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Despite an inherent sense of optimism, this veteran of many struggles now senses three distinct tendencies that have to be confronted despite any implications.

At the risk of offending a few bulked-up behemoths or the masses who hoot and holler at scenes reminiscent of gladiator contests in Rome, I continue to be astounded by the sheer brutality of what is currently promoted as Xtreme Fighting.

At a time when we are getting rid of the more dangerous aspects of competition in hockey; a time when the damage from boxing matches is on the wane; we see an unbelievable acquiescence to staging bouts which are reminiscent of the era when bear-baiting, cockfighting and battles between vicious dogs were acceptable in society.

Surely the sight of two human beings enclosed in a wire cage and using every brutal process known to man struggle for macho supremacy at any cost to the loser - is a scene most civilized people would decry!



Cloaked in self-righteous robes of popularity, there is now a frightening escalation by government in the potential financial rewards for expanding gambling as a key part of budget planning.

There have already been signs of corruption in Ontario. Many staff have been found guilty of fraudulent activity. What we have seen heretofore will be minimal if greed causes politicians to go further with their approval of more casinos; the introduction of off-track betting for race tracks; and the widespread introduction of gambling machines into neighbourhoods.

The promotion of TV support for such things as poker and Internet gambling bombard a younger generation with enticing invitations to become involved. In the past, such activities have led to family breakdowns on a grand scale. The active involvement of the underworld will be inevitable should these trends continue.

Little thought is given to the individuals and families destroyed by gambling addiction, which is just as real as alcoholism.



My third worry is the increasing reliance of a new generation on alcohol as a natural part of daily living.

This problem has been with us for centuries.

But the promotion and acceptance today is over the top. The additional influence from many of our athletic icons leads young people to believe that critics must be the hypocrites.

I have seen both the joys and the tragedy resulting from alcohol consumption.

Raised by a Dad who was an adamant teetotaler, I lived by rules that were certainly firm.

The opportunity to work in France for a year, I saw a broader picture of sensible enjoyment of a good wine, the proper time for a cold beer, and the celebratory imbibing of a glass of rum in the proper setting.

I also witnessed the appalling statistics of cirrhosis of the liver in Paris in the lower classes. Nightly I saw the tragic collection of victims who slept on the banks of the Seine.

Prior to my European exposure I had been involved in social work. Young men in correctional facilities saw alcohol in the home as the major factor leading to incarceration for 90% of the inmates.

I saw parents weeping uncontrollably as children had to be removed from homes for proper care.

Police make it abundantly clear how many tragedies on our roads are caused by drunk driving.

Under the circumstances, one can probably understand my scorn for the rather deceptive commercials which encourage drinking.

Supporters of extreme fighting, gambling and drinking are adults of every age.

It is far too easy to take a generational stance on these issues. Time and again, we hear parents declare that the peak of mental activity must be between the ages of 4 and 17. At 4, they know all the questions. At 17, they know all the answers!"

In criticizing the younger set, we must remember who raised them. That is surely a tongue-in-cheek reminder of our role in the process.

As a bastion of wisdom half a century ago, Eleanor Roosevelt proclaimed: "You gain strength, courage and confidence from every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face." How right she was!