

Dear Editor,

John J. Dumbrosky believes that the total removal of the Robert Moses Parkway proposed by “some area special interest groups...defies all logic.” Based on his recent comments, he also believes these groups are advocating the total removal of the parkway that he thinks runs from North Tonawanda to Youngstown, NY.

It’s been over ten years since the proposal for parkway removal was first made. This issue has been regularly and widely discussed and debated in public meetings, newspaper features, letters-to-the-editor and on local cable and radio shows. In spite of this, Dumbrosky seems incapable of grasping that the proposal, endorsed by over seventy organizations, local, state, national, and international, refers only to about five miles of parkway along the Niagara gorge. Because he can’t understand this basic fact of the proposal, it’s little wonder he can’t understand its logic, either.

Dumbrosky is not, however, alone in his ignorance. Timothy Demler, Wheatfield Supervisor, said in March, 2008, that he supported Lewiston and Youngstown arguments to keep the parkway open. “It’s great to want to walk to Youngstown,” he said, “but I want to be able to drive there, too.” Demler’s obviously another one of those people who doesn’t want to be confused by facts because he already knows what he thinks. There should be a punishment for such willful ignorance, especially for officials who mislead the general public.

In Demler’s case, he should be required to dress as a scarecrow and to skip along the parkway from Lewiston to Youngstown, singing “Follow the yellow-brick road.” When he completes the journey, perhaps he’ll be greeted by the Wizard, who’ll answer questions about the proposal for parkway removal. For those who’d like questions answered without relying on the Wizard, www.niagaraheritage.org might help.

Dumbrosky should be asked to stumble alongside Demler while reading a Logic 101 textbook. He’d find out under Logical Fallacies that terms need to be defined, that words actually mean something. He’d discover that while he might aspire to creating inspirational rhetoric by using such words as “ancestors” and “river heritage” and “golden thread,” when he attempts to construct arguments of such words, they collapse under logical examination.

Dumbrosky asked, for example, “Wouldn’t our greenway goals be better served if we could more closely follow the footprints of our ancestors?” He evidently sees the parkway as doing this. But whose ancestors? Three or four generations ago, my ancestors weren’t even in North America. I don’t know about his. If he’s using “ancestors” to refer to those Native Americans and Europeans who preceded us on the Niagara Frontier about 250 years ago, we know where their footprints were. Their passage is noted with a series of signs along a route known as Portage Road. If, hundreds of years before this, Native Americans walked on trails nearer the gorge edge, then the four-lane concrete slab of parkway is an insult to that heritage. What better way to honor those imagined and faded trails than to restore the natural landscapes which might approximate the environment through which they walked?

Furthermore, Dumbrosky says the parkway, which he describes as a “gentle road,” can be the “golden thread that ties our river heritage together.” And what “river heritage” would that be? Would that be the one where we poisoned the Great Lakes feeding the river and the river itself with so many contaminants that there are now advisories against eating the fish? Is that our PCB, mercury, and dioxin heritage? The river is so polluted that children born this year will grow up, grow old, and die of old age, and it will still be shamefully polluted.

The “golden thread” he eulogizes permits vehicles to spew out over 213,000 tons of carbon emissions annually (just along the gorge), threatening unique botanical populations. Some of these emissions, together with tons of salt spread in winter, residues from herbicide spraying, and other contaminants associated with vehicle operation are flushed into the gorge and then the river, carried by sheet-water runoff from over five miles of four-lane highway.

This same parkway is a barricade that prevents city residents and others from having safe access to what could otherwise be restored parkland. It also allows private vehicles and tour buses to drive just a narrow median away (well within the sight and hearing) from those who would enjoy hiking and bicycling through a scenic natural environment. It prohibits the development of a premier destination for a Niagara ecotourist market. How’s that golden thread of gentle road holding up?

These are just a few of the facts and some of the rationale that caused Niagara Heritage Partnership first to propose gorge parkway removal in 1997. More details are available on the NHP website, so that public officials, other community leaders, and additional private citizens can evaluate the proposal. In spite of the continued misrepresentation of the proposal by those who refuse to examine the issue, we trust that rational community members with the vision to move us toward gorge parkway removal will eventually step forward.

Sincerely,

Bob Baxter
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