

A Bear in the Market?

by Munroe Scott

It has probably come to your attention that "the market" has been sagging recently. It has also been crashing, plummeting, recovering and sliding.

I've got several complaints about these acrobatics. One complaint is that they are in a fair way of radically altering the shape and quality of old age for my wife and myself.

Another complaint is that we are being swamped by radio and TV with pundits, economists, brokers, soothsayers, naysayers, yeasayers, and others telling us in great detail what is going on when obviously not one of them knows what is going on. Ah, well, c'est la vie.

But what I really take exception to is that they're blaming all this on the bears!

They keep telling us the bears have gotten into the market place.

Up until recently it was supposed to be the bulls that were rutting around in the stock exchange! Stock exchange, indeed. The place to exchange stock is a sale barn. Don't they know anything on Bay Street, Wall Street, and you-name-it-street?

Mind you, I can understand them exchanging bulls for bears. If a bull sees a small boy eating berries he chases him. If a bear sees the same thing he goes and eats berries, too. Why all this fear of bears?

This is bear season in Victoria County. There's been a big fellow on patrol in Somerville for several weeks. He seems to be after apples. He's been tidying up the windfalls out here in the country and was seen doing the same in the village.

I understand our bear has a big circular territory he looks after.

Is he the same bear that's messing around in Toronto, and New York, and Tokyo? Is he down there shaking the old stock trees? I hope not. I think he's got more sense.

Besides, I understand that's a computerized bear that's playing hell in Big TO and elsewhere. He doesn't go by the season anymore, or the stretch in his tummy. He shakes the old tree when the computer tells him to, and eats the apples whether they're there or not. If our bear found that one under his tree he'd pull the plug on him for sure. But people aren't that smart.

Back in the days when people lived in caves the bears had every right to take exception to us. But they won that contest so most of us don't live in caves anymore and I don't believe your average bear is vindictive enough to keep pushing. I refuse to believe there's a bear in the market.

There's idiocy in the market, and fear, and greed, and automation, and corporations basing all judgements on profit or loss.

They say the market is being "readjusted". I hope it's our brains that are being readjusted. The need for this readjustment is spelled out in an recent book -- in fact, the title of the book says it all -- "Profits Without Production". What more need be said?

There seems to be a basic non-human insanity to the current stock market activity. My wife and I have important life-time savings virtually locked into a group "plan". It takes time to access it. Nobody knows what it's worth these days. Or what it will be worth tomorrow.

We're not trying to get at it, and it can't be because we don't give a damn so it must be because we know the whole system is so farcically beyond our control that it doesn't rate high blood pressure.

People are buying gold, are they? Why? There's a maple tree outside my window whose leaves turn to pure gold every time the sun shines. I take hope from it. And the bear ignored enough apples on his last visit for us to have a delectable pie. "Consider the lilies of the field," said the carpenter.

I listen in amazement as our leaders now urge us ever more strongly to enmesh our economy more thoroughly into the general corporate madness so we can improve our standard of living! I wonder if they're automated, too, like the stock exchange bear?

Once, in the gloomy mood that sometimes afflicts playwrights, I had a character say: "We men at least create our gods in our own image and ignore them at will, but Companies we hallucinate into a reality more real than ourselves. Oh yes, when we have all gone raving off the precipice our Companies will be left to assess our demise as profit or loss, counting the total on an abacus made from the ivory of our own bones."

I was younger then but as I watch the stock exchange images on my TV screen I still think there's a fundamental insanity in a system so totally devoted to profit and loss. Perhaps one can

apply Shakespeare's most famous stage direction to our vaunted civilization by adding only one modern word -- "Exit, chased by an automated bear".

Our local bear is my anchor in reality and I think I'll team up with him. A.A.Milne had the right idea when he wrote:

If I were a bear,
And a big bear too,
I shouldn't much care
If it rained or snow.

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