

Stop the World, I Want To Get Off!

It's official—I'm depressed. Why? Is it the economy? Partly. Is it family problems? I recently lost my Mom, but not really. Financial reversals? No. What has me in a funk is that my b. s. meter is pegged out. Why is that? Because our national and social dialogue is nothing but a collection of drivel, slanted facts, illogic, and outright lies. Turn on the radio, the TV, go to a movie, or even attend some so-called churches, and you will be subjected to a diet of blistering rhetoric, promulgated under the banner of truth.

If you think I'm being overly dramatic, just try to argue a point with someone these days. Facts don't count for anything, logic is thrown out the window, and the person who shouts the loudest, longest, wins the day. Debate has degenerated to the level of "If my point is weak, I'll just hurl insults and feign a lack of engagement on my opponent's part."

I'm sick and tired of hearing, "Everybody knows...", "It's common knowledge...", "Statistics show that..." and other such drivel, without the slightest shred of evidence to back it up. My answer to all of these comments from now on, is going to be simple: "Prove it! Give me one solid FACT to back up your claim." If I hear any of the above, I immediately discredit the source.

These days, people view the Internet as the source of all truth, as if everything there has been vetted out for veracity. Get real people! How many times have you received an e-mail in which someone or other is exercised about some alleged slight. "Target doesn't support the military," "Pat Robertson, thinks Hitler was a good Christian," "They put (name your toxin) in our toothpaste, cereal, dog food, chewing gum, underarm deodorant," blah, blah, blah. Do the people who send this stuff out think I'm a complete idiot? Is it possible that there are more people out there than I think, who buy this pap (now, *there's* a scary thought!)?

There are more causes than you can shake a stick at out there. If you want to become incensed over the prevalence of ingrown toenails, I'm confident, with a bit of effort, you'll find a group that's against them (or for them).

Give yourself some credit, folks. Stop just listening to what everyone else says on a subject, and think for yourself. Use two essential things, your memory and whatever common sense you can dredge up. You see, the reason it's called common sense is that it's supposed to be *common*. It's not something we're born with. Like a muscle, it needs to be exercised. Want an example of how to do that? I'll give you a couple.

Back when the "ozone layer" was the big bugaboo, I heard stories of how "the hole in the ozone" would be the end of life as we know it. Specifically, I read and heard of a hole over the Antarctic. So I got to thinking: if there's this hole there, I would think it would have a deleterious effect on the wildlife (not much of it, but there) that visited that continent. Guess what? The wildlife there hadn't experienced an unusually large die-off. Life went on pretty much as it always had. Big problem? Big deal. The capper came when I read that the ozone hole had *always* been there! Talk about Chicken Little and the sky is falling.

Then, there's memory. Every time I hear someone go on about the poor air quality of the air in New Jersey, usually attributed to the evil automobile, I want to laugh. Why? Because I remember when, as a kid, my mom would drive down the New Jersey Turnpike, past dumps with open fires that looked like a Hieronymus Bosch painting of Hell. The smells got so bad, my poor sister would hurl like a geyser. Today, driving through the same area, nothing like it exists. About the worst smell is the Meadowlands at low tide. Score one for technology.

What with our government going completely off the rails, a business climate that's beginning to make the kid-run, curbside lemonade stand look like a Fortune 500 operation, and religious thought that's more akin to a Stargate SG-1 episode than actual faith, it's fast becoming a study in depression, so I'm tuning out.

It's gotten to the point I don't even want to listen to my favorite talk show on the radio anymore (you guess which one). It's not that I disagree with the host, or that I'm going insane from all the freaking commercials (AM—arrrrggghh!), I'm just sick to death of the gloom and doom predicted for our economy and country. It's giving me agita!

I'm going to continue with my writing, enjoy my favorite music, my faith, our God-blessed family, our travels around this marvelous and diverse country (as the budget allows). I'm officially going to try to tune out the world. What else can I do—go crazy?