

SPECTRUM

Metanoia Planning a safety net

PRESSURES! There are a lot of planning experts, but who do we listen to?

by John Valk

One of the things that has been grilled into my head ever since I can remember is the great need to *plan*. As a boy I delivered newspapers. I had to plan my route, concoct strategies for collecting moneys owed, and devise ways of spending or saving the oodles of money I earned. In my last years of high school I was told to plan for university. With my mind generally on everything but my studies, this planning, however, became rather difficult, if not outright painful.

The pressure to plan has not changed, even now. In fact, it has intensified. Today I am told I must plan my finances, career changes, mid-life crisis, retirement, and my children's education. And there is no shortage of amicable experts quite anxious to coddle me through reams of confusing if not contradictory information. Two weeks ago my wife and I listened for four hours one evening to advice on life insurance. I couldn't sleep all night. That marathon, no doubt, shortened my life a few years.

Planning of some sort is important, of course. Only foolishness would prevent one from taking it seriously. Nonetheless, much of it gives me a headache. Not only do the dollar figures make my head spin, but when I get a rough idea of how much insurance, retirement benefits, educational funds I may need I discover my after tax income cannot be stretched sufficiently to cover the premiums. More loss of sleep.

Total frustration might well set in if there was not one thing that clearly surfaces in all of this. Not only is it impossible to predict future needs, one cannot hope to provide complete coverage on one's life, family and possessions by concentrating *only* on these kinds of strategies.

The kind of "safety net", which we increasingly cast around us today, may not gain for us what we really desire, regardless of what the financial wizards deluge us with. Its approach tends to be far too individualistic. It also assumes that money (benefits, payments, funds) is the proper response to life's challenges, changes or tragedies: "in benefits we trust".

This type of planning also has subtle ripple effects. To afford this kind of "safety net", as well as our daily necessities, comforts, enjoyments, obviously requires a job with a high salary. To attain that one needs to plan one's schooling for job rather than educational purposes. And, how often has education not been reduced to job training, let alone job satisfaction to salary increases? What might be considered more creative, enjoyable and meaningful work may be relegated to the backburner. And suddenly the vicious circle locks in.

The American one cent coin states "In god We Trust". The social, moral and spiritual impact of that statement today just about parallels the monetary value of the coin. You see, we ignore the biblical injunction—"seek first the realm of God and all the rest will be added". This is also a "safety net", albeit of a radically different nature. According to the scriptures, this is *real* life insurance.

It is foolhardy to pretend we can cover all our bases, or keep one step ahead of the "Grim Reaper". It is also foolhardy to think we can do it all alone. But do we even need to?

To seek the realm of God is to seek to be in the presence and company of God. It is to be anchored in life, not in the shifting sands of modern protectionism. It is to seek those things which are not only meaningful, but also eternal. It is to probe below the surface of our present culture's superficial securities. It is to have faith—faith that God is who God claims to be.

Seeking the realm of God is also to recognize the need to be in the presence of God's people, many of whom may not be easily recognized. It is to acknowledge that we all need each other. Here the real and authentic "safety net" becomes visible and active: people willing to be responsible for people; people looking after people—sharing, caring, nurturing, laughing, crying—in life or in death. This is a whole different type of protection; a whole different type of planning. It merits as much, if not more, attention than temporal protection schemes.

"In God We Trust". Our modern individualistic, consumer oriented society seems to think it is a blind trust. But is it?

A number of people joined together in the Alumni Memorial Lounge last Sunday evening to confirm that this is not the case. They affirmed, first of all, that God *does* exist. Secondly, they stated that their affirmation is not a mere piece of confessional information, to be dusted off on Sundays. God's being impacts life at university, they stated, and God is making a claim on the work and study being done at UNB. That work and study is to be for the purposes of creating a "safety net" that really counts. The group dedicated the 1992-93 academic year to God.

d for democracy

You, the Student Union and "the Vision thing"

DISLIKED! A look at Student Union problems and a few suggested solutions.

by Jamie Rowan

The UNB Student Union... what more can be said about it that hasn't already been said? Well, from listening to the students, I think it is safe to say that there is no more universally disliked or hated group on campus. Okay, there is the Business Office, but they're just doing their jobs—and besides, we can't do anything about them. No, the Student Union is disliked by a whole mess of people. Why? Let's examine the reasons point by point.

