

SPECTRUM

Metanoia by John Valk

Tolerance or Love Your Neighbour?

"Tolerance . . . stops just short of hostility or disregard. It is only next best to ignoring or excluding those whom one dislikes."

The word tolerance has become commonplace. Nowhere is that more evident than in our plural or multi-cultural society, where ethnic, moral and spiritual differences abound. We learn early, in school and elsewhere, that tolerance is a virtue. I don't believe it is a virtue.

Tolerance has negative connotations. It leaves the impression that (merely?) tolerating those who are not like us is sufficient. That's a kind of "lowest common denominator" attitude. It stops just short of hostility or disregard. It is only next best to ignoring or excluding those whom one dislikes. A society that advocates tolerance is not a society free of discrimination.

More positively, tolerance advocates peaceful co-existence. It permits an "agree to disagree" attitude. It recognizes moral, value and faith differences. But tolerance also encourages a kind of moral, value, or belief "stalemate"; a "that's your opinion" situation.

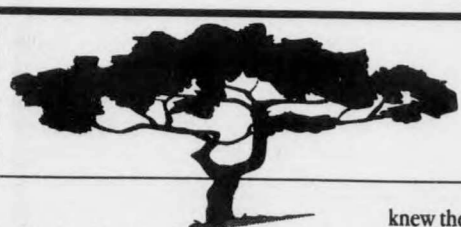
Such renders all too quickly a kind of relativism, and we get no further with each other. We hesitate to evaluate the merits and/or inadequacies of each others views, lifestyles, values, beliefs, etc. We are content to exist each in our own "corners", "tolerating" our differences. Clearly, tolerance is inadequate.

I prefer a different term, and approach. I prefer the term "respect". I prefer even more a particular interpretation of that term, namely, "love your neighbour."

That is the injunction Jesus left us: to love our neighbour as ourselves. It means to go beyond mere co-existence, beyond agreeing to disagree, beyond a "that's your opinion" predicament. It entails entering into the lives and journeys of those who are not like ourselves; to extend understanding, assistance, love.

This is not easy. It makes us vulnerable, even uncomfortable at times. It exposes our own weaknesses, prejudices and intolerances. It is clearly more difficult. But it may also be more rewarding.

Why did Jesus tell us we ought to love our neighbour as ourselves? Perhaps it was because only when we relate to each other as human beings, as people with emotions, needs, dreams much like ourselves, will we cease talking down, at or past one another.



Forest Breeze

The Love for Things Non-Human

by Chris Lohr

Since ancient times, humans have regarded themselves as both steward and master of the creatures in nature. Even Darwinism couldn't falsify this notion completely, because although we may concede that we evolved from apes, we can still regard ourselves as the pinnacle of evolution. And even when scholars, such as Stephen Gould, argued that humans could not be classified as a "superior" beings by evolutionary processes, most of us simply cannot deny the fact that we seem, somehow, *different*. The inevitable result of this feeling is that we do not know our place in nature, and are subsequently awed by it.

Lately, there seems to be yet another shift in the way that society perceives itself in nature. To me, it is exemplified by a woman, Gladys, who heard the old growth cedars sing in the Kootenay region of B.C. She interpreted their message as an exaltation of life, and from that time onward, she

knew their lives had to be spared. I do not want to reject the truth of her experience to herself, nor minimize the impact it had on her; however, I believe her interpretation of the singing to represent a growing tendency to find greater spiritual exaltation in non-human forms of life than in our own.

On the helicopter flight toward the beloved cedar grove, Gladys hissed, "I hate clearcuts." No matter how scientifically sound the procedure was, no matter how beneficial the lumber was to the local economy, no matter how much deer and elk browse it may provide, the fact remains that she hates clearcuts. Plain and simple. You cannot argue the truth of her emotion, no matter what.

The way in which we now tend to react to our own creations in nature stems from this feeling of being different and can force us into the paradoxical situation of disliking our own creations in nature. More and more, many people find greater virtue in pristine forest land than in our own cities. Even our very presence seems to sully a

natural setting.

As long as humans are to survive and reproduce, then we will eat. And if we eat, then we will have to alter the face of nature so that food will go from nature and into our bellies. In this sense we are not different from nature. This is where the paradox lies, because Gladys still doesn't like cutting trees, even if it leads to making money, buying food, eating, etc.

There are some, however, who have a completely different emotion and spiritual experience from nature. Many of us still view humans as the ultimate being on this planet. Here, there is no paradox—we have the right to do whatever we please with the land. The cedars' song may very well be interpreted as a rejoicing for the human ability to transform the cedar into shelter, decorative sculpture, or as the pages in a book. These people may hear the cedars exalting their own lives because they are so useful to us.

Since it is impossible to state the "rightness" or "wrongness" of either party's emo-

NOT that you asked... by Frank Pearce

"It was surprising to me that such a festival could fly in a city as 'redneck' as is Fredericton."

