

OPINION PAGE

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Can you say no to charity?

The United Way is going to come knocking

By Citizens Concerned about Social Policy

Any day now you'll be approached at your door, at your office, at your workplace and certainly through the newspapers, to give money to the United Way. This is the time of year when they will be urging you to open your hearts and your pocketbooks. They will mount an intensive campaign in the schools, the workplaces, and with door to door canvassing for money to support their member agencies in dealing with the individual unfortunates of our society.

It's pretty hard to resist this emotion-laden request to "give to a good cause". If you say no you might appear cheap. Or if by chance you have a little extra money you've almost certainly planned to spend it on your own family needs. Or maybe you've thought of some questions you'd like to ask, questions about charitable tax deductions, where does the money go, and who decides where it goes, how much does it cost to raise all this money, are these problems being solved with our money?

A lot of people have doubts and suspicions about this approach to charity, but haven't had access to enough information to be confident about saying no. So they end up giving a contribution or signing up for a payroll deduction, and dismiss their doubts for another year. After all, how do you say no to your supervisor in the office, to your neighbourhood canvasser, to your teacher? How do you say no to charity?

It isn't easy to say no to something like the United Way. This is a fund raising process which over past years thousands of people have committed themselves to—through volunteer canvassing, through sitting on boards, and through cash donations. But, recently, questions about this fund-raising and fund allocation process have been raised, and a lot of people have discovered that the answers are pretty hard to get.

One of the reasons the answers are hard to get is because the United Way won't appear in public forums to answer questions during campaign time—the time when most people are giving money and have the questions on their minds. The United Way will provide public relations material with questions and answers they design to show themselves in the best possible light, but it is difficult for the average person to take the time to formulate and present questions which cut through the past information handed out by the Fund.

Citizens Concerned About Social Policy has been able to make these questions priorities, and consequently we can give you some information beyond what the United Way makes available.

How much does it cost to raise this money? The Fund hopes to raise over \$14,000,000 this year. They claim that

less than 9 per cent of every dollar collected goes to raising money and to administrative costs over the year. However, this figure only refers to costs which are paid for out of contribution dollars. It does not include the costs of campaign dinners, the cost of loaned executives from corporations, the cost of including their promotional literature in company mailings (such as Bell Telephone), donations of staff time from tax-supported institutions. All these costs get paid for somewhere along the line. Corporations may not only pass these added costs to you as consumer, but they are able to pass off these costs as tax-deductible business expenses.

Where does the money come from, and who gets it? According to the most accurate figures available from last year's campaign, the part that was clearly donated by corporations only amounted to about one third of the money collected. (Corporate donations equalled \$4,593,813.00 out of a total of \$13,277,766.00)

Very little is given to poor people. The United Community Fund only gives money to its member agencies, which provide service, not money. Consequently, a great deal of the money goes for salaries to professionals.

Is the United Way effective? One objective of the United Community Fund, which has not been able to meet its goal for three years, is to unite organizations into one campaign. The numerous tag days and repeated requests for money from many other organizations are a constant reminder of the failure to achieve this objective.

Traditional charitable dollars are seldom made available to groups who claim to deal with situations which cause social problems. The United Fund does not even accept applications from groups who intend to become involved in political issues. If you inquire when you're approached by the United Community Fund, you will find that the agencies which do receive funding do not deal with problems such as housing, unemployment, the rising cost of living, tenants rights or the effects of fixed incomes.

The inevitable result of this refusal to deal with the causes of social problems is that the cost of charity goes up every year. The (UCF) sets a bigger goal and asks for a greater gift because they are not solving any problems, they are just servicing the victims.

An Alternative.

To say no the United Way is not to say no to solving social problems. You may still want to become involved in social action or contribute to groups who are involved in it. There are alternative action organizations that are coming to grips with the causes of social problems. While not eligible for United Way funding and other traditional sources of funds, these struggling groups need money and manpower to keep going.



Mike Lawrence

No debt Left left

If one is to believe the Toronto Sun, everyone's favorite bird cage liner. York has become a haven for pinko intellectuals. Or should that be dinko intellectuals?

