



ASSOCIATED PRESS
A man in a Brazilian soccer team shirt looks at a photograph of Jean Charles de Menezes outside Stockwell underground station in south London where the 27-year-old Brazilian was killed by police officers Friday. The head of London's police force expressed regret Sunday for the slaying by officers who mistook him for a suspect in the recent terror bombings. However, he defended the police use of deadly force.

Muslims must help themselves

Extremism will grow without vigorous debate among all Muslims, including fringe groups and outcasts

By TAREK FATAH
FOR THE RECORD

Mark Whitby was visibly disturbed as he talked to BBC-TV giving an eyewitness account of the shooting. "He half-tripped and was half-pushed to the floor and the policeman nearest to me had a black automatic pistol in his left hand. He held it down to the guy and unloaded five shots into him."

Within a flash, Jean Charles de Menezes, a Brazilian electrician, first reported to be of South Asian origin, lay dead. His fault? He looked like a Muslim.

The news has shocked British Muslims and has played into the hands of al-Qaida, which continues to churn out propaganda about how the so-called Christian West is out to destroy the Islamic world.

First reports quoted police as saying the dead man was linked to the London bombings, but by Saturday a spokesman for Scotland Yard had admitted "the man was unconnected to the incidents of Thursday," in which bombs placed on three subway cars and a double-decker bus failed to detonate properly.

By any account, the London bobbies made a huge error in judgment and a colossal tactical mistake, giving al-Qaida much to validate its propaganda.

From other reports I've read, he was followed and attacked by plain-clothes officers and shot by one officer multiple times. This was clearly overkill. Even if the police suspected he was carrying a bomb, handcuffs, a strong blow to the head and other non-lethal options were available to incapacitate him. If we are to stand up for the rule of law, it must apply to all.

If al-Qaida suicide bombers desire their own death and martyrdom, surely one way to fight them is to deny them this wish. Unfortunately, the United States and its allies have, since 9/11, walked into every trap laid out for them by the Islamo-anarchists.

What was once contained to a mere 161 square kilometres

in the mountains of Pakistan and Afghanistan has, unfortunately, mushroomed to a 161,000 square kilometres in Iraq, thanks to the U.S. invasion. Both U.S. President George W. Bush and Osama bin Laden have fed off each other, providing sustenance to one another in implementing their agendas.

To fight malaria, one does not shoot down mosquitoes; one drains the swamps. Sadly, the Anglo-American "war on terrorism" has done just the opposite. Instead of draining the swamps, they have created many more while they fire and try to kill the mosquitoes.

The American occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, the continued despair of the Palestinian people, the torture chambers of Abu Ghraib and Gitmo and this latest killing on a London railway platform all provide fodder for the propaganda machine of the Islamo-anarchists. They prey on the minds of young Muslims and by each action push them further into the hands of extremists.

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This has to end if we are to stop the world slipping into a spiral of death and violence with death worshippers cheering on the impending Armageddon as the final day of this war of civilizations.

If the Anglo-American axis has contributed to this death spiral, the reaction of the traditional leadership of Western Muslims is equally pathetic and embarrassing. One day, they decry the Bush-Tony Blair agenda, the next, they sing eulogies.

When the self-styled leaders of the Muslim community announced a press conference in Toronto to denounce terrorism, my first reaction was "too little, too late and too pretentious." However, giving them the benefit of the doubt, I went to hear what they had to say.

What followed has left me deeply concerned about where the Muslim community is headed.

The imams sounded deeply apologetic and repeatedly told the press that they were willing to work as informers of CSIS and the RCMP. However, they refused to acknowledge that they were part of the problem.

After encouraging segregation, extremism, misogyny and homophobia on an unparalleled scale, one would have hoped that the Imams had turned a corner and had recognized the dangers of promoting extremism.

In words, they did, but in practice, the culture of exclusion was still being practised. The president of the Muslim Canadian Congress, a woman, was denied entry from the main door and asked to enter from a side entrance, marked "for sisters only." How could the imams reconcile their claim to fight extremism while they treat women as second-class citizens?

If the imams wish to fight extremism and terrorism, they should combat not only the terrorism of blowing up of trains and planes, but also the terror of the spoken word — of threats against gays and lesbians, dancers and musicians, artists and agnostics, free thinkers and secular intellectuals. Verbal threats and intimidation are destructive of community and individuals and must be curtailed.

Such terror is manifested in the calling into question the "Muslimness" of fellow Muslims, in throwing charges of abandoning religious beliefs against fellow Muslims.

Ordinary Western Muslims are caught between the devil and deep sea. On one hand, we have the Anglo-U.S. axis fighting a political war with guns and bombs, while on the other we have a terrorist death cult invoking Islam to wreck havoc on the very societies that have opened their doors to us.

The imams in Toronto are not the answer to our leadership vacuum. On the contrary, we need to take politics out of the mosques and away from the hands of the clergy. There is a need for open and vigorous debate among the Muslim community in Canada — from the left to the right, from the elected MPs to the downtown housing and poverty activists.

