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Submissions to:

NEWMARKET DISTRICT HIGH
SCHOOL BOARD

re:

SUSPENSION OF TIM CRESSMAN

CANADIAN CIVIL LIBERTIES ASSOCIATION

Per A. ALAN BOROVOY,
General Counsel.

Tuesday, October 8th,
1968

Toronto

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A few days ago, Mrs. E.M. Cressman and her son Timmy attended at the office of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association. They came to our organization because on September 18th, Tim Cressman had been suspended from school for his failure to shave his beard.

This is the first time that Mr. and Mrs. Cressman have become involved in a public controversy. They did not seek it; they did not want it. Significantly, following Timmy's suspension, they attempted to persuade him to comply with the principal's instructions and shave his beard. When their son resisted and demanded a rational explanation for the imposition of this rule, his parents faced a cruel dilemma. They did not want to contribute to the further isolation of their shy, introverted boy. They also did not wish to impose standards of behaviour upon him for which they could offer no rational justification. They had raised him to expect parental support unless he were in the wrong. Being unable to demonstrate that he was in the wrong (i.e., being unable to demonstrate why the school should be able to foist its standards of attractiveness upon a student) these parents chose not to break faith with their son; they supported his resistance to the rule. In this, they exhibited an integrity to which few people in our community could lay claim.

Thus, Timmy has been deprived of school for over two weeks. Under the glare of publicity, he is no less shy, no less lonely, no less introverted - probably more so. Throughout this ordeal, his chief consolation must come from the knowledge that his parents love and respect him so much that they would sustain all of this pain on his behalf.

The problem, which this situation so strikingly dramatizes, is that our educational institutions do not have sufficient respect for the Timmys of our society. If we had truly respected Timmy, this incident could never have taken place. Tim Cressman's beard is an expression of Tim Cressman's unique personality. We cannot simultaneously respect his personality and deny its expression.

No one can quarrel with the need for educational institutions to adopt and enforce rules and regulations to further the purpose of the institution. Clearly, chaos is not conducive to education. However, irrelevant restrictions are also not conducive to education.

This is the essence of the issue. If we prohibit the cultivation of beards, do we further the cultivation of minds? Clearly and obviously, there is no co-relation between hair length and brain growth. The only possible relevancy of such a prohibition on education concerns the issue of classroom decorum. The great numbers of well-functioning high schools and universities in which beards are permissible and plentiful, completely refute the alleged incompatibility between beards and decorum. With respect, it is not the unorthodox hair style which threatens to undermine classroom decorum. It is the over-orthodox curriculum, teacher, and regulation. The school can be an exciting adventure or a suffocating imposition, regardless of style of hair or nature of dress.

The Hall - Dennis Report on the aims and objectives of education in Ontario has warned us of the dangers in the dehumanizing trends of our conformity conscious educational system. In a recent address, Lloyd Dennis, co-chairman of the committee, told us that students are being whittled down so they lose their humanity. He said there is "a crying need for flexible attitude on the part of the mentors, the establishment to develop individual freedom and responsibility". To insist on rules which bear no relation to the aims of education is to contribute to the

very process against which the Hall - Dennis Report has so eloquently warned us. Irrelevant rules and rigid administrations are alienating increasing numbers of our best young people from this society.

On Monday, October 7th, we telephoned the Principal of the school and attempted to arrange a meeting with him for the purpose of conciliating this dispute. At the time, we expressed the view that it would be in the interests of all concerned if our differences could be resolved without a public confrontation. The principal felt that the matter had reached the stage where it could be settled only by this Board. Since he saw himself as the enforcer rather than the originator of this rule, he felt that it was preferable to secure a clarification of policy from the Board.

Now, parents and principal are asking the Board to clarify its policy. What we ask is that you do so in a manner which, truly respects the young people in your care. Since the promulgation of many of your regulations, profound changes have engulfed the youth community. The silent apathy of a few years ago has given way to a restless questioning today. If the students seek to express their questioning through strange music, placard waving, or funny hair styles, our educational institutions should respect such expression.

The only restrictions which our young people should endure are those necessary for the advancement of their education. For all of the reasons set out herein, we submit that a requirement to shave is an encroachment on contemporary youthful expression not justified by educational considerations. Accordingly the Canadian Civil Liberties Association calls upon the

Newmarket High School Board to apply its regulations so as to remove these unnecessary restrictions on student expression and simultaneously to reinstate Tim Cressman, with a beard if he so chooses, as a student in good standing.

Such a resolution of this matter would best serve the interests of all parties, the demands of civil liberties, and the dignity of Tim Cressman.

We do hope that you will accede to our request.

Respectfully submitted,

A. Alan Borovoy,
General Counsel