What's wrong with the Student Union (short form):

1. Lack of Visibility.

No one on this campus knows who the hell these people are. Neither do they know what

they are doing for them. Therefore, most of the student body doesn't think it would matter if the Student Union dropped off the face of the Earth, a position that I can certainly understand, though I can't support it. The Student Union funds the Bruns, CHSR, most of the clubs and societies on campus, they bring in concerts and they lobby for our interests. That is worth something, and having a democratically elected representative and being able to speak my mind and have someone listen is worth \$99 a year. Why don't students feel that way? Because the relationship between the student activity fees and the money going to clubs and other activities isn't made clear to people. Also, a point must be made that the Student Union has obviously never heard of the words "Corporate Identity". They use two different symbols on their letterhead, the cover of the Beaverbook and Directory has a different logo, and the Student Union Page has yet another logo (which, rumor has it, they paid \$10,000 for. Guys, even for \$500, the beaver wasn't worth it.) I am not at all surprised that no one on this campus seems to have any idea who they are. For a bunch of people who are masters of self-promotion, you would think they could market the organization a little better.

2. Utility.

Conventional Wisdom: The Student Union is about as useful as a condom with holes in it. Sure, the intentions are good, and if you don't realize that it doesn't work, it's comforting to know that something is protecting you. However, in all truth, it isn't serving any useful purpose, because it can't do what it was intended to do. Even when people accept that the Student Union means

well and has good intentions, they are widely perceived as being incompetent. They suffer from massive bureaucratization, and from the natural divisions which result in having so many Faculties represented. The bottom line, is that even when they have a good idea, it gets lost in the machine or comes under sometimes needless fire because of the person that suggested it.

3. Bad Press.

1000 people crossing the street without getting hit by a car isn't news. One person being knocked into the next county by an SMT bus is news. The Student Union is the

paper (any paper) and padding their resumes to three or four inches thick. The last election was pathetic. When an election becomes a popularity/poster design contest, is it any surprise that the students lose heart in their government, and the government in their students?

Okay, so we know it's broke. The question is, how do we fix it? Publicity and a massive marketing campaign, though I loathe the thought of seeing the Student Union everywhere, is probably the answer. They might also try increasing the Brunswickan's budget. A bribe? No, but it couldn't hurt to foster better relations between the two groups—besides, it can't hurt. For that matter, they could try bribing me, that

couldn't hurt either. (Just kidding.) The important thing (Not that it wouldn't work.) to remember is that unless the students are made aware of what the Student Union is doing there is no way of ever getting them to care. If they don't care, every effort the SU can make is sabotaged before it even begins.

4. Money.

Quite simply, if I told everyone how much they were paying in and where the money goes, someone would probably fire bomb the SU offices.

5. The Vision Thing.

If you want the students to work with you and to care, you need leadership and you need (here it comes) "that vision thing". Ahh, for the good/bad old days of Johnny "Big Brother is Watching You" Bosnitch. There was a man with vision and an agenda... questionable though the agenda might have been. Love him or hate him (and plenty did both), he dreamed big dreams. Nowadays, the SU's idea of vision is getting their names in

relations between the two groups—besides, it can't hurt. For that matter, they could try bribing me, that couldn't hurt either. (Just kidding.) The important thing (Not that it wouldn't work.) to remember is that unless the students are made aware of what the Student Union is doing there is no way of ever getting them to care. If they don't care, every effort the SU can make is sabotaged before it even begins.

If the SU can find a way to involve the students, and if it can ever pull itself out from under the veritable mountain of bureaucracy, deal with its internal problems and get down to some serious work (like the anti-calendar), it could become a viable, effective student organization. If they could get the students to care, then the administration could no longer regard students who speak out as radical extremists.

If students voted, governments (of all parties and levels) could no longer afford to marginalize them and their concerns; now government is effectively writing off an entire generation as politically ineffectual and not dangerous. But they don't vote, the Student Union isn't working, and the Students are lost in the shuffle—and no one seems to care, being too absorbed in the status quo. I can only wonder what would happen if people started caring—but I must admit, I don't think I'll ever find out.

D for Democracy

James Rowan

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