A discussion that includes Muslims who are derided as the fringe, the Muslim gays and lesbians, to the doubting agnostics and atheists, from tattooed artists to bearded scholars, from single moms on welfare to the brilliant entrepreneurs of Bay Street, Shias and Sunnis, Druze and Ismailis, Ahmaddiyas and atheists — all of us need to sit and hear each other with respect and dignity, because none of us has a monopoly on Islam and there are no master franchises for sale by Allah.

If we don't, we step into the unknown at our own peril and we will only have ourselves to blame.

• Tarek Fatah is host of the weekly CTS-TV show, *The Muslim Chronicle* and a founding member of the Muslim Canadian Congress, a grassroots progressive Muslim organization.

Vancouver and Seattle lead world in pot strategies

By JOEL CONNELLY

SEATTLE

Hyperbole is addictive when you direct the Office of National Drug Control Policy, where John Walters has ratcheted up claims that marijuana smoking is a gateway to hard drug use and criminal behaviour.

Crusading against the weed is, for Walters, a crosscountry and even crossborder cause.

Two cities, however, have heard him out but headed off in a new direction. One is a somewhat laid-back Seattle. The other, Vancouver, B.C., has a hard-core drug problem as serious as any place in North America.

On the weekend of Aug. 20-21, 75,000 people will gather each day at the waterfront for Seattle Hempfest — annually the country's largest, best organized marijuana event.

In September 2003, by a solid 58 per cent, Seattle voters adopted Initiative 75, making marijuana possession the city's lowest law enforcement priority.

Walters made a pre-election appearance here, visiting a detox centre with Seattle city attorney Tom Carr.

A year earlier, Walters had travelled to the Great White North, delivering his message to the Vancouver Board of Trade just before a municipal election in which voters endorsed a radical redirection of drug policy.

In Seattle, the public voice for I-75 and marijuana legalization has been a media-savvy young man named Dominic Holden, longtime Seattle Hempfest organizer and board member of the National Organization for Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML).

"Our law enforcement saves money from I-75," said Holden. "Our jails save money. Our kids are not using marijuana more. We have tested, and succeeded in, a more humane policy."

Just 230 kilometres north, at Vancouver city

hall, a guy of very different background is an even more emphatic voice for change.

"Drug czars are the most ill-informed people in government," Vancouver Mayor Larry Campbell said in an interview. "John Walters is pushing against good science. He's pushing an agenda that doesn't fit in the real world. He's in denial."

Campbell is a former Royal Canadian Mounted Police constable, and veteran of the drug squad, who became the first Vancouver district coroner. He was named B.C. chief coroner in 1996 at a time when drug overdose deaths were skyrocketing to as many as 400 a year.

LEGALIZE MARIJUANA AND TAX IT

The mayor decries the timidity of Canada's federal government, which has aroused Walters' wrath by proposing to decriminalize possession of small amounts of marijuana.

Campbell would go a long step further. "I'd legalize marijuana," he said. "I'd control it, tax the hell out of it and put the money into health care."

"The growing of marijuana in this province is a \$3 billion to \$7 billion business. Who is making money off it? Organized crime, that's who. No taxes are being paid. No social benefits are realized."

The mayor even gets personal. Campbell noted that his sister is undergoing chemotherapy.

"I've told her — she is a non-smoker — 'If you get nauseous, I'll get you some B.C. bud,'" said Campbell, referring to the informal name of British Columbia's leading agricultural export.

"Why? To relieve her pain," Campbell added. "Is that not what we are about as humans?"

During ratings-driven "sweeps months," Seattle TV stations often make a beeline for Vancouver's drug-riddled downtown Eastside neighbourhood. They've filmed addicts shooting up and breaking into cars to support their habit, and they've trekked to the much-publicized Cannabis

Cafe — until the police shut it down.

The TV cameras just show the surface of suffering. Recently, I went to Alliance Francaise, a local cultural centre, to see a harrowing exhibit by French photographer Marc Josse.

Josse spent a year in the neighbourhood. "We have drug problems, but nothing like this," he told Daniel Girard of the Toronto Star. The exhibit, *Eastside Stories*, details the lives of people, in Josse's words, "suffering and dying of indifference."

The downtown Eastside proved to be an epiphany for Campbell.

What changed the RCMP drug squad veteran? "I became a coroner," said Campbell. "My goal was not enforcement. It became saving peoples' lives."

Vancouver has moved to remedy its indifference. Campbell champions what is called the Four Pillars approach to Vancouver's drug crisis — harm reduction, treatment, prevention and enforcement.

A centrepiece is the city's supervised injection centre, where addicts can shoot up — "We have almost 600 injections a day," said Campbell — while also receiving health care and counselling on how to kick their habit.

In the opinion of "His Worship," the mayor's official title, the radical measure has broken up the street drug trade, and saves lives by providing emergency response to drug overdoses and curbing needle-spread HIV-AIDS and hepatitis C.

With ineffectual interdiction and focus on enforcement, official U.S. drug policy seems caught in a time warp.

"They're still in Reefer Madness," said Campbell, referring to a laughable anti-drug movie of the 1930s.

Seattle and Vancouver have chosen a different path.

In the "Emerald City," it involved a modest use of common sense. In Vancouver, it has required a



CANADIAN PRESS
An HIV-positive heroin addict shoots up in a downtown Eastside alley in Vancouver in a 1997 file photo.

major leap of intelligence.

• Seattle Post-Intelligencer