

# SPECTRUM

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## METANOIA

By John Valk (Campus Ministry)

### Quality or standard

Who would doubt that our thoughts and actions are indeed sometimes confused? Doing things backwards is common; seeing them as such is not. But a profound difference exists between what is and what ought to be.

We today know a lot about what is. We are well served with complex networks of information-gathering systems, keeping us in touch, in tune, and up-to-date. We are more confused, however, about what ought to be. We affirm that there ought to be human rights; we disagree about its implications for human responsibility. We agree that there ought to be individual freedom and choice; we are not sure what that means in terms of public morality. We believe that we ought to have an equitable justice system, but we have almost lost the meaning of the spirit of the law.

My hunch is that much of

this comes from our great concern for "standard of living". Standard of living, if I have it correctly, has to do with access to goods and services. It has to do with buying power and material pursuits. We are so driven by maintaining or improving these Western "priorities" that any opposition is met with (armed) resistance. Witness alone the situation at Oka and the NATO base in Labrador.

We have prided ourselves over the last half-century and more with a continual increase in our standard on living. One can imagine, therefore, that an economic recession - the loather "R" word - makes us rather uncomfortable. Yet, what we call "tough" today frequently pales in light of the struggles of the past.

But is it clear that it is a higher standard of living that we really do seek? Even though we all like the basic

comforts of life, perhaps we are really doing things backwards. Does a high standard of living really fulfill us, as humans? Is that the route we ought to be following? After all, the "pot of gold" thus far has also reaped us ecological destruction, a spiritual vacuum, and a dangerous rift between rich and poor.

Perhaps we really seek quality of life. Maybe we really strive to be at one with ourselves, free from anxiety. Perhaps we search for a life of benevolent and communal brother/sisterhood, love of family, concern for the "other" and the environment, all the while embracing justice and showing reverence for God. In our heart of hearts I think we do intuitively sense that only here will we find rest.

For the most part however, our actions seem to indicate that we are somewhat confused. We have come to believe that

"things" are more important than people. We engage in power and aggression rather than in peace and justice. We engage in seven days of commercial activity to "stay competitive", but forget the need to preserve one day for spiritual development. And in our struggles to "advance" we have also inadvertently developed a darker "underbelly": crime, poverty, and distrust.

We seek a quality of life, but mistake for it standard of living. We envy the spirit of people such as Mother Teresa and Gandhi, but are duped into thinking the "good" life can be found in things. To what degree do we use expensive clothes, automobiles, stereos, and VCR's to deepen our spirituality and enhance our relations with one another and the Earth? Do these things increase our sensitivities, or our neglect for one another and their environment? Is the pur-

suit of the market place, the making and selling of things, the striving for promotions ultimately for increasing our quality of life, or our standard of living? Do children increase the quality of our lives, or impede our standard of living? Do day-care and dual-career seek to enhance the quality of (family) life, or increase a standard of living? And abortion?

It has been said that it is in our sharing of ourselves and our possessions, rather than our hoarding of these, that we find enjoyment and quality of life. Standard of living in North America borders more on hoarding, at least from a global perspective. It might do to reflect on whether we in our studies and our work seek to develop and sharpen our skills to hoard, or to share; to increase our standard of living, or to improve our quality of life.

## GAY FORUM

By Terry Richards

### Outing

*The greatest poverty is not to live in a physical world, to feel that one's desire is too difficult to tell from despair.*

Wallace Stevens,  
*Esthetique du mal.*

A faction among people has accumulated a tactic that many, myself included, find a total invasion of someone's privacy. This faction, in an effort to abolish a stigma attached to homosexuals, is outing - forcing people to unwillingly come out of the closet.

With a way of showing achievement in the gay community publications are stating that certain figures in the entertainment and business world are gay. Recent examples of this is that of a french newspaper in Paris which reported that actor Richard Chamberlain ("The Thorn Birds", "Dr. Kildare") is homosexual. The National

Enquirer" recently had a front page story on John Travolta having problems with his live in lover. "Out Week", a gay publication from New York, even reported that the deceased business tycoon Malcolm Forbes was gay.

It seems that supporters of outing - as in "out of the closet" - believe that homosexuals in well known positions have a responsibility to state who they are and to provide positive role models for gay people. People feel this is especially true here in the 1990's where the gay community is facing a rise in discrimination because of the AIDS epidemic.

Gavriel Rotello, the editor of "Out Week" states that "the media talks about the private lives of famous people in great detail, but when it comes to somebody being gay there is a code of silence because being gay is perceived by many as

the worst thing someone could be." He further adds, "it's taken for granted that other minorities deserve to have role models, so why not gays?"

I have argued from the onset that one of the smartest things I have ever done was to finally come out. I wasn't blackmailed or forced into doing it; in all reality it was my own personal decision. The point I'm trying to make is simple. If someone is gay and in the closet, whether it's your average carpenter or business executive, then that person has the right to live their life the way they want to. It is totally wrong to enforce (or "out") someone, no matter what reasons may be in question. As Dr. Eric Plaut, a professor at Northwestern University says "we've already given up privacy in so many ways. And one's sexuality is the most private."

Probably the biggest case of

outing occurred last year with Barney Frank, a gay politician from Washington, D.C. He had an affair with Steve Govie, a male prostitute who blackmailed Frank into giving him money. Eventually, Govie told a local newspaper of the affair and ultimately the whole country found out. It was Govie and his personal greed for money (he was paid \$10,000 for the story) which outed Frank. Barney Frank chose to live his life in the closet with no harm to anyone. When the "Frank Affair" became public Frank was in his fifties. It is people like Govie who give gay community, and people in general a bad reputation. I for one would never want to be associated with his kind.

However, there is another side to the coin when dealing with outing and political figures. A politician, like anyone else, has the right to privacy. But if a gay politician goes out of his/her way to harass gay people his private affairs do become a matter for debate and discussion. A prominent NDP political figure recently stated on CBC's "The Journal" that "there is a right to privacy, but not hypocrisy". He was referring to an Illinois

gay politician who "acted poorly" when dealing with AIDS issues. In my mind outing is ethically justified where gay politicians are pursuing an anti-gay agenda and building a career on that dishonesty. Why someone who is gay and would help promote homophobia just doesn't make sense. It is the same that when I start my career as a teacher I would teach that gay bashing is an accepted way of life. I would never help promote that kind of hatred.

Everyone has a right to privacy and outing, in all reality, is not an answer to anything. If someone wants to repose who they are then they should be entitled to that immunity. The bottom line is that we should not lower ourselves by resorting to the same type of invasive behavior that anti-gays have been doing for so long. The ethic is that we should protect each other and just because a politician has betrayed that ethic doesn't give us a mandate to betray that ethic. Politicians also commit crimes like drug abuse: does that mean every Canadian and American should follow suit?