

COMMENT by Bill Jackson Dec 18 2007

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The OPP are now asserting that Gary McHale encouraged mischief by getting a man to park his car across Argyle Street during the Dec. 1 smoke shack protest in Caledonia. McHale and friends say natives did it first and weren't even reprimanded.

Anyone who had been following McHale's escapades since 2006 would know that the OPP has been wanting to get McHale for something. So call it a set-up call it what you will, but somewhere in the process of a car being parked in the middle of a highway, some sort of wrongdoing was committed, whether an instigating penalty was assessed fairly, or not.

How they'll prove McHale coerced a man into doing it is questionable. But in the end, the saying two wrongs don't make a right comes to mind.

McHale has maintained credibility over the past two years even though many disagree with his tactics. His flag-raising events were not illegal in the past. He's never assaulted anyone. He and others have done a good job at exposing problems that continue to fester with two-tier justice in play.

It's a fair statement to say that McHale's rallies have spurred police intervention, but they haven't caused it. Without the rallies, some incidents and charges against various individuals wouldn't have occurred, because they wouldn't have brought the festering, root issues to a head.

It's been said before and we'll say it again, Gary McHale is the pus to the Caledonia zit, the root of which still isn't being addressed properly. Until it is dealt with - and sure, it could get a little messy - we'll continue to have flare ups from time to time, whether it's Gary McHale or anyone else, native or non-native.

While many say McHale is the one who stirs the pot, the OPP is keeping the fire burning to make it boil in the first place.

When considering the charge against McHale - encouraging mischief - consider the detective defending such a charge, who admitted in a court room last week that a smoke shack set up by natives on Highway 6 is illegal. Consider the fact that he said more than 30 other people are facing more than 60 charges relating to crimes in Caledonia since the native occupation began. And McHale is the OPP's biggest problem?

Many also think that we shouldn't be critical of individuals OPP officers because they're only following orders. As an OPP officer said to a reporter last week while redirecting traffic on Highway 3 during a native road block: "I'm doing what I'm told, whether I like it or not."

However after the assertion of the OPPA's union boss last year that two-tier law enforcement was indeed being practiced in Caledonia, you have to wonder at what point officers are going to start taking OPP policies to task for being a danger to them.

It's quite evident that many do not agree with the policies from up top. Some people say that regardless of orders, the officers themselves should be taken to task for ignoring the root problems - the smoke shacks and the illegal occupations.

OPP officers aren't necessarily doing anything illegal through their actions and McHale is perhaps ignoring what he himself inflames. But it's the OPP officers who are ignoring what is illegal in the first place.

When you break down the equation, you realize that ultimately we have laws that as a society we can't uphold and can't enforce. If you can live with that, everything's status quo. But the violence will continue from time to time. And without McHale here anymore, who will be blame?