Last week this university's Student Union hosted an event promoting and applauding multiculturalism. The events during this Multiculturalism Festival which I attended were all well attended, and as such I can only deem that the week proved to be a success. Pulling off a festival of this nature is definitely a coup for the Student Union (where was the university's administration?) and a tribute to the hard work put in by Toreq Islam.

It was surprising to me that such a festival could fly in a city as 'redneck' as is Fredericton. Granted, Fredericton is not nearly so redneck as Alberta or the deep South but it is still redneck enough that COR's provincial power is centred around the city. The COR party stands as a beacon for all who believe in the power of intolerance, and it is a beacon which many Frederictonians have been more than willing to follow.

The prejudice and intolerance in Fredericton and at UNB is not so much racist per se as it is far more in the vein of cultural supremacy. Racism does exist in both the university and the city at large, and it is definitely a problem which must be dealt with. The naivety of Tom Traves' rationale behind UNB's decision to not establish a policy against racial discrimination is appalling for one with his education. Just because there have been no lynchings on campus recently does not mean that racism is not a problem.

However, from my admittedly insufficient observations as a white Anglo-Saxon (+ Gallic) Protestant male, it appears to me that prejudice on this campus has a greater cultural component than it does a racial one. The standard at this university is not so much that you have to be white, but rather that you must conform to the dominant cultural values as expressed by North American society. Go to the Social Club on any weekend night, and race is not so much the issue. Any black man or woman, any Asian man or woman can integrate fully with the crowd with either no or only eligible hostility, provided that the individual in question acts, smells and dresses in a manner accepted by our culture. If the individual in question does not display these values of our culture then a vacuum of space is created around that person. All of a sudden

they are weird. They act in such a manner that we can no longer communicate with them. Quite simply, they are different, and their difference makes it difficult for us to deal with them.

Sadly, in recent years the people of Canada have begun to profess an intolerance for people who do not express the values which we consider to be typically Canadian. As a result, the right of Sikh Canadians to become members of the RCMP has been challenged, since a mandate of the Sikh religion for males is the wearing of a turban. Several Canadians will argue that it is more important that the RCMP's standard uniform excluding turban be worn, than it is that a Sikh be allowed to be both a member of the RCMP and follow the practices of his religion. These are the same people who agree with the logic of the Royal Canadian Legion in denying entrance to their Legions of those who are wearing turbans, on the basis that the wearing of headgear is not permitted within their Legions. What they fail to understand is that a turban is not equivalent to a ball cap, that it is not simply a form of headgear, that it is a part of their very cultural identity.

The fact is that multiculturalism is the dominant factor in making Canada the best damn country in the world to live in. It is Canada's inviting climate for immigrants that has provided the impetus for many of Canada's social programs. Many of these social programs have encountered severe criticisms in recent years because of the bankers preoccupation with the deficit, but without these social programs Canada would be a far worse country to live in. The genesis of these social programs comes from the old CCF out west, and the core of

the CCF (which became the NDP) came out of the many Slavic immigrants who settled on the Prairies. The point is, that unlike our giant neighbours to the south, Canada has had the wisdom to not embrace a melting pot mentality. As such, Canada has managed to embrace the best aspects of several cultures throughout the world. In return, we are forced to deal with some less savoury aspects of non-Anglo-Saxon cultures — female circumcision comes immediately to mind. This is a small price to pay in return for the gains received by a multiculturalist approach, since this multicultural approach also forces outside cultures to adapt to and with contemporary Canadian culture.

Unfortunately, the superficial success of the United States blinded Canadians into accepting the policies of that Great Northern American: Brian Mulroney. As a result, Canada has begun to take on the conformist mentality of the United States. Even people who disagree with the establishment are becoming intolerant of those who disagree with them. Canada is thus in serious danger of becoming a divided nation in a way much more serious than is the potential separation of Quebec. Canada must maintain and continue its tradition of acceptance of other culture's beliefs and values if it is to remain not only a beacon of prosperity, but also a beacon of what is right and good with the world and humanity. Should we fail to continue our acceptance and integration of other cultures, then ultimately our culture will become both stagnant and redundant, and we will be surpassed, and then Canada will cease to be the best damn country in the world in which to live.

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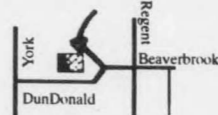
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tion or spiritual experience, who is right? Is it more right to scorn our creations that originate from the resources of the earth, or is it more right to view other life as existing purely for our own benefit? Neither extreme is acceptable since they both lead to absurd conclusions. We must find a middle ground in order to settle the debate over resource use.

That middle ground is very difficult to find, however. If it were not so difficult,

then many of the forest industry companies would have long ago solved their problems over resource use. The common element between both extremes is a love for life, or in this case, for the old-growth cedars. Given the human tendency for manipulation of the environment, and given the pervasiveness of spiritual experiences in nature, there has to be a compromise made somewhere. It should be obvious, however, that working toward one extreme is not the solution.