

“Do you have a better idea?”

By Henry K. van Eyken

Half a year ago, the Corona virus began pushing environmental pollution and global warming onto the media's back burners. But let's not overlook that unchecked global warming is the most threatening of the three simply because it makes our Earth uninhabitable, period.

It didn't take long into the pandemic for people to say that the world will not be the same afterwards. Question is: How will the world differ?

Will it be an economy in tatters that will then take a long time to recover, whatever that recovery will be like? Besides, with the current pandemic in full swing, there are strong clamors for societal change.

For one, the recent murder of George Floyd (by a Minneapolis police officer on May 25) magnified an outcry to end racism.

Currently, our federal government is providing financial aid to the unemployed, to middle-class enterprises, and to provincial governments in the hope it will see Canadians through this pandemic. Health-care experts are far from optimistic about that, even with some,

touted to be potential cures on the horizon. Conservative political strategists have a word for this spending on aid, a word that smacks of cynicism, “largesse.” Cynicism is cheap. What is not cheap, however, is the risk

that comes with such spending: inflation, inflation getting out of control as it did in Germany within a few years after the 1911–1918 world war. I mentioned this in *The Review* of July 8 and its consequences that culminated in WW-II and the Holocaust.

And so, we need to act against inflation of our currency. This made me think of taking some basic human needs (such as food, clothing and shelter) out of the money-economy's loop. Taking things one-by-one, food is the first to be shifted into a distinct economy, a coupon-economy.

This is not an altogether new idea. In my early teens, under Nazi occupation of The Netherlands, food was rationed for which government provided people with ration-coupons to limit consumption of certain items that money could then (hopefully) buy.

What I am thinking of now goes further than that: a coupon-economy entirely separate from the money-economy. Ration coupons issued by the federal government should not be exchangeable for money except when transacted by the federal government itself. Any illegitimate occurrence calls for some form of severe

punishment.

The government provides ration-coupons to registered citizens and sells ration-coupons to visitors from other countries for the duration of their stay. The government pays farmers and food distributors in currency. To partially compensate (as much as possible) for the “largesse,” the government raises taxes and other payments that are its due. Obviously, this is merely a broad outline of an idea. Much needs to be worked out, but at least it buys some time for trying to come to terms with other big conundrums that are facing us. Or, harking back, to avoid as much as possible political and backroom expediency.

Among those big conundrums is mistrust. Who do we trust—spokesmen for governments or for medical authorities, or those everywhere around us who flout the rules proclaiming they know better? It appears at the time I am writing this that a deficiency of trust (not wearing masks, not keeping social distances, not carefully washing hands) is hampering efforts to bring the Covid-19 epidemic under control. This huge problem is compounded big-time by international power politics, greed, and an abuse of an ideal called democracy whereby multitudes of the more-ignorant overrule the less-ignorant. One could fill libraries with what has been written about this, yet there is no simple solution in sight. The best I can come up with falls in the domain of upbringing, schooling, lifelong learning, and unbiased media. Hard to accomplish, hard to avoid scepticism here, but somehow we do need to get go-

ing in this direction.

“Politics is the art of the possible.” I am inclined to believe that the coupon-economy is very much made possible by citizens' desire for security for themselves and those they feel responsible for. Thinking a little further ahead, I perceive a coupon-economy as gradually encompassing goods such as clothing, goods made of substances that pollute the environment, goods made of non-renewable natural resources, unnecessary goods that by their manufacture generate heat, whatever.

To be sure, I am concerned whether the approach just outlined is enough to forestall inflation. One needs data to begin with. My thoughts turn to a Piet Lieftinck who became The Netherlands' first finance minister after World War II. Among his measures was a temporary freeze of the Dutch currency while replacing it with a new currency available for exchange if it could be shown that the old currency was obtained legitimately. Do I need to say that not all old money was declared for exchange?

Sorry, I haven't got all the answers, however it just may be that this old fogey is a step ahead of your elected representative. Why not ask him?

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Note: For complete details on his writing and more of his blog posts, visit: <https://bit.ly/2CPPuIV>

-- Author Henry K. van Eyken is from Lakefield, QC.

Note that last week a different blog post appeared under this column title. This week, we get it right.



The Houses of Vankleek Hill at night

During her walks around Vankleek Hill at night, *Review* publisher Louise Sproule has been taking photographs -- during these irresistible long days when the fading light extends well into the evening.

She has been sharing a few on her personal Facebook page and has decided to compile a series of these night-time photographs into a book.

She may be doing some re-takes -- so town residents should be ready for a call to turn their lights on for a few minutes -- as part of her quest for the perfect shot.

“I am not a professional photographer by any means, but I love the angles and the light in Vankleek Hill as the sun sets and just afterward, as the sky grows darker,” she says.

She is aiming to have the book available for sale in mid-October 2020.