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Shaken, not stirred

by BRIAN LOCKHART

?I'll have a martini, shaken, not stirred.?

Yes, that's the famous line from Bond, James Bond. Although I'm pretty sure even Bond couldn't tell the difference in how his drink was created.

I'm not a martini guy, at all.

If I'm going to imbibe liquor, which isn't very often, I prefer the corn mash variety ? Jack Daniels, mixed with Coke. Somehow those two beverages seem to create, at least for me, the perfect drink.

I also like the All Canadian Caesar cocktail, with its snazzy red appearance and liberal sprinkling of celery salt on the rim of the glass.

Although the ?secret ingredient' ? clam juice, is sort of questionable. Exactly what is ?clam juice?'

Employees of the LCBO in Ontario have gone on strike ? their first strike in Ontario history, apparently.

LCBO representatives say the strike is not about money. Of course it isn't. Whoever heard of any kind of public union going on strike for higher wages? It's always some kind of ?principle' involved.

That sounds nice. I guess as long as the principle is met, they won't need any raises.

Is that the way it works?

According to reports, the strike's sticking point is the sale of pre-mixed drinks at corner stores and grocery stores.

Why would you buy a pre-mixed cocktail in a can, in the first place? A cocktail is something that should be mixed and enjoyed ? not swigged from an aluminum can which is then tossed out of your vehicle into a ditch on a rural concession.

In the bigger picture, why is there an LCBO to begin with? Why is there a government monopoly on a legal product?

The LCBO was born out of the prohibition days when it was established in Ontario in 1927 after the end of prohibition.

Other provinces have their own version of the LCBO.

The government finally figured out that people liked to drink, and the temperance movement was a failure.

With the return of legal alcohol in the province, the government decided the public couldn't be trusted when it came to drinking. So they established a Crown Corporation to make sure the public couldn't enjoy a drink without paying through the nose for it.

They decided that liquor was not something that was a ?need,' so they taxed the living daylights out of it.

You also don't ?need' paintings on your walls, curtains on your windows, an electric can opener, or an air freshener in your car.

They aren't needs, they are wants, but those items aren't sold and taxed at ridiculous levels.

Between the years 1927 and 1962, people in Ontario had to acquire an Individual Liquor Permit, good for a year, to be able to buy liquor.

Given the LCBO's history, no doubt people who obtained a permit were looked down upon as shameful alcoholics or something similar.

Can you imagine needing a permit to buy a bottle of wine?

The LCBO gouges the public every time it opens its doors. No other product is allowed to be sold as a monopolized item, and price fixing between rival companies is not allowed.

A check with the LCBO website reveals, regarding their pricing: ?Our suppliers set their own pricing (subject to minimum retail prices) and have the option to adjust their retail pricing up or down through the year in response to currency fluctuations,?

Note, it says ?subject to minimum retail prices.' Who sets the minimum? It's certainly not the wineries and distilleries or their products would be a lot less expensive and competitively priced.

The complaint by LCBO representatives is that the Ontario government is ?allowing public profits from the LCBO to be given to other, private interests.'

Well, yeah! Distilleries and wineries aren't in business as a public service. They operate to make money ? just like every other business in the province. How about the profits go to the private companies that produce the product?

The last I checked, neither the province nor the LCBO is in the business of producing any kind of alcohol product, yet they want the profits from someone else's hard work.

I like the LCBO. You go in, you find what you want, and you buy it.

The staff are generally knowledgeable and helpful, and they have a large selection of products.

However, this is the 21st century and times are changing.

If the LCBO wants to stay viable, it needs to keep up with the times and stop trying to be the monopoly that controls alcohol in the province.