

SPECTRUM

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LEGALEASE

ALCOHOL AND DRUG DEPENDENCY

by James Gill

A couple of weeks ago I heard a fascinating statistic: alcohol related falls are a higher cause of death among young people aged sixteen through twenty-four than alcohol related car accidents. What this seems to indicate is that we have become more responsible when it comes to drinking and driving, but not when it comes to drinking.

When I began writing this column I did so with the desire not only to present gay and lesbian issues, but more importantly, to present lesbian and gay perspectives on social issues. I am not entirely happy with the term "gay and lesbian issues" because an implication can be read in to say that heterosexuals need not be concerned with these issues. The issues we raise are social issues. While we have the principle responsibility of persuading them, everyone must be concerned. Certainly no one would assert that a white South African has no business protesting Apartheid. By precisely the same logic, heterosexuals should be supporting our struggle for equality rights, and men should be supporting the struggle for women's rights.

So what has this to do with substance abuse? Not much, on the face of it, however, I raise the issue to explore whether the issue is any different in the lesbian and gay community. On the whole, I think not. I am the first to admit that to argue on the one hand that we are essentially no different from everyone else, and on the other that we are affected differently by alcohol and drug dependency is generally inconsistent.

I believe that gay men and lesbians face a host of additional social problems during adolescence. I do not believe that the effects from this are always negative, and in any event I do not think that they contribute to any higher rate of alcoholism or drug abuse. Indeed, I have known some gay men who have had serious emotional problems who had no problem with an alcohol dependency.

One issue which has come to my attention concerns Alcoholics Anonymous programs. Those programs have, among their focuses, spirituality. This is not to say that there is anything religious about the program, in fact it is quite the opposite, however, I know of several lesbians and gay men who have had great difficulty with this aspect of the program.

I think that this stems from the manner in which they have come to deal with religion. There is no question that gay men and lesbians face tremendous crises when trying to reconcile their religious beliefs with their sexuality. Many abandon organized religion, and some, in so doing, abandon any spiritual notions. I do not think that this problem is peculiarly to lesbians and gay men, however, among us it may be wider spread.

Another difficulty for gay men and lesbians in these programs is simply the problem of dealing with personal issues in an environment which is perceived to be heterosexually dominated. Many gay men and lesbians are not comfortable dealing with issues which they perceive to be connected with their sexuality in an atmosphere where they are not sure that their sexuality will be understood or accepted.

Some programs, like Gay A.A. and N.E.W.S. (New Women in Sobriety) have arisen to deal with the particular difficulties which gay men and lesbians have felt in established programs. These are generally found only in large centres, though.

Of course there is the other side of the coin. I know well adjusted gay men who are comfortable in their sexuality, hold about religious beliefs, and gain tremendous strength from programs like A.A. In the end, I think I am right in my suspicion that substance abuse in the lesbian and gay community is no different than in the community at large.

We must be conscious, though, that on every social issue there are perspectives not only from the gay and lesbian community, but also from women, racial minorities, and other groups. At the same time, the issues raised by all of these groups are, in the end, social issues with which we must all be concerned.

Next GALA Meeting: Tuesday, November 7, at 8:00 p.m. in Room 203 of the SUB (across from the Ballroom).

LANDLORD AND TENANT - NOTICE REQUIREMENTS

Under the provisions of the Residential Tenancies Act, both landlords and tenants must observe specific notice requirements in a number of situations. These requirements help to ensure that both you as a tenant and your landlord are treated fairly and have adequate time to adjust to changes in your landlord/tenant relationship.

Rent Increases

Can my rent be increased without prior notice?

No, as a tenant, you are entitled to reasonable notice of any rent increase. If you are under a month to month or a week to week tenancy, your landlord must provide you with a minimum of

two months notice. If your tenancy is year to year, or if your tenancy is for a fixed term and your landlord has the right to increase the rent, three months notice are required.

What if I no longer want to keep the apartment?

As tenant, you have the option of treating a notice of an increase in rent as a notice of termination. In other words, you may choose to vacate your apartment rather than pay higher rent. If this is the case, your landlord is entitled to a written notice one month prior to the day preceding the date of increase. If you tenancy is week to week, you need only give notice one week in advance.

Does my landlord have the right to enter my apartment?

A landlord does have the right to enter rental premises provide that certain notice requirements are respected. If you landlord wishes to carry out normal repairs or wishes to redecorate you must receive seven day notice. If your landlord wishes to inspect the premises or wishes to show the premises to prospective purchasers, you must receive twenty-four hours notice. In the case of showing the premises to a prospective tenant you landlord may enter without notice during the final rent period if provided for in the lease.

