OUR ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD LEARN TO WALK THE TALK

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Team Keghart Editorial, 2 May 2010

Thirteen months ago it was announced, with great fanfare, “An unprecedented 46 Parliamentarians Join Canada-Armenia Friendship Group.” Naturally, it was welcome news, and it raised expectations of great things to come. No, we are not superstitious: Thirteen is just another odd number to us.

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For the purposes of this discussion, it is immaterial who made the announcement. What matters is whether there was a follow-up to evaluate the group’s progress. Who else--other than Armenian organizations--were to provide a report card about the functions of this group? To our knowledge, no such report has been furnished to the public. And that’s the rub for it raises questions about how Armenian Diaspora communities invariably operate.

It goes to the core of the principles of transparency and accountability. Let’s assume for a moment that the aforementioned group accomplished work that matters to Armenians. If that’s the case, why has the public been left in the dark? If nothing was achieved, the obvious question is: why?
It seems unusual to pose such questions, and more importantly, to expect answers from leaders of the community who claim to speak on our behalf. And therein lies the skepticism of the “silent majority”, especially of the young who are turned off by boisterous announcements, fervid slogans and plans, without responsible connection to action or outcome.

There are several proposals on the table now about plans to form new organizations—small and big, local and more widespread. They are furnished by well-meaning individuals. Some profess limited objectives; others contemplate far-reaching goals. The general community stance towards these budding organizations is one of “wait and see” at best and incredulity at the other extreme. Both responses have lead to lack of participation, despite the buzz that “something should be done”.

Maybe the solution to this morose mood is for Armenian organizations to inject accountability and transparency into their operations.

Another matter that frequently comes to play is the deployment of “history” when furnishing a *raison d’être* for the continued existence of current organizations, particularly that of the “political party” variety or the invoking of the “lessons of history” when projecting the establishment of a new organization. The amazing characteristic of these two explanations is their convoluted manner. It’s as

if they were a page or two torn from a 19th century voluminous novel or a philosophical treatise, with no consideration or understanding of present-day listeners or readers conditioned to speed in the Internet age.

More importantly, who cares what partisan and contradictory "histories" rival groups spouse? The young, who are forward-looking and care less about the "mistakes" of history, are repelled by this obsession in the past. Only a few are interested… and mostly for documentation rather than for passing judgment, since more often than not, they consider Armenian organizations to have blundered frequently in the past century and earlier.

As to the lessons of history, despite the adage that history repeats itself, the fact is past "mistakes" are relevant only within their own context of time. Circumstances are not reproducible as time goes by and new factors create new contexts.

It's pointless – if not self-defeating – to dwell on the alleged past political mistakes of Armenian organizations. It's divisive and should not play a role in the birth to new organizations. Similarly, raising the subject of whether the Second Republic was authoritarian, oppressive, and anti-nationalistic or an age of "zartonk" (renaissance) is a time-waster in public perception.

Precision, brevity and clearly-articulated objectives garner a bigger and stronger following than a whole library of narratives.