

unMitigaTeD Au dacltY

A World Without Evils? Say It Ain't So...

(before I start this week's rant, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the folks at the Barn for their "loving dedications" and publicity. Probably be the only time I'll see my name in lights...)

Ever wonder what the world would be like without vice? No addictions, no weaknesses, everyone'd be happy, healthy and wise. Nothing to do but live long and prosper, sounds like a sweet dream indeed. Well, I'm about to wake up screaming...AAAAAAAAAGGGGGGGGGKKKKKK!

How dull!

Yes, the hope of a world -- or at least a province -- without debauchery seems to be the objective around here. To narrow it down for you, I'm ranting about the recent plebescite which would totally remove video lottery terminals, or VLTs, from the land of Anne. Good intentions notwithstanding, I'm a bit upset that the locals have overwhelmingly called for a total ban on the things. I'm a bit more upset when the PEI Medical Association deems the issue to be their number one concern. Never mind that access to health care is next to impossible for a non-Islander, it seems to be more important to save the insane gambler from the steaming cesspool of his own desires.

As I've said, the intentions of the vote aren't what I'm upset with. The notion of banning them outright is the disturbing factor. Certainly, compulsive gambling is a problem for some people; the "experts" figure it's what, about 5 - 10% of the province's population is hooked on the one armed bandits? Five percent. Correct me if I'm wrong, but would seven percent constitute an epidemic? It seems to be more of a natural level of addiction. Virtually every social evil -- alcohol, porn, smoking, etc -- has got some percentage of it's users which overindulge. But as long as these statistics are low enough, there is no need for a total ban. If it was a matter of fifty percent of people dropping loonies into the local one-armed bandit, then sure, there's a problem afoot. But five to ten? Pretty weak case.

As well as this, I'm a little curious as to how they defined "addiction" for this survey. Usually when someone's compiling statistics, they'll use an exaggerated criteria to further vilify the evil of the moment. Was it the amount of money dropped into a machine at one time, or frequency of playing the slots or what? Does playing the VLTs every time you go for a Coke make you an addict? What if you drop a loonie in once a week? How is addiction defined here?

Although the provincial government has said that they plan to honour the wishes of the people on this issue (which leads to another question: since when does a vote in Charlottetown constitute the wishes of the whole island?), I do not see a total ban. Sure there's some addiction, but the profit raked in by the province will be too hard to ignore. To me, the current issue does not constitute an epidemic. Is there some notion that by eliminating social darknesses starting with VLTs, everyone'll live forever? Must be an Island WayOfLife thing that a CFA such as myself can never understand...

- Ross Williams, who'd love to develop some bad habits

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