Unless you consent, your landlord may only enter your premises between the hours of eight o'clock in the morning and eight o'clock in the evening. Entry is to be on a day other than Sunday or a holiday. In the event of an emergency, if you have abandoned the premises, your landlord is not required to provide any notice.

TERMINATION OF LEASE

How much warning will I receive if my lease is to be terminated?

In order to terminate a month to month lease, one month notice must be given. Three months required to terminate a year to year lease, and one week for week to week notice. A fixed term lease ends automatically at the end of the stated term.

REACHING A TERM OF THE LEASE

What happens if I am late with rent payment?

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"STRANGERS BENEATH US"

by David S. Gorham

At present the Province of New Brunswick is undergoing what is apparently an expression of anger, resentment and sometimes open hatred surrounding the policy of official bilingualism. What often seems to inform the anti-bilingualism side of this "debate" is often conjecture, mistake or distortion of fact, and sometimes simple prejudice.

A part of this animosity and frightening degree of resentment is possibly the existence of a scapegoat syndrome. Those within conditions of poverty, unemployment or even the broader context of maritime regional alienation may seek someone above (eg: the government) to blame, or it may seek someone below. The partial evidence for the existence of that scapegoat syndrome may well be the frequent and dogmatic assertion that bilingualism and its attendant fiscal costs will be the ruin of us all. The anti-bilingualism camp often seems to suggest that the root of our regional disparity or economic distress is the policy of official

bilingualism. This assertion is clearly a distortion. The reasons for regional disparity are much more complex than any fiscal action of the Provincial Government. Without even bothering to debate the cost of bilingualism, it is obvious that such a simple answer is at its worst false, at its best woefully deficient.

The pattern of searching out "strangers beneath us" is as common as the search for simple answers to complex problems. Often, the ideology of movements or philosophies utilizing scapegoats simultaneously elevates and denigrates the subject of anger or ideology. The Jews were elevated as the masterminds of a vast conspiracy and yet were

also viewed as somehow subhuman, inferior. The patterns of prejudice involve senior citizens, the mentally challenged or the immigrant. In the U.K., the object of prejudice is often West Indian. In Canada, it is more likely to be the native Canadian; one need only witness the disclosures of the Manitoba Justice Inquiry concerning murder of Helen Betty Osbourne.

The functioning of prejudice is frequently a matter of hierarchy. Blacks in the American south were often despised by the poorest whites. The illusion that they were better than the blacks improved self-image and social status. Such functional applications of prejudice are not always the result of heinous political doctrines. More often they are something with which we all must grapple. When we discover our own prejudices we help to broaden our own narrow vision.

Hierarchies of prejudice can only be cracked by the widespread realization of the spiritual worth of all persons. Even the mentally challenged have a gift to give us, and implicit pedagogy of innocence. Senior citizens offer an experience which is of the most valuable quality, the personal record of human trial and triumph. This recognition of the inherent value of all life opposes

that most dangerous tendency in us all: the urge to judge. Through judgement we affirm our own superiority and value. Rather than grant that value we might see in others, we instead often tend to appropriate extra value to our own personal or collective cultural ego.

When we return to the present situation in New Brunswick, we witness an interesting denial of value in another culture. The anti-bilingual atmosphere is often filled with earnest disclaimers which declare an opposition to a policy, not a people. The supporters of the anti-bilingual side are quick to say they are not anti-French. The problem with such disclaimers is that they exclude the fact of language as the cornerstone of the Acadian culture or of any living culture. To suggest that bilingualism is not crucial to preventing assimilation is absurd. Without the opportunity to exist amongst the majority of English speakers using their own language, the only alternative is assimilation for French speakers.

This analysis is a difficult one to make. It risks labelling people as bigots, racists, ideologues or malcontents. No doubt some people are deeply prejudiced, but there is more often varying shades of grey

which defy such narrow description. Those discontented with an out model or antiquate political system, those disturbed by the system's unresponsiveness to local community or regional needs. Government is an attempt to find a collective framework for something which is incredibly difficult to rationalize: the human experience. Authority may be delegated in a democracy but it should never be alienated.

If one accepts that hierarchy is inevitable in society, then one accepts that prejudice is acceptable. This clearly unconscionable for those concerned that justice be done. As important as recognizing prejudice is to build dialogue with those with whom we disagree. We require open and honest debate in New Brunswick absent of malice and dogma. What we require more than anything is to become more human and elevate those strangers beneath us, to elevate them to the point where we do not equate them, but rather to a point where we respect them.

