

Openings: Author Rebecca Solnit, in a magazine article titled *Acts of Hope*, offers us the following challenge:

We need a progressive activism that is not one of reaction but of initiation, one in which people of good will everywhere set the agenda.

Spotlight: Stating that a businessperson is an activist seems oxymoronic. We associate activism with environmentalists, trade unionists, and a host of other occupations, but almost never with entrepreneurs or capitalists. It is as if commerce and activism are mutually exclusive. Perhaps it is the dated image of commerce being controlled by solemn men wearing three-piece suits that has imbedded this idea in our psyche.

The irony is that the "suits" represent a stereotype that is universally abhorred. The term is used by branch offices referring to the interference exerted by head office, by business owners referring to onerous requirements imposed by central governments, and by environmentalists referring to the destruction of endangered habitats by faceless corporations. The decline in the wearing of suits as business attire may be a subconscious act by businesspersons to disassociate themselves from the "suits", those suppressors of creativity, compassion, and action.

Activism is the use of direct action in support of a cause. Using this definition, most businesspersons are activists. They labour on the frontlines—within their businesses and communities—pursuing, with dedication and zeal, goals and principles that serve the greater good. Unless we apply some arbitrary judgement on what actions and which causes qualify under the banner of activism, chairing a local economic development committee is as much the role of an activist as is leading an anti-war protest march. As well, with the increasing role played by self-employed individuals, more people find themselves being a businessperson. Today's reality is that most people in traditional activist roles are also required to be a businessperson.

The forces that rob a business of its potential are the same as those that pollute our environment, provide uninspiring employment, and cause social injustices. Businesspersons, environmentalist, trade unionist, and social advocates need to recognise the commonality of their activism. While our individual causes differ, we should celebrate and be energised by all cause directed action. Apathy, indolence, and carelessness cannot exist when we are passionate about a cause. An air of optimistic enthusiasm is our guarantee for a bright future and our best defence against passivism.

Cross-pollination between the strategies of business and activism will help ensure that we leave the world better off than we found it. Our legacy should be measured in terms of the health of the economy, the environment, and our communities. Having one without the others is not what we want to leave to future generations.

Musings: Recently, while reading a magazine article, I experienced one of those beautiful moments when another person is able to point you towards your truth. A moment when you are able to say "Yes, that is exactly it!" and feel totally understood by and connected to your world.

This experience came at an important moment in my life. A moment when, having slowed sufficiently to navigate a difficult turn, I was uncertain of which fork in my path to follow. As I contemplated my direction—ever aware that if I slowed any more I would stall—I felt very out of time with my world. The author's words crystallised my resolve and I accelerated, increasing my velocity along my path, climbing into a steady orbit with my world.

In life, there are always critical moments; voids into which we pour hope or despair. These moments ask for either our action or our patience and knowing which is appropriate is the essence of wisdom. Learning when an input or output is required to facilitate our process is our opportunity to make mistakes and experience what makes life interesting if ever so mysterious.

Lexicon: Long before meaning a set of matching garments, a *Suit* was the required attendance of a vassal at his feudal lord's court or manor. From the Latin *sequere* meaning "to follow", the issuance of a suit by a medieval lord was an invitation that the recipient could not refuse.

Facts & Figures: So what does the face of business look like? In 2002, small business (those with fewer than fifty employees) accounted for almost 98 percent of all businesses in British Columbia. Micro-businesses (those with fewer than five employees) comprised about 83 percent of small businesses. Self-employed individuals with no paid employees accounted for over half (56 percent) of all businesses in the province.

Links: Adbusters Media Foundation has decided to do more than just media advocacy. They have launched their own product line: the Blackspot Sneaker. Check out www.blackspotsneaker.org to see how Adbusters is attempting to meld commerce with activism.