

Symposium preaches peace

by Sandra Bit

"Man without mysticism is a monster."

This sentiment was expressed by one of the seven guest speakers at the World Religion Symposium, and best captured the theme of the event.

Held in the Public Archives of Nova Scotia on January 21, the panel discussion, "Religion in 1990s: a path to peace?" drew together representatives from seven different world religions for a public discussion about where religion is going, and how it can contribute to peace in the world.

Sponsored by the Association for Baha'i Studies at Dalhousie, the event commemorated World Religion Day by allowing people of such diverse faiths as Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Baha'i and Sikhism to discuss their concerns about the escalation of violence in today's world, the focus on materialistic over spiritual values in Western society, and the place of religion in modern daily life.

After a prayer from each faith and a musical selection, the audience heard ten minute presentations from each speaker. While the stress was on the similarities rather than the disparities between world religions, each speaker had a unique perspective.

Reverend Anderson, a Lutheran minister and the representative for Christianity, spoke of the need for more pluralistic thinking in the Christian church and its tendency to exclude other faiths, such as those of North American Indians. He struck a common chord when he spoke of the need for people of all faiths to come together to resolve conflicts while allowing each other to coexist.

Dr. Bedavie, who represented the Islamic faith, spoke of the need to relate peace and justice within one framework. We need to see ourselves as one family in the image of the supreme deity, regardless of what we choose to call it, and recognize religion not as a source of violence, but as a source of inspiration. Crimes

committed "in the name of God," Bedavie said, are truly crimes committed because of human misreading of God's will.

That religion is fundamentally open to peace and dialogue was reiterated by Mr. Cohen, the Judaism representative. Cohen spoke of modern humanity's perception of itself as God, because of its capacity for invention and destruction. We need to change this destructive attitude through open discussion with other faiths, he said.

Pandit Ravi Dogra, a Hindu priest, and Rachel Farahbakhsh, representing the Baha'i faith, both spoke of the intrinsic nobility of the human spirit and the necessity for unconditional love towards one another to heal the split in the global psyche caused by violence.

Farahbakhsh went further, suggesting that the root of discontent in society is the lack of a sense of purpose among people. This will only change when we learn to abolish war and depend on faith in ourselves, and when we

achieve a genuine equality between men and women, she said.

The need to change our perceptions about women and minority groups was also iterated by the Sikh representative, Dr. Sodhi. Sodhi stressed the importance of serving God and cleansing ourselves of our egos and ego chains, as well as the danger of developing a spiritual myopia through religious fanaticism.



Perhaps the most moving talk was given by Ken Friedman, representative of the Buddhist community. He spoke of the fear of feeling vulnerable, tender and exposed, and how people often mask or repress such feelings by

creating a seemingly secure, but ultimately illusory shell around themselves using material wealth, political ideologies, and religion. He stressed that true peace is the absence of warfare within the human spirit, and that everything in life is precious.

Most importantly, Friedman stressed that rather than seeking "instant" enlightenment from religion, we should use it to mobilize those moments in our lives when we face fear and strife head-on to strengthen our spirituality. Throughout life, it is important to have a sense of humour, and to not take oneself too seriously, Friedman said.

The discussion concluded with a brief question and answer session. While the issues were important and worthy of discussion, the format of the event prevented any dialogue between speakers, or between the audience and the panel. What might have been a forum for dialogue between world faiths turned out to be merely a series of lectures on religious points of view.

Posters promote genes

by Darcie Reidpath

This is the second year the Biology 1000 classes will be holding a poster contest. In groups or alone, students must create a poster on a chosen topic and submit it as a lab. The topics are based on biotechnology and cover a variety of newsworthy issues which, because of lack of time, cannot be covered in class.

This exercise will not only give variety to the students' work, but will encourage them to research a specific topic of interest and to share this information with fellow students.

The posters will be marked by lab instructors as a lab exercise, and then each lab group will choose the best two posters to be judged for the actual contest. The judges have not yet been selected, but will likely consist of three Dalhousie science professors, as was done last year.

The judges will mark the posters on the basis of how well the key idea is chosen, communication of the idea, and how well the theme relates to biology. The poster with the best of these qualities will receive a biology-related textbook.

All of the posters will be handmade and posted in all of the study centres in the Life Sciences building. Last year the biology staff was quite surprised by the impressive results and looking forward to a similar outcome this year.

Start looking for the names of the winners in the Biology 1000 newsletter the week before February study break.



Yes, even arts students can do Blo 1000.

photo:
Rochelle
Owen

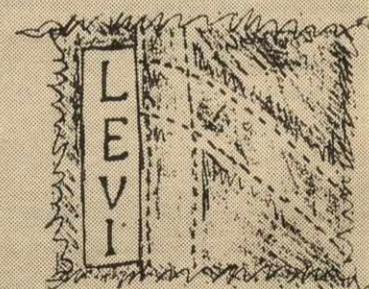
Jeans pose

by Juanita Smith

On Friday, January 19th, the Dalhousie Student Union Building lobby and balcony were packed as students crammed in to see the Levi's 501 Fashion Show. Models, Dal students themselves, strutted their stuff in 501s and Levi's paraphernalia in a show that was not only a promotion for the Levi Strauss Corporation, but was also a charity event for the Metro Food Bank. When the event was over, a quantity of food had been gathered, a number of cheques has been received from the show's sponsors in support of the food operation, and for the second time a team from Dalhousie had taken part in the "501 University Campus challenge".

The Challenge was taken up last term by Leslie Pearson and five other Commerce students as an experience in the promotional aspect of business as well as a competition. They fixed and submitted a promotional package proposal to the Levi Strauss Corporation, and were chosen as one of ten teams from across Canada vying to best promote Levi's and win a cash award and a trip to Toronto to meet with a senior executive of the company. They received such promotional devices as jeans, T-shirts, and a budget to use however they pleased, in order to reach a market from ages seventeen to twenty-four. The only requirement in the package was that their strategy included a fashion show, such as the one staged on Friday.

While the show was a success from the audience's point of view, it served other purposes besides showing off denim. Not only did the Food Bank benefit in cash, foodstuffs, and attention, the project generated interest in Dalhousie as a campus itself, especially coming as it did during Winter Carnival. Part of the purpose behind taking part in the Challenge was to represent Dal nationally and give it a bit of positive publicity and spirit, and the team hopes that they have accomplished this as well as their original aim in promoting Levi's.



But the battle isn't over yet. A dance at Queen Elizabeth High School will prominently feature Levi's jeans and prizes, and the team is planning to bombard Levi Strauss employees with Valentine's cards in February. In addition, another fashion show, this time at the Bayer's Road Shopping Centre, is planned for the near future and will bring a lot of attention to the Food Bank, their product, and themselves. Whatever the outcome of the challenge, the Dal team seems to have their act together and know how they want to reach their goal.