

# SPECTRUM

## No More Handouts

We are a society of haves and have nots. The former enjoy the affluence generated by our capitalist system. The latter are the economic underclass, frequently dependent on government support to maintain their even meager existence.

An underclass is a dependent class. It is people with limited options and opportunities. They are unable to determine their own future. Government support and lack of creative alternatives keeps many perpetually impoverished.

In the worst of economic times options and alternatives for the powerless decrease. Social programmes, even health care, are the first to come under public scrutiny in depressed times. "No more hand outs", is the rallying cry from the tax-burdened middle class; "no more tax increases." But that has a hollow ring among the underclass, who distinctly remember that our powerful rulers voted themselves a hefty increase not so long ago.

We are now not in the best of economic times. And things may not get a whole lot better. That puts the underclass at even greater risk, most particularly children, teens and single parents. Few will have sufficient options or alternatives to escape the dependency syndrome.

Even students can become part of this dependency class, though it is a dependency of a different sort. It results from the cost of higher education today. It is not at all unusual for graduates to be burdened with a fifteen to twenty thousand dollar debt before they receive their first pay cheque. If any contemplate marriage with the hope of a family and their own home, one can easily deduce that they will be dependent on their banker and a well paying job for quite some time. Who can blame them for using high salary as the main job criterion, or as new tax payers voting against new tax increases?

In spite of the optimism expressed by our political leaders, continued growth and increased prosperity is a harder sell today. Slowly our economic dream of great material wealth may be coming apart at the seams. Not only is it environmentally harmful, it is also very time consuming. In our incessant drive for more there is little time for rest, reflection and renewal.

Today a moderate lifestyle for a middle class family requires two incomes. But with two adults working full-time there is little or no time to be still to enjoy each other, our children and our comforts. Our esteemed leaders have given us an extra day (Sunday) to spend our money, but that has

deprived us even more of quality time with each other (unless shopping is considered quality time).

What is needed in this whole circus is not more hand outs or more material wealth. Governments can ill afford increased social programmes, or decreased tuition fees. What is needed are *hand ups* for the disadvantaged, reduced time and cost for the advantaged, and more creative reflection for all of us.

But who will do this? Who will give another a hand up? Who will liberate someone from life-long economic dependency? We say, "of what benefit is it to me to give another a hand up? Most likely it will delay the realization of my own individual economic dream. And, my happiness is tied to my economic dream. Isn't it?"

Tom Sine, who visited Fredericton last week, stated that

*Well, This is  
What I Think  
by  
D. J. Eckenrode*

"WOW!! Dr. Know, did you read the article in this week's FORTUNE magazine about Americans not reading anymore?" S/he said. "Yes. D.J., it's that dam Sesame Street Syndrome (SSS) again." "Well, what about Canadians, is it the same here?" I queried. Correctamundo, D.J., it's no different here. "D.J., S/he went on to say, "it's not just the students, very few people read at all." I thought about the debate over Frank Mckeena's "thoughts" on how to correct the "cross-border-shopping problem". It became obvious that Frank nor any of his supposed advisors could ever have read an Economics book. I mentioned this to Dr. Know, S/he remarked, "You know the boy's. (Frank) got his head up where the 'sun don't shine' when Cameron and Weir agree to disagree with him. Any one who got a C— in Econ 1000 would recognize the folly of his 'proposals.'"

Dr. Know and I both noted there were several interesting issues in the FORTUNE article. First, you had to be a "so-called" university freshperson to even read the article. Now-a-days, if you can write your own name (and I suppose read it too) you are credited with the equivalent of a grade four education. The average American spends just 24 minutes reading every day. For someone here at UNB, if that average holds up, and if you include 10 minutes on the Bruns, 5.9% of a person's

we have been sold the wrong dream. Our happiness and security does not lie in the accumulation of individual wealth, material goods or individual power and control. It lies, rather, in the people around us - in community. Foremost, it lies in God. We have learned the wrong meaning of peace security and happiness.

To focus on people does not mean depriving ourselves of basic comforts and amenities. But let's ensure that all people have them. We need to invest in people, not merely in their money or labour. That requires a community of people, willing to give others in need a hand up, not a hand out.

Imagine, for example, if a community of people liberated one of their students from his or her university debt upon graduation. This debt-free student in turn would be

weekly allotment is squandered. "TRAGIC!" was Dr. Know's comment. I wondered out loud, "Does this include time for professors to prepare for class and for students do their studying?" Dr. Know, warned me about statistically generalizing to specific groups from broad populations. S/he went on to tell me about his/her observations that many 3.5 plus GPA students don't read anything they don't have to. I recalled the quote from the CEO of Barnes & Noble, the largest USA retailer of books. Mr. Leonard Riggio guessed, "...half the books his customers buy-some as gifts, some just for display-go unread." (Note: the underlines are mine, D.J.)

