

Establishing a nanny state in NZ

By Sir Bob Jones, 12 May 2015

Two years ago, while running along a busy Wellington street, a 40 year old jogger shot into the road and was killed by a bus, this lapse confirmed by witnesses.

Bureaucratic insanity then ensued. But first; why did, she and co-incidentally, some other central city joggers at the time, do this? The reason was that they were fallible human beings, not robots, and when jogging it's easy to slip into a rhythmic-induced detachment. There's a word for such phenomena.

It's called an accident. The Oxford Dictionary defines accident as "an event without apparent cause or unexpected, an unintentional act, chance and misfortune causing injury", normal human behaviour.

Unfortunately, normal human behaviour deeply offends the ubiquitous, usually bearded busybodies who are such a blight on modern society. That weird one-off spate of Wellington suicidal joggers spawned a ludicrous proposal from the council's wets to reduce the CBD speed limit to 30kmh.

As my company owns the most CBD buildings, the council solicited our view as an affected party. I replied explaining Darwinian principles and suggested that instead of their regressive proposal, for the enhancement of the gene pool, lift the CBD speed limit to 80kmh. One suspects the beards would prefer every vehicle was preceded by someone walking ahead bearing a white flag. Fortunately that 30kmh idiocy was dropped.

Now, this matter has re-emerged with coroner Garry Evans' report. Instead of stating that through a moment's negligence the deceased met with a fatal accident, Evans added a typical coroner's infantile rider, specifically that the safety of Wellington's Golden Mile thoroughfare "should be reviewed". And so the lapdog council, instead of pointing out that the bus did not mount the pavement and mow down the jogger, has hired a consultant to carry out a "study"; a classic wasteful "other people's money" expenditure. Evans should face a manslaughter charge if the consultant understandably dies of hysterical laughter after receiving this brief.

Then again, so-called consultants are the major Wellington growth industry, replacing at greater cost to the taxpayer, the laid-off public servants, and they're well familiar with receiving and dispensing nonsense.

Safety measures are necessary but nowadays are too often taken to ridiculous excess. Ask house-builders and other trades about the childish and costly safety regulations they're subject to. Or consider the recent Lufthansa tragedy.

Ignoring the utterly freak nature of that event, borne out by eight million daily flight passengers, some airlines announced costly repetition preventative measures. It's madness. So too on our roads, where contrary to their employers (us) will, hordes of uniformed pimps, plainly lacking any self-respect, instead of pursuing real criminals, bully and persecute motorists over trivia, as always, ostensibly on safety grounds.

Cultivated work and safety hysteria has now become cult-like and grips the feeble minded, as evidenced by a recent call to our Wellington office by a lawyer's secretary. Her complaint; (I'm not making this up) the neighbouring office had burned toast and the smell was a health threat to her staff who consequently had gone home, presumably to hide under their beds.

As we've done for 40 years, three summers back a mate and I sailed our laser yachts from Eastbourne on the eastern side of Wellington harbour, across to the city's Oriental Bay. There we lingered awhile. Meanwhile, a vicious southerly blew up. It was a hellishly crazy two-hour ride back in those tiny vessels. Co-incidentally the Pacific region laser championships were taking place off Eastbourne with about 30 nations represented.

Yachts were capsizing everywhere and the rescue boat was busy pulling competitors out of the drink. One hundred and fifty metres from shore where the waves become unpredictable, over I went. It was impossible to right the yacht in those heavy seas and, eventually, the rescue boat dragged me aboard although in those seas I could have virtually surfed ashore. "I told you we should have cancelled," an official on board shouted to his colleague. "Look at him. His life-jacket's been ripped off."

I shut up about not being a competitor. Do I wear a life-jacket? Never. It's part of the pleasure, zipping about solely in shorts and a hat but molly-coddling know-alls abound, currently demanding life-jackets be compulsory. I'm not cavalier about risk but it's my life and I'll make my own decisions regarding the set-off of pleasure versus safety.

Come to think of it I was once bailed up sailing on Lake Ontario off Toronto and, to my joy, given a ticket by water police for not wearing a life-jacket. I happily copped two more for continuing on, each left fluttering in my wake.

All of this reflects the modern state's most basic tension, being the constant conflict between self-determination, individual liberty and, most of all, self-responsibility, set against bureaucratic bores who consider citizens' behaviour should be prescribed for their own good, as determined by them. Furthermore, they're winning. They've succeeded in establishing a nanny state and have now re-set their goal of a nappy state.