

Time to reduce, reuse, rethink, relax

By Skid Crease

The long weekend has come and gone, and so we now look to back to school, harvesting the fields of plenty, and girding our loins for the upcoming federal election.

In these last few lazy, hazy days before the crazy begins, it's a good time to reflect on our autumnal priorities. Now that we have reviewed the gold medal recycling standards so that King can own the green podium (August 5th issue), it's time to look at the other Rs. It's time to take a good look our consumer habits.

If you have children in school, regardless of any upcoming labour disruptions, parents will be bombarded by corporate messaging to help your children succeed. This will include their clothing, their telecommunications arsenal, and a plethora of school supplies (most of which are supposed to be supplied by the school board).

Very few of these ads will include anything about healthy nutrition, fitness, a good night's sleep, and early evening disconnection from the electronic drug. Very few of these ads will talk about study habits, hard work, engaged participation, or getting assignments done on time. No, parents, we will be overwhelmed by the Kim and Kanye version of higher education: how to dress, text, and upspeak yourself to success.

In other words, we will be tortured into consuming as many new clothes, materials, and devices as possible by the endless advertizing cycle and our children's whining. "Like, Mom, if you don't get me that new iWatch/iPhone/iPad, I won't get good marks? OMG, you, like, don't love me?"

So, the first REDUCE on the list is all the stuff that our children do not need to succeed in school. This is where we get to REUSE all that stuff we bought years ago.

In agriculture, we are faced with the same dilemma. In order to compete and survive, we will be encouraged to buy the newest, the fastest, the biggest and the best tractor, cultivator, broadcast seeder, manure spreader, irrigation sprinkler system, harvester, milking machine, and feed grinder ? to name only a few ? that the banks can afford.

If nothing runs like a deer, then that Deere should be able to run for a very long time with the proper care and maintenance. Maybe like the parents of school children, we are being manipulated into buying something we don't really need. Bigger, supposedly better, shinier things, like the new Trans Pacific Partnership trade deal (dairy farmers unite!), might not be as beneficial as the advertising makes them seem.

And that's when we start to RETHINK the whole cycle of consumption into which we have been seduced.

When I helped my Dad repair our farm barn years ago in Bewdley, he removed and straightened every nail from the old boards. I still do that to this day. When we finished painting ? actually when I finished painting the barn roof, tied on by a rope moving from ridge to edge in a series of looping, aluminum paint splattered swings ? every brush was cleaned and dried thoroughly, every drop of paint collected and sealed for the next time around.

The children of the Great Depression knew the benefits of a conserver society. They had to be resourceful to survive; necessity is still the mother of invention. My grandmother used to rave about her favorite "limp lettuce salad" that she saved only for herself. It wasn't until years later, my Mom realized that Grand Mama had fed her children first with the good produce, and used the limp scraps for herself.

That kind of sacrifice and ethic are exactly what we need in this time of rethinking who we are, and where we might be going. As I have written before, there is a vast difference between growth and development. There are limits to growth, but there is no limit to the development of human potential. We got spoiled and we got lazy with the post-war boom and artificial intelligence of stock trading.

Yes, time to rethink. How will we, as the wise elders who probably read this newspaper, model our behaviours for the children who follow? How will we decide on which corporations we will spend our money? How will we use our thoughtful voices to influence community change for the better? Who will we vote for in the upcoming federal election?

Those are the questions we should be thinking about as we RELAX in the closing days of summer. True rest ? complete relaxation ? comes with a clear conscience that we have thought our clearest, done our best, and worked our hardest for our families and our communities. That's when we are humbly proud of our accomplishments.

The emperor who struts like a peacock wearing no clothes and falsely trumpets accomplishments that are phantasms of his marketing team, is more a part of the problem of over consumption than a part of the solution to a consumer society. So, can an election, like happiness, our children's love, and farm security actually be bought in the 21st century? Or are there values that we have forgotten, lying dormant under layers of corporate advertising, that we can put into ethics in the coming months and years?
Time to take back our future.

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