

We've got a good thing going



Many years ago, when I lived in Toronto, we rented a flat in a handsome old house in an area called the Annex. Our tree lined street housed mostly families and some university students, and there were children outside and gardens in people's yards, sometimes even in the front yard. Porches were home to 10 speed bikes, Boston ferns and people hanging out.

Almost daily, I walked with my little Jeremiah, (who's now 31) in his stroller down to Bloor Street. We'd buy things for dinner. We'd stop at the Italian bakery where I'd get bread and where the owner always came around from behind the pastry filled display case to offer Jeremiah a free cookie. On the way back, we might stop to visit one of our many friends in the neighbourhood. We had a good thing going. But things change.

Houses like the one I lived in began selling. Those single family dwellings, rented communally by a number of students, or containing two or three flats, were renovated. Generally, it started with sandblasting the outside brick. Inside, they would be subdivided into "bachelor apartments". There might be 12 single units in a house, each one renting for as much as one flat that housed a family before. Young professionals moved in. Front lawns were paved for parking space. Families moved out.

Change came so quickly and it was irreversible once the flow began. Maybe the neighbourhood should have seen the ambitious buyers coming and rallied round to hold on to what was a good thing. Too late now.

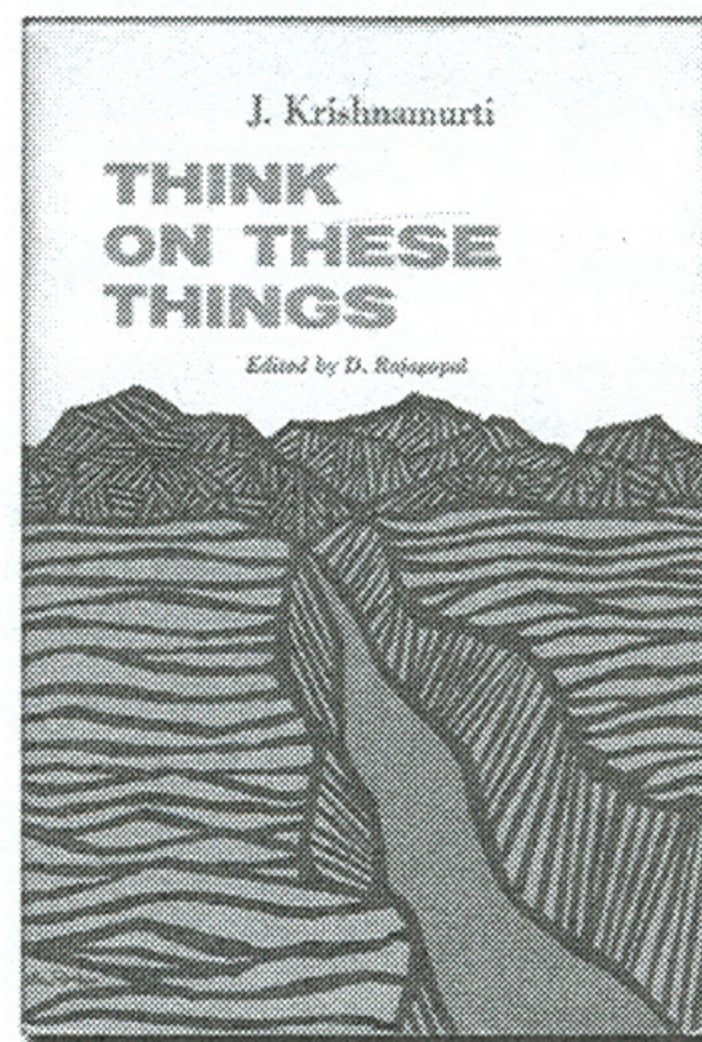
Fortunately, here in Prince Edward County, where change has in many ways been positive, there is also an increasing awareness that we could become a casualty of over exuberant growth if we are not vigilant. This consciousness has made some of us ask if we are willing to let the marketplace set rules for growth, prioritizing profit over other aspects of County life. What about our natural environment? How could growth affect beaches and agricultural land? Do we want a downtown lined with businesses names that have homogenized many other small towns, robbing them of the character of independent merchants? Are we prepared for the concomitant increase in the cost of living brought about by an

influx of high-end development?

Answers to these questions will impact not only the lives of those of us who are full time residents, but also the tourists who we invite to enjoy the County.

I believe our visitors come because we have something to offer which is disappearing in many places: a beautiful natural environment, independent shops and businesses, and a sense of warm welcome. But more importantly, I think we have a collective, creative energy deeply rooted in community spirit, in a love of what we are doing. This creative passion makes this an extraordinary place.

You need only read this issue of *upfront* to learn of all the wonderful art, music, and similar interests flourishing here. But all of these are at risk if we don't examine our individual ambitions.



In this issue of the magazine, David Sweet mentions in his article the writings of Krishnamurti. In his book, *Think on These Things*, Krishnamurti wrote, "Now is not the ambitious man destroying himself? That is the first thing to find out. Not to ask whether ambition is right or wrong. Look around you, observe all the people who are ambitious. What happens when you are ambitious? ...you push other people aside because you are trying to fulfill your ambition, trying to become a big man, thereby creating

in society the conflict between those who are succeeding and those who are falling behind...and is this conflict productive of creative living?" And further, he asks, "Are you ambitious when you love to do something for its own sake? When you are doing something with your whole being, not because you want to get somewhere, or have more profit, or greater results, but simply because you love to do it – in that there is no ambition, is there?"

These are perhaps the soul searching questions that need to be asked. And within these questions and the discussion they initiate, we may find alternatives to ambition and continual acquisitive growth. Let's hope so, because we've really got a good thing going here in Prince Edward County.

Happy summer,
Christine