloodstained history in Tibet, continues to insist that the peace-loving Dalai Lama is a separatist who uses his religion to camouflage his true intentions.

It is to laugh. Or cry.

While China flatly denies human rights abuses - despite mountains of evidence to the contrary - the Dalai Lama estimates that since he was forced to flee his homeland in 1959 when China forcefully took over the country a half million Tibetans have died at the hands of the Chinese. He says the suppression of religion, language and culture is getting worse, and there is no reason not to believe him on that score, despite China's continuing lies to the contrary.

China even denies Tibet was ever an independent country, even though the entire world knows it was.

In fact, despite this observer's praise for Harper's actions - along with Bush and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who also met with him recently - the west should be prepared to go much further in expressing its displeasure at China's ongoing brutality and blatant disregard for the human rights of Tibetans and its own citizens.

As much as Mulroney must be admired for leading a boycott against South Africa, trade between Canada and the apartheid regime was peanuts compared to trade with China.

We know Liberals aren't interested in upsetting the Chinese, but if Harper really means what he says about not allowing the "almighty dollar" to dictate his views on human rights, why not take the next logical step and boycott all things Chinese, including (perhaps even especially) the upcoming Olympics?

Now that would be a message worth applauding.



**National Affairs**

**Claire Hoy**

# Forced environmentalism?

It's not easy bein' green.

I am referring to our commitment to keep the planet alive and healthy for generations to come, and not the phrase coined by a rather famous Muppet, long before the planet was knee-deep into recycling and diverting trash from our overburdened dumps.

Since the Exxon Valdeez spewed sludge for all to see in Prince William Sound back in 1989, Canadians have consistently placed their concern for the environment as the number-one priority in this country. Poll after poll, we concerned Canucks express our love for our planet.

And yes, we've come a long way.

Since that environmental maritime disaster, we've toughened legislation against industrial pollution; sparked the development of spill cleanup technology; created environmentally friendly chemicals and products; improved incineration and energy from waste, and convinced the bulk of the population to recycle. We've sounded the alarm about global warming and greenhouse gases.

The Region of Peel, and by extension the Town of Caledon, have been green leaders for more than a decade now, with compre-

## Our Readers Write

### Growth questions remain

The following letter, to Councillor Richard Whitehead, was submitted to the Citizen.

Richard, thanks for the note you sent along. You didn't mention a few other facts:

1. You were on council when many of the present problems we are facing in Bolton grew. Therefore, you cannot explain the present situation entirely by saying that the Province of Ontario or as some suggest, the Ontario Municipal Board, didn't do their job in the past to ensure planned and properly staged development so that infrastructure would be constructed to handle the crazy, unplanned development.

Nor can you say the present exercise is only due to the provincial government's efforts to control growth. In other words, you were/are part of the problem, not part of the solution.

2. Why was the information you provided only prepared now? Isn't it only available now because many people in and around Bolton and Wildfield realize that processes are happening without their real involvement? Many feel that some opportunities were provided for input but that input doesn't seem to matter to some people on council.

3. The trinodal concept of the Town of Caledon is an exercise in fantasy. Why? Because the projected future development mainly focuses on Bolton just as in the past.

4. If things were done in the past/present in an effective and democratic manner, how do we explain the misinformation, confusion and anger we now see.

5. In February 2005, a staff member from the planning department of the Town of Caledon attended a BRAG meeting to inform the participants of the Town's South Albion-



**Mark Pavilons**

hensive recycling and organics programs. Caledon has boasted a very high participation rate and that's something to be proud of. We've also been named one of the greenest municipalities in the province.

But back to Kermit. It ain't easy being green and it seems we don't always put our money where our mouths are.

The same successful Peel recycling program isn't without drawbacks or flaws. Just recently, Peel cut back the amount of allowable curbside garbage to two bags per week, from the three-bag standard. The idea, it seems, is to force people to recycle more, by allowing less trash at the curb, unless you buy tags for \$1 apiece. Some could argue it's a green tax of sorts. At the same time,

Peel advised residents they no longer accept many types of plastic containers - the ever-popular clam shell containers that hold everything from donuts and chickens to tomatoes and eggs. These, we're told, couldn't be properly sorted in the recycling stream.

Were they being tossed out for the last few years, without a word to the public? Or were they being recycled and then some sub-contractor changed or upped the ante and it became too costly?

Whatever the reason, thousands (perhaps millions) of these containers are now destined to the garbage dump, to live the remainder of their very long lifespans among the heaps of trash. Many types of plastic can't be recycled or incinerated - the fumes they give off are toxic. Believe it or not, there are "cheap" plastics in the marketplace.

Let's hear it for the ingenious plastic and injection molding industries!

There's no question these things are a plague on the modern world. They're horrible, little things all in the name of consumerism.

Again, we don't remember when the consumers were ever asked what type of containers they'd like their baked goods or veggies in.

No, when these wee monsters appeared on the scene, they were embraced by the food industry as cheap, convenient packaging. No one seems to care where they come from, what noxious chemicals they contain, or what's to become of them once their usefulness is over.

Well, some of us do.

Perhaps, instead of forcing consumers to suck it up, the manufacturers should be asked to consider environmentally sensitive, and recyclable alternatives.

Manufacturers will argue they're simply giving consumers what they want. That's an excuse. If Canadians consistently stress the environment as their number-one priority, then we could assume they don't prefer the cheap, easy, destructive route. In fact, most would favor paying a few pennies more for a product than furthering the suffering of our world.

So, from the plastic baggies we rip off the spools to carry our lemons, to the blister packs and clear plastic toy shells for our action figures and diecast cars, foul plastic is a part of our lives. It's one of the most obvious. And it's likely one area we can change for the better.

But that would require action, not just words.

You see, we Canadians, being the materialistic copycats that we are, do love our excesses. The number of gas-guzzling SUVs are rising and the price of gas doesn't seem to faze these gluttonous motorists. We toss, instead of repair. We are living in a disposable world - TVs, computers, VCRs, DVD players and cell phones have very limited lifespans, destined for ugly mountains of plastic, metal and glass. And the big-screen TVs, electric garage door openers, bar fridges and super capacity washers and dryers use hardly any electricity at all!

It's true that one person can make a difference. We do so weekly. But we need to do more.

We need to think of the automobile as having the same fate as the dinosaur. We need to really reuse and recycle - not just when it's convenient - but all the time. It should become second nature and require no extra thought. We need to truly respect the environment, the world, and the habitat of every living creature we share the planet with, and not consider the world as our own big box mall.

And that will take extra thought and effort. And that means everyone, from manufacturers, all levels of government and citizens. If not, we'll be known as the species who killed its planet because we wanted to keep our sandwiches fresh.

**Joe Grogan**  
Bolton