

SPECTRUM

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What does it mean to be a man?

What does it mean to be a man? That question is being asked frequently today. Not only books but also weekends, workshops, retreats and gatherings specifically for men are proliferating. Men are huddling together, asking themselves what is wrong, what has gone wrong, and where has it gone wrong.

What many see, in themselves or in other men, is violence, aggression, abuse, suppressed emotion, alcoholism - the list goes on. They see that it is men who in far greater proportions fill to overflowing the prisons in this and other Western countries. It is men who abandon their partners and children. It is men who devastate wildlife, the environment, and each other. They see men out of touch with their inner selves.

Of course, not all men are like this. We should be clear on that point. Countless numbers have developed their inner self, and express it in meaningful, stable and creative ways. Furthermore, these men may also not be the "mutated He-Man become Soft-Man, the Sensitive New Age Guy", which Robert Bly feels is "nothing more than a man determined to turn himself into a woman.

Yet there are also others who, though not destructive, abusive or alcoholic, still bear much unresolved inner pain and conflict. Much of this is ironic. We are a society where material abundance proliferates and individual freedom is at a level previously unknown in the history of the West. Yet, as Ian Brown recorded some men saying, "our lives suck. We're middle-class men, supposedly the envy of the world - so why does it not feel good?" There is pain at the centre.

An assortment of books attempt at explanations for men's behavior. Robert Bly (*Iron John*) asserts that the Industrial Revolution separated families and dispensed men to the factories. Sons were, and in many cases still are, raised solely by women. As a result, boys lost close physical contact with fathers. Separated from male-father figures their transition from boyhood to manhood became confused. Hostility, aggression, alcohol and unfeeling filled the centre and suppressed the pain.

Guy Corneau (*Absent Fathers, Lost Sons*) feels that boys replace their absent fathers with cultural stereotypes - Rambo, gang membership, soft male or hard father. Sons need fathers, and mothers, no matter how hard they try, cannot replace an absent father.

According to Sam Keen (*Fire in the Belly*) sex is the big thing for

men. But it is frequently sex divorced from much feeling, responsibility and communication. "Scoring", even casual sex, is a superficial way of relating to women, devoid of love, commitment or concern. Physical intimacy replaces emotional intimacy, the latter which in some men remains forever underdeveloped.

Communication and relationship building are difficult for many men. Alienation, abuse, mistrust suffered at the hands of a physically if not emotionally absent father result, and can linger a lifetime. It can also perpetuate, from one generation to the next. It can further result in what some today characterize as our only rite of passage for a teenager: "the day he realizes that his father is a jerk."

We are coming to realize, however, that no son is satisfied with such an attitude. Sons do have genuine feelings for their fathers, whatever they may be. And sometimes a mid-life crisis re-awakens the deeply hidden and unresolved pain. A broken relationship with

one's father begins to eat away not only at the physical self (ulcers) but also at the inner soul.

Lack of communication with one's own son(s) may create similar haunting pain. Add to that an inability to share deep pain or unresolved hurt with a spouse, because that was assumed not to be manly, and marital breakdown also occurs. The final assault may come from a growing sense of meaninglessness characterizing one's own job, career or position, brought on by its alienation from, or destruction of, nature or other humans.

Do our cultural emphases play key roles? We tend to measure the worth of a man by what he has, not what he is. We educate boys to perform tasks, make money, attain power. But do we educate them to become real people? We spend the bulk of our time selecting, buying, fixing and paying for consumer items. But research tells us fathers on average spend only 10 minutes a day relating to their most precious gifts - their children. We develop tremendous skills at relat-

