

Motorcycle helmets

by BRIAN LOCKHART

Hollywood actor Gary Busey is known for two things.

He famously portrayed Buddy Holly in the film The Buddy Holly Story, and he was an outspoken opponent of proposed laws in California requiring motorcycle riders to wear a helmet.

Riders in California claimed it was their right to ride without a helmet so they could feel the air blow through their head or glide aerodynamically across their bald spot.

Right in the middle of the debate, Busey lost control of his motorcycle one fine evening and struck his head on a street curb resulting in a near fatal head injury ? something that he never fully recovered from.

Had he died, he would most likely have been honoured posthumously by having his name entered as a member of the Darwin Awards list that memorialized people who have removed themselves from the gene pool by their own actions.

The Ontario government's decision to allow members of the Sikh faith to be exempt from helmet laws if they wear a turban is nothing more than pandering to a single religion.

If you want to wear a turban, go head. However you must accept the fact that having a turban will interfere with a lot of things you want to do.

The helmet laws are there for a reason. I'm the last guy who likes to see government interference in our lives, but sometimes people need instructions on how not to get themselves killed.

I've had a motorcycle licence since I was 16 years old ? I would never hit the open road without a helmet.

It used to be a common occurrence to hear a person had been killed in a car accident after being thrown though the windshield.

Finally they started putting seat belts in cars to stop you from being tossed like a rag doll if the car hit something. Of course, people chose not to wear them.

The law was changed to a requirement for their use and thousands of lives have been saved.

Allowing one single group to legally flout the law simply does not make sense.

Will they also be exempt from wearing a hard-hat at a construction site because it won't fit over a turban?

I don't know how many turban-wearing guys in Ontario actually ride motorcycles, but regardless of your religious practices, common sense should tell that certain safety features are in place whether you like it or not.

If the government is going to pander to one group, who else will jump on the band wagon for religious purposes?

There's a long list of religious groups that have rules and doctrines in place that don't agree with government regulations. But for the most part they abide by the law of the land.

Will the government allow members of a particular religion to drive without insurance because they consider insurance a form of gambling and it is frowned upon?

No, they wouldn't.

The response would be that driving is a privilege, not a right, therefore you have to abide by the same rules as everyone else.

Then there is the question of what constitutes either a turban or a Sikh?

Currently there are no rules that define a turban and there are certainly no laws on the books requiring anyone to carry identification proving they are a member of any organized religion.

There are a lot of motorcycle riders in Dufferin County.

Perhaps the next time one of the local groups have a charity poker run, they could all put on a bandana and ride as a group. If questioned by police they could all say ?It's okay, we're all Sikhs. We don't have to wear helmets.?

The police would be powerless to charge them with a offence.

You can't be charged for your religious beliefs whether sincere or not.

Finally, there is a solution ? wear a helmet that will fit over a turban.

No doubt there is helmet manufacturing company out there that could design a helmet that could accommodate a turban. The military did it with helmets to accommodate sailors who wore headphones in the navy to hear firing instructions.

Changing laws to pander to a single group is nothing more than vote-buying.

If Gary Busey had used some common sense rather than worry about looking cool on a Harley, he wouldn't have a hole in his skull and an altered personality.