

SPECTRUM

Metanoia by John Valk

Venturing Forth

The University of New Brunswick has initiated a **Venture Campaign**. In charting a course for tomorrow—planning for the future—it is requesting public financial support: the university depends on partnerships. The Chancellor, Chair and President of the campaign all proclaim that opportunities for progress abound, and, as the Premier of New Brunswick has asserted, the university is well placed to offer innovative solutions to the complex issues facing us, both today and in the future.

One might ask what those complex issues facing us are, which demand such vast support and partnership. One might even ask who it is that defines those issues. These questions are not as obvious as they might seem.

When one examines the glossy **Venture Campaign** brochure a certain picture emerges. The matter of jobs, entrepreneurship, research, and technology dominate. No doubt these are important, both to the present and future of this province. But are they the only ones, and are others of such lesser significance that the university can well afford to ignore them?

No doubt certain choices have to be made. But what criteria is used to make such choices? Further, what are the assumptions and values underlying those choices? Were all sectors of the New Brunswick community consulted in establishing the criteria? Were, for example, spiritual as well as business leaders involved in defining the complex issues of tomorrow? The former as well as the latter may be in good position to advise on a course of action which will shape the university as it heads into the future.

Are the views of the former on value, dignity and meaning in human life not also important?

The brochures depict confident students and faculty engaged in research using computer and lab equipment; interaction with technology to seek answers through endless information. In fact, securing the "information highway" is deemed a pressing need. Few photographs depict people pondering and asking the meaning of it all. Where in all the information we seek do we pause to ask of its meaning? There appears to be an unquestioned assumption that it is meaningful.

Outside the university, confidence in entrepreneurship, detailed research, endless information and innovative technology to solve our human problems is not so clear. Douglas Hall, president of St. Paul's United College in the University of Waterloo, points out that there we are confronted not with confidence, but with instability, fear and apprehension on virtually every front. In fact, we have difficulty believing in ourselves. Western civilisation, sold on its scientific, technological and industrial pursuits, is now registering a failure of confidence and of nerve; a failure to follow through on what was promised.

Western humanity is saddled with high suicide among its young, violence in the larger centres, rudeness in public discourse, and diversion into consumer and television addiction. In addition, Hall states, "human-kind at the end of what was supposed to have been the

"Christian Century" does not seem to have a very high opinion of itself. Ironically enough, its *low* self-esteem seems most pronounced amongst the nations and peoples with the highest "standards of living."

This is perplexing. When we have it all, it appears that we do not have it all. Accord-

ing to Hall, "the great rug of purpose (*telos*)—the teleological rug—has been pulled out from underneath our feet." Meaning and purpose is not as clear as some might assume. Perhaps the most complex issues facing us as the 21st Century approaches are those of an ever growing meaninglessness, despair and cynicism (even nihilism), especially among the young.

These issues are matters of the spirit. They cannot be satisfied with endless information, increased consumer options, or innovative computer technology, as important as these may be in providing employment and opportunities for people. Optimism or pessimism comes from the human soul. It is there that we find answers to ultimate questions: what am I doing in all this activity and noise; where am I going; who am I? T. S. Eliot framed these in a manner hopefully not lost on members of the **Venture Campaign**.

Endless invention, endless experiment, Brings knowledge of motion, but not of stillness; Knowledge of speech, but not of silence; Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word. ...

Where is the Life we have lost in living? Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?

Christina Sabat, in her "Visual Arts" column in the *Gleaner*, expressed disappointment that Fine Arts received such little mention in the campaign. Might one express disappointment that Religious Studies received no mention?

Religious Studies appears to be outside the purview of UNB. But should it be? Should questions about meaning and purpose—in career, research selection, grant

Venture Forth:

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Pride, a Deeper Love... by J.

Politico

The politics are dancing, and they seem to be dancing to the tune of those who are opposed to homosexual/bisexual rights and issues. It is no surprise that at this time, part of being gay, lesbian or bisexual is a politically motivated. This century has seen an increased awareness of homosexual and bisexual lives and issues, nudging the social order to an understanding of what it really means to be a gay businessman, a lesbian mother, or a bisexual spokesperson for an organization, just to name a few examples. One of the largest areas of gay, lesbian and bisexual information concentration, is in the political sphere. Politics provides the power and means of imparting certain social niceties that we, as citizens, sometimes take for granted. It is the vehicle of law, regulations, ideas and propositions that enable us to function as a society. As such, it is the perfect vehicle for the transmission of actual information regarding the lives of Canada's homosexual and bisexual population.

It is also, without a doubt, the perfect place for opposition; after all, there must be a balance within the political structure. Politics, as within other social institutions such as economics, family and education, has its supporters, opposers and those who maintain a neutral stance with regards to issues concerning homosexuality and bisexuality. In Canada, the advent of the political movement towards homosexual and bisexual issues, began in 1977, when the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms prohibited discrimination based on sexual orientation. The remaining provinces and territories at this time, were recommending the inclusion of sexual orientation into their respective provincial legislations, but then, as now, these attempts at equality were defeated, even though a Gallup poll conducted by the Canadian Institute of Public Opinion in 1977, proposed that 52% of Canadians stated that gay rights should be protected. This was further supported in a survey performed by Reginald Bibby, a Lethbridge Sociology professor, in which roughly 67% of those polled thought that "homosexuals should have the same rights as heterosexuals..."