Laurie Kretchmar, the reporter who wrote the article asked the rhetorical question, "SHOULD ANYONE CARE? After all, people get information from television, radio, videocassettes, audio tapes. Workers can learn their jobs by attending a class or putting a tape in the VCR. Computer databases give you more facts than you'll ever need, and CNN tells you what's happening in the world. Who needs to read?"

The answer is everyone who hopes to be productive or successful. Reading turns out to be strongly connected to many of the most important skills in business-among them speech and writing, the primary forms of human communication. . . . Reading transcends the mere transmission of information: It fosters an imaginative dialog between the text and the reader's mind that actually helps people think."

"Heavy! Dr. Know. The beauty of each and every human (huperson) being is that s/he, to

## Metanoia by John Valk

free to seek a job not with a focus on his or her own personal financial gains, but one which would give a hand up to others who were disadvantaged. What such a job might entail would be limited only by one's own imagination and creativity.

What kind of community would offer such an opportunity to a student? Certainly one in which a considerable trust had developed. It would be one concerned with reducing cost of living, rather than continued economic growth and material prosperity. It would be one with common rather than

individual goals, with a world and life view oriented toward "the other". It would be a community of love and devotion, seeking to empower others, especially disadvantaged women and children. The ultimate struggle of the community would be to become true image bearers of God.

Such a view is radically different than our present outlook. A rampant individualism, a competition and struggle for power and control, tends to shape our lives at present. It certainly undergirds our society. It is even taught to our children.

## Who Needs To Read?

some degree or other, thinks, imagines, and interprets "The Lord of the Rings", "The Foundation Trilogy", "The Pride and the Passion", "For Whom the Bell Tolls", "The Spy Who Came in From The Cold" extra in a way special to that particular person?! "Yes, D. J. and also, "Sydney Sheldon, Stephen King, Louis

L'Amour, E. Frank Howard, St. Peter, Michael E. Porter, and even Danielle Steele! can be special to each reader" I asked Dr. Know, "What happens if we as individuals abdicate our rights to our minds and the beauty of our own imaginations?" S/he responded glumly, "These people go to work as political advisors to premiers."

### The Wimmis Room (continued from p. 10)

try to imagine Eve's side of the story and how she felt.

After several months in the Garden of Eden, both Adam and Eve were growing bored of the plentiful yet unexciting fruit the Lord (our father!) had provided. Day in day out Adam complained to Eve that she wasn't cooking the passion fruit and banana roast long enough, or spicing enough, or serving it on time, or the fruit salad wasn't colorful enough or just wasn't the right mix. Eve was no happier than Adam, but tried different variations, and attempted to put on a good front for the gloomy Adam. She suggested that he go out to explore the rest of the garden, to look for different fruit, or maybe some nuts to add a little variety, after all, "the way to a man's heart is through his stomach", and Eve didn't exactly have a vast choice of men. After days of frustration and exasperation, Eve finally forced Adam to go in search of a new food item. What did he come back with? Nothing but more complaints, and one suggestion. The forbidden fruit that the lord had warned them about. Eve adamantly refused to eat of the forbidden fruit, after all, she had been raised to obey - and she did not plan to disobey the big guy of all people. Adam persisted, and heated up his complaints of her failure to 'please him'. After

much thought and soul searching, she decided that eating the forbidden fruit could not possibly be worse than putting up with Adam. So one fateful day, she ventured out into the Garden, and stood in front of the tree, she was just about to turn away and give up when she heard a voice. It was the serpent, urging her to pick the fruit. Finally, in anticipation of Adam's pleasure, she took the precious fruit. She held it in her hand for several moments before taking a bite. It was the most delightful taste she had ever experienced, moist, tasty and full of flavor. She ran back to Adam and offered him the fruit, he also tasted it, and a huge grin broke over his face. Finally, some variety. All of a sudden lightning struck and the Lord appeared, he demanded that Adam explain why they had eaten the fruit. Without flinching, Adam told the Lord how the evil temptress who was his mate had forced him to eat the fruit. Adam urged the Lord to punish her severely, but he thought that Adam should also shoulder some responsibility. He condemned Eve to pain during childbirth, but Adam's punishment was much more severe, he would have to work for a living, and endure P.M.S forever. Perhaps the Lord is more just than I first thought.