

# Spectrum

## METANOIA

BY JOHN VALK

## Seekers and doubters

An article in last week's *Globe and Mail* caught my attention. It highlighted certain findings in a recent UNICEF report. Its findings about suicide, homicides and child poverty rates in the "advanced" countries of the world is rather alarming.

In 11 of the 14 industrialized countries, suicide rates among youth (15-24 years of age) increased in the past two decades. Canada ranks third highest. Homicides rates in the same age category is high in the United States, but low in Canada. Child poverty rates in three industrial nations, including Canada, is about 10%. In the United States it stands at about 20%. Canada rates first in enrollment in higher education, with 60% of people up to 24 years of age taking some form of higher education. Its assistance to basic education in developing countries, however, is dismal.

This information was contained in the report *The Progress of Nations*. The title though is somewhat ironic. The figures above indicate serious weak points. Richard Reid, UNICEF's director of public affairs, concluded: "All of the industrial countries need to pull up their socks in meeting human needs".

No doubt the industrialized nations, Canada included, have advanced tremendously in certain areas, as the report makes clear. But industrial development and human development do not necessarily go hand in hand. The report states that in some respects poorer countries are doing much better than the rich ones, especially in regard to their children.

The report did not speculate why child poverty, for example, exists at all in the wealthiest of the world's nations, But Reid did. He laid some of the blame on "adult ego and selfishness". Governments alone are not to blame, he said. Responsibility "goes right down to the level of society. If people don't give a damn, it's hard to do anything about it."

These last statements, though nothing new, continue to haunt. We in the rich countries have so much, yet we have so little. We can offer so much, yet we give so little.

Are the ideals we have pursued turning out to be illusive? Are the dreams of economic prosperity, industrial advancement and individual freedom to be realized at too high of a human price? Can they even be achieved for all people?

Cynicism has set in. Governments are mistrusted, and many are disillusioned. For some suicide becomes a drastic alternative. The statistics are clearly alarming. So much for progress.

The industrialized world is burdened by large deficits. But is it economic bankruptcy that is so threatening, or is it spiritual impoverishment. In seeking some meaning and purpose in life have we pursued false gods?

Not many will readily admit such. Some may not even know what this means. Our conscience is so easily numbed, even duped by media and slick advertising. Material quantity and relative truth so easily replace spiritual quality and universal principles.

Material comforts and industrial advancements do not, however, give rest to the soul, or even the body necessarily. So we remain seekers. And much of our seeking is for genuine human relationships and authentic meaning in life, none of which can be achieved apart from God.

It has been said that the major regret uttered by those on their death beds was not that they failed during their lifetime to purchase this or that shiny new car, or make this or that financial investment. Their regret was that they failed to invest sufficiently in people, especially their children.

In a society overcome by economic concern, material gain and individual pursuits, we quickly lose opportunities to

reflect on the deeper meaning of life.

At one time the churches were the focal points for such discussions and, in spite of their warts, provided some solid answers. In a society eroded by secularism, religion has become privatized, even discredited. So many come to doubt that traditional religion, or religion at all, has any answers, or even relevant questions.

And so we have a situation of seekers and doubters. That in itself is not so bad. We need to be seekers, in order to make meaning in our lives. We also need to be doubters, in order not to be swallowed up by every fanciful thought or idea that come our way.

What is often lacking on campus is an environment where we can nurture our seeking and

express our doubting. It must be a context where neither professors, parents, peers, grades or jobs are threatened by what is asked. On Wednesday afternoons at around 3:00 o'clock Campus Ministry is providing an informal environment (complete with coffee and cookies) for both "seekers and doubters". At Monte Peters' residence, Apartment Two, Bridges House. For more information call 459-5962.

## WIMMIN'S ROOM

BY LIZ LAUTARD

## Empowerment

Women Unite: Take Back the Night! Not the Church! Not the State! Women must control their fate! What do we want? Safety! When do we want it? Now!

These chants and many others were among those shouted along the route women marched during the Take Back The Night March this past Friday evening from (about) 8:15 until around 9:15 p.m.

I arrived at City Hall with two friends. A group of women and a few children were already there. While we waited for the march to begin, I hugged and talked with the other women I knew. Soon, opening remarks were heard. The Clothesline Project was explained and, as well, the purpose of the march. I noticed the cop car driving up just then. Somehow having police escorts seemed to defeat the purpose of the march. If only the cops had been women. That, at least, would have been a small consolation.

As we began marching some of us were a little nervous and perhaps intimidated to shout the chants. A few photographers snapped pictures of us. However, our shyness was quickly overcome. We began proudly shouting the chants as we marched along. Chants like this one: Yes Means Yes/No Means

No/However We Dress/Wherever We Go! We even made up a few chants that evening. A few women moved from the sidewalk to the street. I joined them. After all, we were marching to have the right to walk the streets at night, so it only seemed natural to march in the streets. A cop car slowed down beside us to tell us to move back to the sidewalk. We ignored him. Soon, all the women in the march were in the streets. By the end of the march, we were a united group strongly voicing our desire to have the right (among others) to walk the streets night and day safely.

It felt good to shout in the streets. It felt good to say what I have always felt in my heart. Women should be able to enjoy many of the rights that we marched for last Friday evening. In the last week a few people have asked me why men could not march as well. This is a question that comes up every year when it's time for the Take

Back the Night March. I have already explained this several times. It finally occurred to me. I will not be able to make everyone understand my point of view. I will try to be patient when asked this question. But, this is all I can do. For those women who did go to the march, what an empowering experience! See you next year.

The UNB Student Women's Collective will be meeting Thursday, October 7 from 1:30 -2:30 p.m. in Singer Hall Rm. 158. Among the topics to be discussed: social projects, the Wimmin's Room, and much more. New and returning members welcome. If you cannot make the meeting, have any questions or ideas, call Liz at 455-0566.

Blood and Thunder,  
and Spectrum  
deadline: Monday, 5 p.m.  
No exceptions.

## THE BI-LINE

BY M.C.

## Peeling the label

This is the bi-line, a series of articles on bisexuality today. I am writing these articles not as an offense against those who feel extremely uncomfortable with people who are not heterosexual; the bi-line is a source for those interested, whether personally or intellectually, about bisexuality and bisexuals.

A bisexual, or bi, is a person of either gender who can have an emotional, social, and sexual attraction to individuals of both sexes... end of definition. A lot of stereotypes have been placed on

those who identify themselves as bisexuals. Bisexuals have been given such labels as "fence-sitters" to being unable to have a monogamous relationship and being unable to have a monogamous relationship and being permissive (sluts). Some members of the gay community consider it as a myth, a way to avoid the social prejudice which homosexuals and lesbians endure. Bi's are dealing with as many labels as the homosexuals, if not more.

I will not deny the fact that

some of those who call themselves bi can be diagnosed with these traits (avoidance, permissiveness, confusion). However, to stereotype all bisexuals with any trait is just as ignorant and uneducated as some of the assumptions made about Native Canadians, homosexuals/lesbians/straights, women blacks, Jews, etc... To the unprejudiced individual, a bisexual is viewed as one who is open to having a relationship with someone of either gender. Here's to a more open society.

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