Within the last few weeks much publicity has been given to a union strike in progress at the Artistic Woodwork factory on Keele Street. The scenario is not an unusual one as strikes go. Management has chosen to import scab labour with the obvious howl of complaints from the union. Though the police describe their own role in this as merely one of crowd control, accusations of strikebreaking have been thrown at them. Just because the police have been laying assault charges on picketers with halitosis gives no grounds for this belief.

The story is an interesting one, particularly with the arrests of some York students who had joined the picket line. Contingent on their release from custody was the signing of a statement promising not to be naughty in the future, specifically, steering clear of the picket line. The alternative was staging a one man picket at the Don Jail. Enough for history.

Now as they say in the vaseline business, let's get down to the nitty gritty. For the moment I'm only considering those individuals who are sympathetic to this strike or any other for that matter. What can such individuals do to aid what they see as a justified cause?

The motivation for such a question is a conversation I had this week with a friend who labels himself a Marxist. I asked him if he was considering joining the mentioned picket and his reply was characteristic of inactive activists. "My presence there would be ineffective."

He continued, explaining that the labourers involved would most likely resent his presence and further, that he had other responsibilities which he couldn't jeopardize by being arrested. He resented the accusation that he was being hypocritical and stated that he "had paid his dues" by participating in such pickets when younger. With age and the perspective that it had given him, he felt that his role had changed.

Interested, I asked him what that new role was. The "paid in full" Marxist replied that he could be more effective by making fellow students aware of the labour struggle and then letting them decide for themselves what the best course of action should be.

I neither defend nor accept my friend's position, and to be fair I admit this is my personal description of a very long conversation. But I think we all know people who fall into this group of sincere yet visibly inactive individuals. The hyperactive politicals, you know, the ones in the used Che Guevara suits, would most certainly accuse my friend of intellectually copping out. But are they any more effective?

Probably more people have been turned off from personal political commitment by such activists than anything else.

Most people find it inconceivable that the mating habits of dogs have political significance; bow wow, Chairman Mao. Yet when they take a breather from shoving dogma down your throat, you discover that these too are sincere people who have important points to make.

There seems to be no simple resolution here. Raise the consciousness of your friends and be accused of being a liberal fat-ass; join the revolution and your parents disown you. Worse yet, if you can't grow a beard you're disqualified from both.

So shall the 'twain ever meet? I propose no answers, for after all I'm just a naive columnist, but might not there be a good reason for studying the middle ground?

I hear the words of my father's advice ringing in my ears. "Those who choose to be fence sitters only succeed in getting dents in their ass."

S.D.S. comes to campus

Fed up with inept leadership?

By DAVID JACOBS

a member of SDS (Students For A Democratic Society)

SDS, the leading radical student organization in North America, has at long last come to York University. The York chapter is being formed by students fed up with the inept political leadership of student bureaucrats, Trotskyites and others who, for example were involved in a sit-in over fees last year which achieved nothing in the way of reducing sky-high tuition costs.

A group such as SDS, which is broad based and issue oriented, could spearhead such important student fights in the future.

By this time, you may be asking "What is this group about anyway?"

Students for a Democratic Society is an international multi-racial student organization, founded in 1962, dedicated to fighting against racism, imperialism, and the oppression of women. Last year SDS raised more issues on campuses than any other group.

SDS was involved in fighting Canada's new, racist immigration laws and was a leading force in winning the battle against the discriminatory ban on foreign students getting summer jobs in Canada. The group held support rallies for black students killed at Southern University while protesting racist policies.

U of T's group held a successful teach-in on racism, helped lead the sit-in over the firing of 3 radical profs in the Math department, and organized student support for the Dare cookie

strike (where the main issue was equal pay for women). At present, they are leading the fight to fire psychiatrist Ian Hector, who has said that Italians are "culturally predisposed" to fake injuries in order to get compensation.

At York this fall we intend to mount a sharp attack on academic racism, especially as the racist theories of Herrnstein, Jensen, Shockley, et al. are already being taught in many Psychology, Sociology and

Anthropology courses.

SDS has led the growing attack on these "blame the victim" theories all over Canada and the U.S.

We think that fighting these theories is the main task of the student movement, as they are being increasingly used to justify government policy.

The first meeting will be in S130 Ross, Thurs, Oct. 4 at 3:00 p.m. Those interested can call 248-6355 for more information.

