

Young fighters needed, says Sixties activist

He says he does not want to be identified, and for good reason.

It has nothing to do with squealing or dumping on anyone — it's just that a lot of people who are counting on him to change things might wonder why he's suddenly decided to declare himself passé.

So he has no name. But accept that he is in his 40s, middle-class, well-educated, and a known activist.

The sort of person you have been reading about and listening to — and, perhaps, counting on — for the past 20 years or more.

He and his type have fought for your neighborhoods, battled developers, staged protests, suffered arrests, worried about the environment, lobbied the governments and circulated petitions for as long as his generation has been trying to re-make the world in their often-confused image.

And now he's wondering what went wrong.

"I look around," he says, "and it's still all Sixties people."

"We're not fighting modern day issues. We're fighting issues that should have been dealt with years ago."

It's not that they are unimportant, it's just that somehow, suddenly, things like height restrictions and original architecture and maybe even the arms industry have a, well, *dated* feel to them.

There are new battles to fight, and new soldiers are needed.

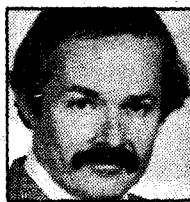
"The basic problem," the Sixties activist suggests, "is that there are no young social activists to be found."

He points to the November leadership convention of the New Democratic Party which, over television, had more the air of a Sunshine Club gathering for a euchre tournament than of a vital political force prepared to take on the establishment.

And to some surprising degree, the aging activist says, his peers are becoming their own establishment.

Scientist David Suzuki, while still saying all the right things, is now a wealthy man so sensitive to criticism that he would cut off a scholarship fund he once established solely on the basis of a rotten review of his book.

Colin Isaacs, once the heart and soul of Pollution Probe, is now a well-paid consultant who



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makes television commercials with the president of Loblaw's.

What he started out doing for free, his generation now expects to be well paid for doing.

"Maybe it's the death of idealism," wonders the Sixties activist.

Such gloom is hardly encouraging news as we enter what *The Washington Post* recently tagged "The Coming Doom Boom."

The signs of apocalypse are everywhere, if you wish to search for them: earthquakes, hurricanes, killer storms, Greenhouse Dread, incurable disease, bookstores filled with titles like *The End of History* and *The End of Nature*.

The Post even speculates the wacky 16th-century French astrologer Nostradamus is about to make a comeback based on his 1555 prediction that the 1990s are going to hold drought, wind, fire and, ultimately, cataclysm.

In other words, the entire world is in desperate need of a Neighborhood Action Committee.

But where will its leaders come from?

"Not from the universities," says our disenchanted activist. "All they are right now are hotbeds of job interviewing."

Perhaps he should lower his sights.

He might visit with the Grade 5 and 6 class from Toronto that set out to visit every McDonald's within range and insist that their Big Macs be served on easily-disposable paper napkins instead of inside plastic boxes.

And he should look to his own young children, who are growing up convinced that unless people change, and change quickly, there is not going to be a world worth growing up into.

Young people who are every bit as idealistic and determined to change things as he was himself 20 years ago.

It's not that they're not there.

It's just that they're not here — yet.

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