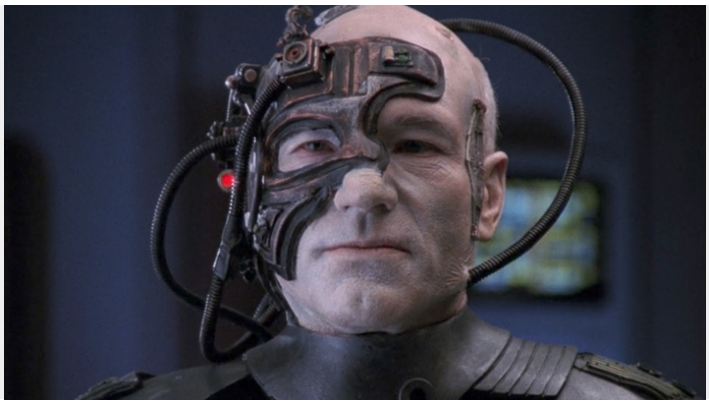
THE BORG MENTALITY

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Category: Opinions

Dikran Abrahamian MD, Ontario, 10 September 2006

Photo by The Telegraph

This essay was written more than a decade ago. In the author's opinion the subject remains relevant and is submitted for publication without editorial change except for the explanatory links.

"This collective consciousness is experienced by the Borg as "thousands" of voices — they are collectively aware, but not aware of themselves as separate individuals. Consequently, they never speak in singular pronouns"

We've experienced the Borg mentality long before the USS Enterprise NCC-1701 "discovered" it. It has existed in our communal and national life all along. It's ironic that in this age, which is characterized by individualism and free speech, we tend to preserve what's artificial and potentially undermines creativity.

There is nothing uncommon and it's quite natural that communities and interest groups in any civil society organize themselves in assemblies, committees, associations, congresses and what not. Furthermore, it's in the nature of any political beast to look after its herd and keep the flock from getting astray. Much good has evolved from this phenomenon. It is pathological, however, the reluctance of such entities to recognise the existence of the other, and treatment of the non-self almost like an enemy rather than an opponent. In this process ignoring, marginalizing, name calling are part of the armamentarium, not to mention fratricide that was exercised in not too distant past, and which has not been studied in a scientific manner.

We've witnessed change of loyalties every now and then, and when it's in the national arena we've tolerated it without imposing strict rules. Recent examples are Jean Charest's acceptance of the Quebec Liberal party's leadership when he was at the helm of the Federal Conservative Party. Belinda Stronach crossed the isle. Emerson accepted a cabinet position. Wajid Khan, a liberal, got appointed as the Middle East envoy by the present government; and now Bob Rae, an ex NDP Premier is running for the leadership of the Liberal party. Would you dare to witness such a change of heart in our community?

The other glaring flaw in our narrow civic life is the absence of accountability and a system of checks and balances as a good friend reminds me. Why do we tolerate such an obnoxious anomaly? Is any organisation exempt from scrutiny by simply proclaiming itself as the torch bearer of cherished dreams and deeds? Some of you, I am sure, received requests for donations in the past couple of weeks for a lofty cause, i.e. helping the Lebanese and the Armenian Community in Lebanon. One asked to write checks to AGBU, the other to the Armenian Community Centre. Suppose you are one of those that belong to neither of them. Do you have any recourse to check where your donation will eventually end? The initiators of such drives for donations are neither

accountable to me nor to you.

It's so curious that when an individual tries to question practices she/he is silenced or advised through intermediaries not to disclose "everything". Why? The routine, mundane answer is that somebody is watching. It's almost absurd not to be aware that "somebody" is "watching" and following every move that we take, or every utterance that we make in this electronic age. It's no secret, especially when that somebody has the support of a government.

Is keeping silent and hush-hushing not more deleterious to civic health? Why avoid public scrutiny and discussion of issues that concern us all? What can be more dangerous and harmful than being critical of your own authority amidst a war?

During the recent Middle East crisis the Israeli public was openly discussing, and yes sometimes criticising its own government's actions. More importantly, in the process it was making public "top secret" documents and information available to the public. And yet, here, during the recent federal elections some have tried to "advise" people not to disclose an otherwise public speech by Stockwell Day in the parliament, under the pretext that negotiations were being carried on, or some other excuse. It's been almost a year now from a "tete a tete" discussion with a respected community leader who was asked by the present writer whether anything is being done regarding inclusion of the subject of the Armenian Genocide in the curriculum of the Ontario High Schools. The answer then was "we are working on it" and "don't publicize it" as the "enemy" is watching. Why this secretive approach? The so called enemy is there in all its might whether we like it or not. Why don't we openly, with the participation of the Canadian public at large determine what's just and what's not an acceptable behavior. There is no substitute for grass root support in these matters.

It's so pathetic that our civic entities abhor change of loyalties, individual criticism and initiatives, yet some are very creative in making a leap into an extreme position without public discourse. A glaring example is the appearance of the "Armenians and the Left" whereby one is mistakenly led to believe that an organisation which was anything but left in the past seventy or so years represents the left today. It would have been welcome news if it corresponded to realities of past deeds. Unfortunately it doesn't stand scrutiny, and it appears to be just another means of misleading the public without the latter's consent. I would really question whether our well to do entrepreneurs, industrialists, and free enterprise promoters who have functions in our most active organisation subscribe to principles and practice of socialism.

Ultimately this brings me to the following question. Why do we tolerate such suppression of individual thoughts and ideas in an otherwise one of the most democratic counties that as yet has not totally succumbed to the interests of transnational corporations? May be the answer lies in our instinctive affinity to let the Borg solve the problems. Cult of History propagated by some, which inherently borders obedience, inculcation, and indoctrination is something that we feel comfortable with, because it symptomatically alleviates our innermost sufferings associated with communal post

traumatic syndrome. Or better still, like so many in a well to do society we are accustomed to adopt complacency as a norm of behavior. I don't think the answer is political, it is more sociological. It's an area in which I can't venture delving in due to ignorance, more than anything else. I leave it to those who feel confident.

There are no comments yet.