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EDITORIAL

Fanaticism is one of the worst facets of human characteristics. Fanatics get so involved in their chosen subject that they lose total contact with reality and thus can no longer see or accept anyone else's views or positions.

Fanaticism has been at the root of more arguments, fights, law cases, homicides, religious wars and political warfare than we will ever care to count. We see it in Ireland, in the Middle East, in Sri Lanka and in ex Yugoslavia. If it were not for the fanatics, the extremists and the militants, these wars would not exist.

You can also call the fanatics: bigots, zealots or activists, it is all the same. All these people have one common streak: they are so convinced that their own beliefs are absolutely correct and therefore unassailable, that anyone thinking or acting differently must by consequence be wrong. Nothing outside their own personal views can be right and therefore any discussion or reasoning with these people is a total waste of time. People with opposite opinions must be shouted down, silenced, beaten into submission or, in extreme cases, simply eliminated or bombed out of existence.

Although the methods have changed since the beginning of mankind, the principle still remains the same. Fanatics will never accept a dialogue, a compromise, a general discussion or a give and take situation. For them only one thing counts: their own opinion. To get

their point of view across, fanatics will resort to anything between derision, abuse, mental cruelty, fist fights and mass murder.

In our lives, we all have come across some fanatics. Fortunately, most of them are quite harmless, from the proverbial absent-minded professor who is a genius in his own field but a total babe-in-the-woods in anything else to the railway enthusiast, the incurable stamp collector, the sports fanatic and the inveterate potterer. We have met them all. Although they usually can only talk about one single subject, the one they are absolutely mad about, they thankfully at least do not stick a knife into you simply because you express a different opinion from theirs. Discussions with such people might be a bit one sided but they are usually nice people and you would not mind having them as neighbours.

Intolerance is of course the main characteristic of all fanatics, bigots and zealots and nowhere else does intolerance show up more than in the newspapers "Letters to the Editor" columns. Reading through some of these columns, you realise how very narrow-minded some people really are. This is particularly true when it comes to TV programmes. Here people lose all sense of reality. For a start, everyone wants his or her favourite programme to be screened between 7 and 8 pm. In their view, they ask themselves, what sort of stupid person is this programmer who cannot see that their own

favourite programme is the only one worthwhile being screened in prime time. As prime time is obviously limited and as the programmer receives hundreds of such letters, the poor guy can never satisfy everyone and so he has to endure for ever the wrath of many of his most fanatic viewers and critics. Here are a few sample letters:

- I pay a high price for my TV licence, so I should be entitled to view my F.P. (favourite programme) when it is convenient to me.

- Why on earth did you have to shift my F.P. to half an hour earlier when I am still on my way home from work.

- Why has my F.S (favourite series) been stopped and replaced by the most stupid programme I have ever seen. (Series of course cannot last forever).

- I want to see more sport instead of all this educational crap.

- Why not use TV for more educational programmes and do away with all this meaningless rugby and cricket.

And so it goes on. There is never any consideration given to the fact that other people might enjoy programmes that the writers themselves do not like. We all have different tastes, but these people cannot accept that fact.

And then there are the totally daft ones who sit through a whole programme, hating every minute of it, simply to write to the editor:

- We had to sit through this terrible programme. No one should be subjected to such tripe. This particular series should be taken off the air immediately.

In other words: I did not like this particular programme, so it should not be seen by anyone else either. What a selfish and narrow-minded attitude. And what a silly thing to do to subject yourself to an entire program simply to complain about it later on. No one forces you to watch a given programme, after all there is a certain switch-off button on every TV set which was put there for a good purpose.

It is a real shame that no school, no university and no church seems to teach children one of the most important subjects in life: Tolerance, Open-Mindedness, Indulgence, Courtesy and Understanding towards others. It would make life so much more pleasant for all of us.

FIFA EXPANDS

The Fédération Internationale de Football Associations (FIFA) or World Football Association which has its headquarters in Zurich is running out of space in its present offices. So it took over the famous hotel-restaurant Sonnenberg which happened to be just next door. However the outdoor restaurant with its magnificent view over Lake Zurich will remain open to the public but the hotel itself will be transformed into offices.

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