

Spectrum

WIMMIN'S ROOM The election: equality is the bottom line

Many women are fed up with being bullied by dishonest economic "talk" about reducing the country's debt. This "talk" acts as a smoke screen for the real and very damaging political choices that our federal governments have made in the last decade. While the prevailing wisdom is that Conservatives are good money managers, the record does not bear this out. The debt has increased substantially during the Conservative era and their policies have contributed directly to this increase.

Putting People Back to Work is the Solution

In the current debt hysteria, governments are refusing to create jobs and act as if they believe that the only jobs that truly contribute to the economy are private sector jobs. Many economists disagree, and estimate that every \$1000 spent creating a job becomes between \$1500 and \$2500 in the economy. When jobs are created that assist with social equity and environmental protection, the benefits multiply and become part of the solution.

Social Programs are the Heart of the Solution

Most women are deeply worried about what is happening to the country's social programs. These programs have provided all Canadians with access to an education, decent health care, a family allowance and some income security during times of unemployment and at retirement. The question of whether we can afford effective, universal, publicly delivered social programs is a political question, not an economic one.

Canadians never voted to cut our social programs. Cuts have been introduced mainly by stealth, through policy changes that were never openly announced or debated. Cuts to social programs are an attack on our ability as a country to distribute our society's resources more equitably. They are an attack on the idea of equity itself. The notion of university that includes everyone is the system, no matter what their income, keeps the whole society invested in the same program and prevents the development of two levels of services (one for the rich and one for the poor) and prevents the transformation of universal benefits into welfare programs which categorize and control our poorest neighbors.

The Debt

There is no denying that the current debt is large. But even the Conference Board of Canada recognizes that we don't need to panic: they estimate that with reasonable economic growth the debt will return to a more normal portion of the economy by the end of the decade. The annual interest that the government pays on the debt has become the biggest single item in the federal budget. This increase has largely been because of high interest rates, which have been a deliberate policy of the Bank of Canada.

Taxation

Another attack on equality has been a quiet, successful tax write-off among the wealthy. We no longer have a fair tax system. The frequently painted picture of rich white men shouldering high taxes to underwrite the costs of supporting the

poor, most of whom are women, many of whom are non-white or native people, is not accurate.

In principle, our income tax system is "progressive", that is, where individuals and corporations are taxed more as they have more ability to pay. In reality it is increasingly less "progressive". In the last 10 years the proportion of federal government taxes paid by corporations has been cut almost in half, while income tax on low and middle income Canadians are paying considerably more taxes than 10 years ago. Lower income people have experienced an 115 percent increase in their taxes since 1984. The country's richest people are paying only 20 percent more in taxes. Individuals now pay almost half of the country's taxes: corporations pay only seven percent.

Who benefits:

-Federal support for businesses, sports association and lobby groups is far higher than for social justice groups.

-In 1992, the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, representing the largest manufacturers in Canada, received \$675,000 (twice as much as the National Action Committee on the Status of Women receives) and Alliance Quebec (a big business group) received \$1,581,000. The same year the government granted \$160 million under the Defence Industry Productivity Program. Most of the benefits that wealthy individuals and major corporation draw from the government are tax deductions and tax shelters and don't show up on the books. In 1989 the government estimated that it lost \$2.4 billion in personal income tax

because of low rate of capital gains tax. Tax shelters for corporations are even more costly.

Conclusion

As women look backward to assess the record of the last decades and look

forward to envision Canada's future, we can see through the smoke screen and perceive that any future government must:

- *Reduce unemployment
- *Protect and develop effective social

women and all those who are disadvantaged.

THE BI-LINE

BY M.C.

Closet with two doors

My coming out can be considered the most selfish act I have ever committed in my life. In doing so I placed my family, my friends and those I work with in a potentially awkward situation. I could have stayed a closeted bisexual. There would be less outside social pressure than a closeted homosexual or lesbian must endure; inquiries into your sexuality are thinned by the occurrences of comfortable male-female and very discrete same-sex relationships. So what made me decide to become open about my orientation?

Self-acceptance

After years of confusion and the mental anguish of growing up knowing you are not like most of the 'normal' kids, the conclusion of orientation is reached and we move on to dealing with the important things in our lives. There were strong feelings, some motivated by men, some by woman which caused a great deal of personal confusion. Uneducated by the school system on the topic, all I knew were the colloquial definitions of 'straight' and 'gay'. I portrayed myself as a hetero sexual while trying to decide what I was. **Orientation was never a choice, actions are, but**

orientation is determined by something other than the person who lives with it. The day I learned about bisexuality was the time of recognition of my sexuality.

Truth

The opposite of the lies and deceit that must be upheld in order to keep the closet door shut tight. Lying becomes second nature after a few years. If you are not careful, it will become so thick that you won't even be able to tell what is the truth anymore.

I am not straight and I did not enjoy pretending to be straight. Remembering to change last evenings names of 'Mark', 'James', 'Robbie', or 'Michael' to 'Mandy', 'Jen', 'Roberta', and 'Michelle' was sometimes a fun mental game, but it's hard to live in a soft cover novel, always changing the names to protect the innocent.

I am not gay; from my experience in portraying a heterosexual, I was not about to go undercover again by pretending to be only interested in men. Sneaking away from my gay friends, something about a headache or an early class, and head on down to one of those straight bars, would be too much of a *deja-vu*.

Having to lie is not a big ego booster, I traded the security of my two-doored closet and opened myself to a great deal of prejudice for one thing, my self-respect... it was a trade in my favour.

Yes, there were some very valid arguments and real life problems which would have to deal with coming out, the omission of homosexuals, bisexuals, and lesbians from the Canadian Human Rights Act, the strong prejudice which exists which includes acts of discrimination and violence, the ignorance of those who do not understand the simple definition of bisexuality, a change in the relationship I have with my friends and my family.

For myself, it was something I had to do to move on, to finish growing up. I would never recommend that every non-heterosexual come out, I cannot take that responsibility. However, I can give this advice if you are considering it: ensure that you are comfortable with whatever choice you make - take your time because there is no deadline, and you are not alone, you're never alone. Here's to a more open world.

WANTED: OPINIONATED PEOPLE

The Brunswickan is looking for columnists to write for our weekly Opinion feature.

If you have an Opinion for us, write it up in a submission of 750 words or less, make sure it's not racist, sexist or homophobic, or containing an attack of a personal nature, and bring it to the Brunswickan office (Rm. 35 of the SUB) before 5 p.m. on Monday of the week you'd like it published. You must include your name, student number, and phone number,

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