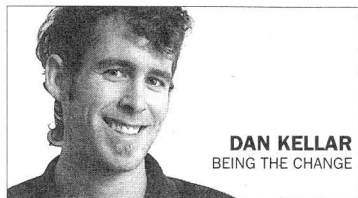


Society must hold individuals responsible

North Americans too rarely accept the blame for their poor decisions



DAN KELLAR
BEING THE CHANGE

I always thought that in a free society we were free to do whatever we pleased as long as Kant's Golden Rule - to treat people as ends rather than means - was applied.

There are some rules or laws that prohibit certain actions of self-destruction as those may show you to be quite insane and a possible danger to the public. There are other laws which are geared towards public "protection," but I don't think there are any laws that control a self-aware human from taking actions which cause no harm to others.

Why is it, then, that insurance companies can dictate to operators of action sport venues that some services will not be covered by insurance and, because of that, they will not be able to provide the service as our governments provide the business certificates based on

having insurance?

Why can't people decide for themselves what risks to take? Why do we have to have labels that say the contents of a steaming cup of liquid is hot? How are insurance companies able to dictate what we can and can't do?

I was in Europe a few years ago and was looking from the top of a mountain and noticed an odd-looking sign. There was a picture of a skier jumping off a cliff, an avalanche, and a money sign below the avalanche debris.

I could not understand what the sign had printed under the picture, but my friend told me that it was an avalanche area (which was quite obvious from the picture) and that if you caused the avalanche you were responsible for all damages caused by the avalanche.

To me this was a revolutionary societal and cultural idea: holding people responsible for actions that they took under no dictatorial persuasion.

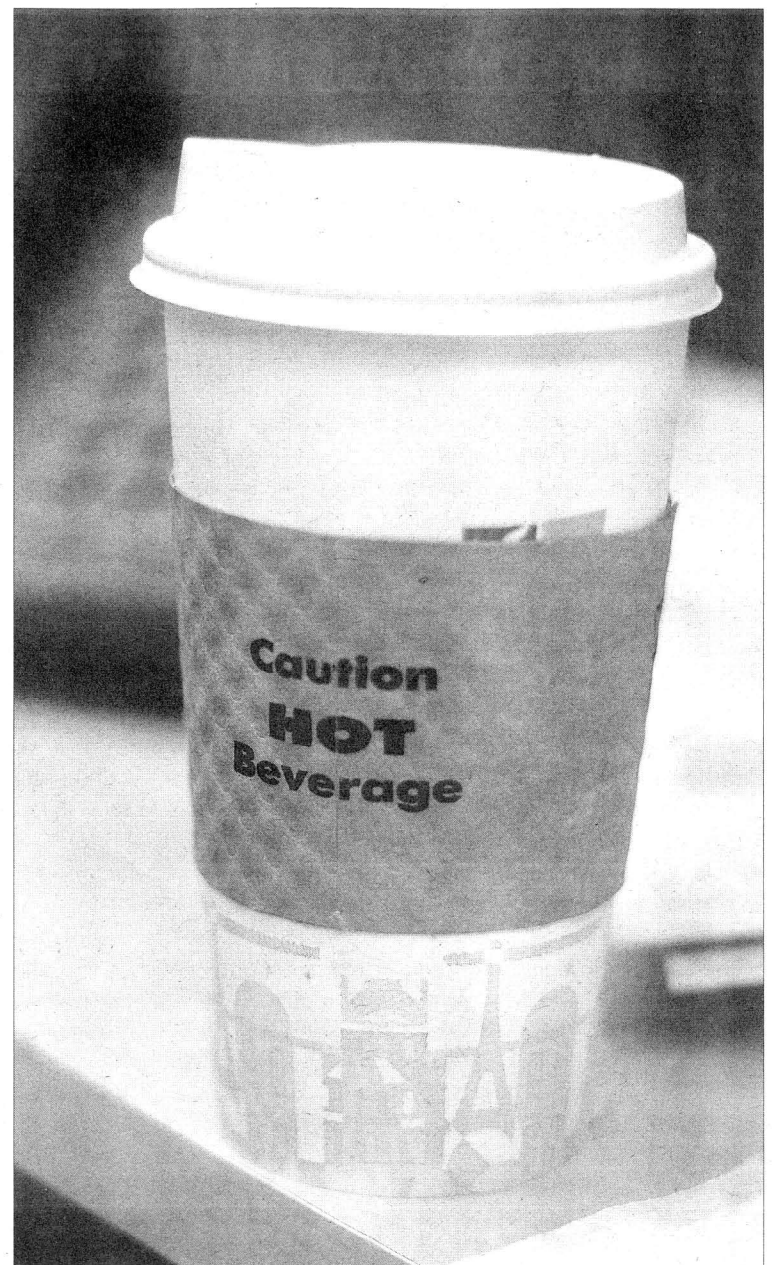
I asked my friend about other differences between ski resorts in Europe and those he visited in

Canada. He told me that the jumps are as large as the builders want to make them; you can ride in the most gnarly areas; and the ticket prices are not as outrageous as those in North America (Chicopee is surely not worth \$45+ a day).

He elaborated that, in general, people are more liable for what they choose to do. If you screw up and injure yourself, you can't just sue everyone under the sun so your paralyzed life is made easier. One has to face the consequences of one's actions (the social assistance programs will provide for you). Surely, this same idea could be applied here.

I don't know when it happened, but at some point, Americans decided to be ignorant of responsibility for their actions; insurance companies demanded safety, and padding was put on every corner, helmets on every adventurer. Canada is following suit in many regards and our self-responsibility is slowly deteriorating.

- SEE LAWSUIT, PAGE 22



SYDNEY HELLAND

HOT STUFF - Coffee cups are often labeled with a disclaimer warning that their contents are hot to prevent liability lawsuits.

Lawsuits aren't the answer

- FROM LAWSUIT, PAGE 21

Since there is no limit to human stupidity, people still manage to get hurt and at some point they sue those who allowed them to take the risk. No person forced them to take the risk but they could not possibly be responsible for screwing up. It must be someone else's fault.

From the action sports world, I point to two examples. First, a huge ownership group of mountain resorts has banned all jumps from their winter ski and snowboard parks, as they did not want to see people get hurt on the jumps. This represents about a third of the major ski resorts in Canada: resorts that are now jump-less.

Second, this summer a major biking destination demolished their bike-jump park after two serious accidents on jumps that could fairly be considered safe. In both cases, it is clear that insurance companies had significant influence, either

through a detraction of coverage or through skyrocketing costs.

The fresh brewed coffee is hot; don't spill it in your crotch while driving with it between your legs.

The skylight is glass; don't try to break into a house by jumping on it. The 25-metre-jump is not something to take your six-year-old or a drunk first-timer friend on, either.

If you do these things, don't sue after you get hurt. Just accept your momentary stupidity.

If you screw up, it is not the responsibility of the entity that allowed you to screw up to pay for the rest of your life. In most cases, the "accused" did not cause you to screw up; you did that on your own.

Why is it, then, that people sue, driving up both service prices and insurance costs? Why can't North Americans just accept responsibility for their actions?

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Campus Pictorial



SYDNEY HELLAND

INDOOR LAKE - Caution signs were not present on Tuesday to remind students that puddles are indeed slippery. Hopefully no one will fall and file a lawsuit - being treated as intelligent is nice.