Mexican free trade

Business writer Peter Morton, writing in the May 27th, 1991 edition of *The Financial Post*, reported frankly on the Mexico-Canada-U.S. trade talks from the Post's Ottawa bureau. The different views offered by the Canadian and U.S. head representatives are an instructive lesson, showing us that states do not, contrary to popular media headlines, have friends, they have interests. Wilson said he believed culture was not on the blackjack table in the casino of international deal-making. U.S. Trade Representative Carla Hills (can you stand the suspense mate?) thought culture was on the table. Sorry Annie of Green Gables - you gotta sell the homestead and maybe the whole damn Island. What about the Auto Pact? Wilson said it was non-negotiable, Hills said of course it's on there. One quickly begins to sense a pattern developing in Morton's portrayal of these trade talks. For the United States "everything is on the table." And what about the Mexican-U.S. two step at the Old Trade Hoedown? Well the Mexican trade minister Jaime Serra has previously declared that Mexico's 'energy industry wasn't up for grabs'. In Morton's frank estimate of U.S. motive and purpose, "the U.S. doesn't want to actually develop Mexico's resources; it just wants priority access to Mexico's oil exports." the

fact of U.S. concern about "security of supply" for oil was well highlighted by the Gulf War and concern about the disposition of Kuwaiti sovereignty. Morton rightly pointed to an important partial motivation behind the American administration's eagerness to ink a new Mexican trade deal: The desire "to see more secure sources of foreign oil closer to home." Mexican oil as Morton depicted it, is a dream come true for the industrialized economies to its north. The oil is "light crude in easy to find places close to key U.S. markets." The further factor to be considered is that "Mexico's production could be improved dramatically if modern equipment from Canada and the U.S. were used more extensively to extract oil."

The Bush administration looks at Canada for different benefits. The Reaganauts let some items slide in the Mulroney-Reagan Trade Deal concerning culture. "Access to Canada's protected film, television and publishing industries is a key one." According to Morton, the protection of Canada's cultural industries has long been a thorn in the side of the U.S. government, since Canada protects "ownership and distribution of these industries, especially when Canadian entertainment is dominated by American-sourced

Metanoia by John Valk

ing to things. But many men never learn, or are never taught, to relate meaningfully to others, even those closest to them.

And now men are paying the price. No doubt we thought we would avoid the cost. But we ignored or abused the "prophets" in favour of other "profits". That is why it is so disheartening to hear that our school system needs to become even more science, computer, math and business oriented.

However, the women's movement (minus its radical wing which really encourages more of the same) and

now the men's movement are hopeful signs that re-orientations are taking place. But the pain at the centre needs to be filled with more

than earth goddesses, primal screams, warriors and men weeping on each other's shoulders.

Perhaps the men's movement will discover the one historical figure whose approach to men's problems was not only most profound, but also most creative. He displayed confidence and self-assertion. He was inner focused, but not self-centred. He gave away his power. Though not without his own pain and turmoil, he was nonetheless firmly at one with his Father, the ground of his being.

On Friday afternoon's at 3:30 p.m. some university men are gathering to discuss male gender issues. All men are welcome at Monte Peters' Residence, Apt. 2, Bridges House.

The Global Eye by David Gorham

products." Other items in the crosshairs of Carla Hills include imports of autos from Canada made in Canada by Japanese and Korean owned plants, "Canada's generic drug laws" which offer Canadians no-name drugs at lower cost and things like Canadian pork (no, not construction in Baie Comeau of the Brian Mulroney Appreciation museum) and lumber, to name a few. Peter Morton states the reality succinctly when he outlines the reality of the North American market: "But the reality remains that a North American free trade agreement isn't one market of 360 million. It's two markets totalling about 110 million, trying to sell to one rich market of 250 million. That means the cards favour the U.S. negotiators."

In Morton's final assessment,

he had some truth: "The Mulroney government is going into these talks largely to protect Canada's special access to the U.S. market. To do that, it shouldn't be surprising if there is a price to pay." Morton's assessment of the Mulroney government's commitment to protecting anything which remains in the tattered sheet of Canadian sovereignty is extremely dubious if not non-existent, given the raw deal they gave us in the last big roll of the dice. The so called 'special access' we have into the U.S. market is also very questionable in its effective reality, given the bad deal signed before. The truth in Morton's conclusion is the fact that there will probably be a new price to pay this time round the rosebush. A very costly price for Canadians and Mexicans.

Take a deep breath. Smell the stench? Why, I think it's Spring! Sometimes a foul odour can be a wonderful thing.

Tennessee Lewis