This year, the politics were dancing indeed, when Ontario's NDP government proposed a bill that would have guaranteed the rights of homosexuals and bisexuals in terms of spousal benefits and adoption. Named Bill 167, the proposals would have provided same-sex couples with the same pension and employment benefits, and

equal chances at child adoption as heterosexual couples. Many companies and industries already provide spousal benefits for same-sex couples, and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms appear to be heading in that direction. As for the adoption section of the bill, the main gist of the section focused on the legal standing of a person in a same-sex relationship, who has a partner who is a biological/custodial parent of a child/children. The response to the bill was staggering. The government was not the only group to support or oppose Bill 167; the Roman Catholic church of Toronto also stepped in with their opposition to the bill, while other Roman Catholic churches in Ontario placed their support. Thousands of supporters and opposers marched in parades, spoke for or against the bill, and supplied information and "evidence" in

terms of their respective stances on this issue. However, the bill was defeated in the second reading of the Ontario government, meaning that the bill's principle was unacceptable to them. Of course, the reaction to this, was a sense of outrage and disbelief, given the support of some of the members, such as Attorney-General Marion Boyd and Liberal Opposition Leader Lynn McLeod, who then did an about-face and reject Bill 167.

This has not stopped the push for equal rights for homosexuals and bisexuals in Canada. For example, the Nova Scotia government proposed a bill (Bill C-41) that would "increase penalties to people charged with propagating hatred toward certain groups...", homosexuals and bisexuals being one of those groups. Yet, Liberal MP Roseanne Skoke, vehemently opposed the bill, stating that homosexuality was "immoral, unnatural and a threat to the family." The comment, according to Skoke, was in defence of the family; still, comments such as hers, tend to propagate and condone the bigotry and discrimination that many gay, lesbian and bisexual Canadians feel in society. In short, statements of this sort, promote the hatred that the Nova Scotia bill is opposing!

Those who support homosexual and bisexual rights and issues, have remained steadfast and true to the issues at hand. British Columbian NDP MP, Svend Robinson, has been one of our staunchest supporters in the constant fight for equal rights, alongside Bloc Québécois MP Rhéal Ménard from Quebec and NDP leader Elizabeth Weir in New Brunswick. These politicians, along with our friends, families, associates and other supporters, have made it possible for the homosexual and bisexual movement to gain greater visibility and a voice in Canada. One of the comments made by Svend Robinson from the news article in today's issue is important; those who oppose and make known their views towards homosexuality and bisexuality, have generated debate and much discussion concerning these issues. At least now we're out of the closet, so to speak.

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The Pigeon's Right Wing

by James Kierstead

Dominating the headlines over the last couple of years have been the problems plaguing our medical system. With a constant stream of bed closures (recently a whole hospital was closed down for a whole week except for emergency services) all of New Brunswick is asking why this is happening.

Regardless of how you feel about Premier McKenna, he is certainly no fool. These kinds of measures cost him politically, so there must be a damn good reason for doing them.

The answer is as near as the annual deficit and the mountain of provincial debt. This year the McKenna administration will incur a 131.5 million dollar deficit adding to our existing 3.9 billion dollar debt.

The government is under pressure to balance its budget and start paying down its debt (for several reasons outlined in a previous article). Many will say that they agree with the objectives, but want to leave Medicare untouched because it's a 'sacred-trust'.

The simple fact of the matter, is that there is no way healthcare can remain untouched and still balance the budget. Medicare represents 25% of the provincial budget or 1.2 billion dollars. This is the single largest expenditure made by the government (interest payments on the debt is number two and closing).

By now it should be clear that healthcare reform is crucial to balancing the budget.

Many feel that there are other measures that can be taken other than closing hospitals and rationing service (last month the Fraser Institute released a study showing that New Brunswick has the longest waiting lists for treatment in the country).

It is often said that our system of universal coverage helps to keep cost down. Approximately 9.5% of GDP in Canada is spent on healthcare whereas in the United States they spend 13.5% of GDP (never mind the fact that Americans have access to the best and most advanced medicine in the world). However only 6% of GDP is spent in Great Britain and they have a system of coverage comparable to ours, if not superior. A closer look would reveal a more efficient administration.

Recently, the McKenna government has revealed plans to privatize certain aspects

Healthcare Reform

of a tiered system that would develop. The simple fact of the matter is that anyone who can afford the services of a private clinic can also afford to travel to the United States to receive private medical treatment. Obviously a two-tiered system is in place now.

The beauty of such a system is that it relieves some of the strain on the public health system, reducing waiting time for other residents. This will also improve the labour market for healthcare workers, many of which must go to the States to find employment at this time.

This approach is used in Britain, which with other measures (the use of inter-hospital competition, via per-person funding rather than block funding) keep their cost down and quality up. This system is also being tried in Alberta with good results.

Another concept often suggested is the imposition of user fees which would entail, say a 5% (of total cost) charge on medical services rendered to a maximum of \$100 and exempting all those holding healthcards (issued to welfare recipients). There would probably be little revenue generated by such a system, however it will make the consumer more cost-conscious and less likely to go to the doctor for every headache or sniffle. This system has the potential to generate plenty of savings.

Regardless of the measures used it is important to get more bang for our healthcare dollars, not only to eliminate our deficit and debt, but to keep taxes low, so we can have more money in our pockets.

of the Medicare system. This will hold down cost without affecting the availability of service.

A concept being strongly advocated is the establishment of private clinics to operate alongside our public ones. Many left leaning lunatics (who believe governments pull their money from the sky) oppose this option because of the supposed two-

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