

Leaders need foresight to choose wisely

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Even with the best intentions, we sometimes do things that turn out badly. For example, there are times when good intentions are not enough to guarantee good results. In these situations, what we seem to be lacking is clearer vision about how things can be improved.. Leaders especially, need to envision in advance how things can work out for the betterment of our planet.

Often we see things clearly after an event has happened, or as is said, “hindsight is 20/20.” But in the worst cases certain leaders who hold positions of authority have failed to recognize their mistakes even after the fact such as those that follow:

Robert Dziekanski, a visitor from Poland, arrived in Vancouver airport, October 12, 2007, expecting to be met by his mother. Instead, after a lonely and terrifying night he was met by four members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police who only a few seconds later tasered him at least four times and held him down by adding their weight to his chest until he died. These policemen seemed unable to envision a better plan. They lacked a humane approach to perceive Dziekanski as a fellow human in need of help rather than as a threat to four able-bodied armed policemen. Caring, compassion, and later during an investigation, honesty, were sadly missing.

The British Petroleum Company had prior warning that their safety procedures were not carefully followed. In the interest of the speedy mining of oil far below the bottom of the ocean floor they failed to oversee their tasks properly. This oversight resulted in thousands of barrels of crude oil polluting large sections of the Gulf of Mexico and beyond. The deaths of nine oil-rig workers, damage done to the environment, to animal life, to the fishing and tourism industries, are incalculable. Greed sadly replaced human life and concern for the environment was missing.

During the G20 Conference in Toronto many television viewers watched with some disgust as black-clothed protesters smashed windows, looted stores, and set a police car on fire. If they had any vision of how their protests might improve the world, their view did not come across to hundreds of viewers. Shortly after this wild disruption most black-clothed protesters either fled or mixed in with the crowd. The arrival of police followed with their full riot gear, tear gas, truncheons, shields, and rubber bullets. Their rounding up several hundred protesters and bystanders by dragging them into enclosed police compounds did not resolve the problems being faced by either the G20 Conference leaders or the more peaceful protesters.

A few days later I talked with a friend and his wife who had come from British Columbia to join a peaceful parade. They were carrying signs about poverty, peace and pollution. Both these friends were retired teachers protesting in a non-violent manner in a prescribed area away from the protesters mentioned earlier. Both estimated that there were about two thousand people involved in their non-violent protest. Both indicated their peaceful parade seemed to be of little interest to the media. Apparently what happened in the more violent parade was judged to be more news-worthy. It seems that the earlier violent protesters were generally content, and perhaps even happy, the cameras were focused upon them. This raises a question as to how the public media envisioned their own role. Why did the media quickly lose interest in the quiet parade for poverty, peace and pollution? It may be that we too share responsibility in their decision since many people enjoy the violence and destruction and excitement that we can see for free rather than attending a hockey match or a fight in the octagon cage or paying to see a violent movie..

This section of The London Free Press is about Spirituality and Ethics. Each of the areas above has a bearing on ethics. When ethics work well they work in a quiet inner sense. Good ethics are not driven by violence, greed, or destructiveness. Ethics are driven instead by an inner vision of justice, peace, equity, caring, acceptance of people from other cultures, and by concern for the welfare of humanity.