

SPECTRUM

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A new "killing field?"

For most work is a natural part of life. That's not so surprising. Obvious economic demands dictate the necessity for work. And thus, for the lucky ones, work pays the bills and (sometimes) affords a few luxuries.

Most Canadians have been brought up with some variation of the (Protestant?) work ethic. Our whole week rotates around work. No doubt we look forward to Friday, but Monday morning returns most of us to our work stations, enthused or otherwise.

Apart from obvious economic necessities, why do we work? And, if the statistics are correct why are we beginning to work longer days? Most assume that labour was all-consuming in generations past. We, however, were to become more leisure, and technology was to assist us in reducing our work (week). But increasing the opposite is happening.

According to Karen Liberman, a Toronto consultant for Families that Work, "the biggest myth that was ever foisted on all of us was how technology would set us free." It hasn't. In fact, we have become enslaved to it.

Communication has become all-important. So great is the fear that a lost call or conversation is a lost (business?) opportunity, that we put telephones in our cars and on our belts. Answering machines cover for us when we are out, and computer modems and fax machines willingly receive messages throughout the night.

Has such technological gadgetry reduced the work week? Hardly. Upper management positions are seldom limited to a 40 hour work week. Sixty, even seventy hours are frequently expected. Current Day Time planners can record appointments from seven in the morning right through until nine in the evening. Our Premier prides himself in working a 16 hour day (is that 5 or 7 days a week?)

Hard work has always been valued in this country. Nonetheless, there must be a limit to all good things. Excess in any one area brings with it a cost. While the paycheck or profile may increase, other things inevitably suffer. What might these be?

Much is made today of comparing our educational system to that of the Japanese. Some Canadians feel we are no longer internationally competitive. Our schools, the reasoning goes, do not produce sufficiently

skilled graduates. And so our educational system begins to take directives from the market place.

Not widely discussed or known is a new phenomenon emerging in Japan. It is called *karoshi* - death from overwork. According to a recent Globe and Mail article, as many as 10,000 Japanese fall victim (die) to overwork annually. These victims include men in their early 40's.

I know of no one in Canada who has fallen victim to *Karoshi*. But that is not really the main issue. What is of concern, however, is the effects of distorted work.

METANOIA with John Valk

What is distorted work? Workaholism for one. It makes work the essence of all things. Work becomes an idol. Once one makes an idol of something in this world, it begins to shape them. It twists and distorts the truth and leaves a path of destruction. All things are sacrificed for it: relationships, families, children.

Work, and the monetary rewards it brings, frequently

encroaches on the time and energy reserved or required for other activities. I think particularly of marriages and families. But, students sometimes also fall victim. Economic necessities notwithstanding, when greater value is placed on prosperity rather than knowledge, students spend greater amounts of time working for money than for their studies. They pursue good grades rather than good learning.

What is killed here is the spirit of being human. The pursuit of work for money and prestige becomes distorted. Ought we (and especially men) not work as much and as hard on our marriages, families and relationships as we do at our work

stations, perhaps even more.

Surely then employers and employees must be sensitive and flexible in juggling work station with family. Where single mothers and fathers with children are forced to work quality day care ought to factor into the contract. Where both parents work flex hours or flex days would be a better alternative than full time day care and latch-key children.

Healthy marriages, loving families and well adjusted children bring greater and lasting value and meaning than large bank accounts, company loyalty and impressive credentials. Perhaps we ought to redirect some of our time, learning and curriculum to these areas.

Outing in reverse

Let's scrap the term "pink" from the leader of this column for this week, and let's replace it with the term "yellow". This week's column is dedicated to the men and women of the "yellow press", the supermarket tabloids, the heirs of William Randolph Hearst and all who make their living dedging the public gutter.

Bear with me for a moment while I share a secret of monumental significance - the Earth may well shake, and you would be well advised to sit down for the duration. What do Frank McKenna, Elizabeth Weir, Arch Pafford, Denis Cochrane, Brad Woodside, Brian Mulroney, Joe Clark, George Bush and John Major have in common? (Hushed whisper!) They are ALL flagrant heterosexuals!! (. . . to the best of my knowledge).

I did warn you! This is knee-trembling stuff, and I claim my Pulitzer Prize now . . . Woodward and Bernstein, eat your hearts out! Seriously though folks, I have just "outed" a number of public figures, in the sense that I have placed their sexuality in the public record. In doing so, I have not invaded their privacy in the least - and somehow I doubt the "National Enquirer" or "Weekly World News" are going to offer this column syndication rights anytime soon.

If I had stated that any of the above were having affairs with

POSITIVELY PINK with Adrian Park

Ms. X or Mr. Y, on the other hand or that such an affair involved whips, chains, and the imaginative employment of jello . . . well, they would have every cause to sue me for my last cent and beyond. I would have grossly and unjustifiably invaded their privacy, threatened their good standing, and probably placed their careers and livelihoods in jeopardy.

Back to reality. You and I, and anyone who has not been on Pluto for the last 12 months, know full well what "outing" is. It has nothing whatever to do with heterosexuals, and in fact, very little to do with privacy. It has everything to do with hypocrisy.

Why should militant and flagrant homophobes, like the late Roy Cohn, or the equally late J. Edgar Hoover, enjoy active homosexual private lives in peace, while building their careers on, amongst other things, the enthusiastic persecution of gay men and lesbians? They no more warrant immunity than any politician involved in a conflict of interest, or an inveterate wife-beater who spouts pious chant about violence against women.

In those sections of the gay press opposed to the practice, and in the wider liberal media, "outing" has been described as being the equivalent of "throwing people to the wolves." Perhaps those same organs, and their writers, might like to focus their attention on the identity and motivation of those same wolves.

Personally, I find it difficult to justify "outing" on the grounds offered in much of the gay press - namely, that by "outing" public figures role models are provided. It smacks too much of the ends justifying the means. But do not confuse that reticence with the "defense of privacy" shields. That someone should choose to publicly identify themselves as gay or lesbians is, of course, a personal matter. It is a statement of their sexual identity that no more flaunts their private lives than does Brian Mulroney's public appearances in the presence of Mila and the kids. "Coming out" is only a flagrant display of sexuality in the sense that it is unapologetic.

And there is the crux. "outing" can only be harmful to its subject when a society - or

influential segments of it - consider homosexuality a cause for shame and guilt. That same shame and guilt that have been "bread and butter" to the "yellow press" for much of this century. Fortunes have been made on it. The ultimate hypocrisy being that this self-same "yellow press" now leads the howling pack condemning "outing". Perhaps they fear the competition. So here goes.

Stay tuned to this column for further startling revelations. Next week: "The NB MLA's who are actually space aliens - pictures!" and "Elvis speaks to UNB Senate - from Neptune."

The
Brunswickan
holds weekly
staff meeting
on Friday
afternoons at
12:30 pm.
Anyone can
attend. We
welcome
your help
and
participation.