SPECTRUM

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Perspectives

Socialism and Capitalism

To those who object that capitalism is "rooted in human nature", we answer: Possibly, but so was cannibalism. We no longer eat each other. A civilization is within our reach in which we shall no longer exploit each other. (League for Social Reconstruction, Eugene Forsey and others, 1935)

In last week's column, I discussed Albert Einstein's observation that capitalism is theoretically flawed, and emphasized that to imply that socialism is communistic is false and libelous.

The nub of the philosophical disagreement between capitalism and socialism is the question of empathy for the poor, and whether or not the democratically elected representatives have a duty to alleviate their poverty.

What mystifies and angers socialists the most is how a capitalist society can carry blithely on in the face of the terrible suffering that accompanies poverty.

First, most the urban middle class rarely see real poverty for example, the 30,000 New Brunswicker's who live without running water or indoor plumbing. Second, there is a strong degree of self-interest. But the essential justification lies deeper.

The central article of capitalist faith is that poverty is inevitable, self-induced, and the responsibility of no-one but the poor themselves. As a society, rich and poor alike, we have come to believe that poverty can only be a consequence of laziness, stupidity, or some other profound personal failing.

Furthermore, since ability, creativity, and initiative are unequally distributed, poverty is considered to be a mildly regrettable but permanent feature of human existence. It is not uncommon to hear persons of wealth quote John 12:8 to justify this point of view: "For the poor always ye have with you, but you do not always have me."

Kurt Vonnegut (palm Sunday) has made the case that Jesus Christ's statement in John 12:8 was an expression of regret, not prophecy - a profound expression of resignation, of disappointment as he observed the selfish

nature of man.

Socialists believe it to be self-evident that a child born in an outport of Newfoundland does not have the same opportunity as one born in a Toronto suburb. A socialist

might quote Ecclesiastes 9:11 in support of this view: "Speed does not win the race nor strength the battle. Bread does not belong to the wise, nor wealth to the intelligent, nor success to the skillful; time and chance govern them all."

Socialists believe, not in taking away advantages or opportunity from the presently wealthy, but in providing the structure and mechanism to extend these opportunities as best as is possible to all citizens, regardless of the region of the country they live in or the material circumstances of their parents.

Socialists recognize many virtues of free enterprise, such as the value of incentive, and reward for productivity and creativity. However socialists believe in a mixed economy, they some industries used by all the citizenry are best owned by the citizenry.

As an aside: The argument that companies owned by the citizenry are unprofitable is no longer valid, for the appropriate mechanisms are now perfected:

Air Canada was profitable when it was privatized; Petro-Canada and Canada Post are profitable now. There is no logical argument for privatization of these corporations.

Socialists believe for the first time in human history technology has provided us with the means to provide every citizen with a fair standard of living. All that remains is the will to do so.

Let us look to Europe for an example, and to Sweden in particular: "Swedes can boast of full employment, thriving manufacturing exports, a budget surplus and a per capita income that ties it for third place (after Switzerland and Japan) - not to mention a 'quality of life' that is measured in longevity, air quality, low crime rates, absence of poverty, high educational performance and physical fitness." (Globe and Mail, 3 march 1990)

The only economic philosophy to offer constructive solutions for our economic problems is socialism. Capitalism is a

failure - theoretically and practically. Poverty and homelessness are on the rise. Leisure time is decreasing, our level of stress is increasing, unemployment is increasing, and our economic future lies in the hands of a capricious and unaccountable international currency market.

with William M.

Stewart.

Capitalism is a Darwinian philosophy which teaches us to be adversarial and confrontational, ignoring the fact that cooperation is the highest and most advanced manifestation of a sophisticated social group. Capitalism may well be an appropriate minimalist survival strategy for pre-civilized times, but it is unworthy of the social development of twenty-first century man

When we finally understand and truly believe that cooperation is more efficient than confrontation, then the predatory phase of human history will draw to a close, and we will finally embark on the construction of a truly humane economic system, and a truly humane society.

Ease-Tax Law for
Students

It comes as no surprise to anyone who has filed a return to hear that tax is among the most confusing areas of the law. The following are items of some specific interest to students.

Am I required to pay taxes on scholarships?

The first \$500 of all scholarship, bursary and fellowship monies received over the course of a year is exempted from taxable income. The number of scholarships received is irrelevant as it is the total amount of all scholarships received which is important. For example, if you have received three scholarships in the value of \$250, \$500 and \$500 respectively, totaling \$1,250, \$750 of it must be added on your taxable income. The other \$500 is exempted.

Are tuition fees deductible?

The new tax laws have now changed tuition fees into a tax credit. This means a percentage of the tuition will now be subtracted directly from the amount of tax owed by the taxpayer. For 1989, 17% of the tuition fees will be deductible as a tax credit. This tax credit will apply to any student in attendance at a university, college or technical school whose tuition fees are in excess of \$100.00. A certificate of attendance issued by the institution is required.

Is there still a per month education deduction?

The former \$50.00 per month education deduction has now been changed to a tax credit, like tuition fees. The credit for 1989 will be 17% x \$60.00 x the number of months in school. A certificate of attendance issued by the institution is required.

What if my parents or my spouse pay my tuition fees?

The 1988 Tax Law Reform now allows a transfer of tuition fees and education deduction to the parents or the spouse of a student. The new tax credit will allow a maximum transfer of \$600.00 of the unused credit to a supporting individual. The tax credit will apply in this manner: The student will subtract that portion of his or her tuition fees and education deduction necessary to bring his or her claim down to zero. Any portion of the credits not needed to reduce the claim may be transferred to the Income Tax Return of a parent, grandparent or spouse. Any unused amount of the tax credit is non-refundable.

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How can I obtain more information on income tax?

Phone or write Revenue Canada-Taxation at 65 Canterbury Street, Saint John, NB, E2L 4H9. Tel: 1-800-222-9622.

In The Pink

"Community"

by James Gill

An episode of ABC's current affairs program 20/20 not too long ago investigated the issue of the gay and lesbian populations in North America. Among the most interesting findings brought forward from that program was the relative size of the gay and lesbian population in several North American cities. Not surprisingly the biggest proportion was found in San Fransisco. What was far more surprising was the city which came in number two .. you guessed it ... Fredericton. Upon reflection, though, this is not astonishing. Both San Fransisco and Fredericton are relatively small cities. The main industries in Fredericton are government, the universities, and the armed forces. There is a strong cultural community for so small a city. Conventional wisdom, then, tends to lend credibility to this finding.

The number most often cited in studies regarding homosexuality for the incidence rate of homosexual orientation is around ten percent. Even if we do not allow for a somewhat higher figure for Fredericton, we come to realize quickly that there are literally thousands of gay men and lesbians in this city. To drive the point closer home, in a class of fifty people, chances are good that there are five gay men and lesbians in the class. In a residence of one hundred men, you can safely bet that between eight and twelve of them are gay. I know of at least one course being offered on this campus in which every single student is gay (granted, it is a small class) To spell it out more clearly, we are, quite literally, everywhere.

The other thing to realize is that of that large number of lesbian and gay students, staff and professors, a large number of them are still very much in the closet, so much so that they attempt to look and be heterosexual. More than any other group in society, gay men and lesbians can assimilate. After all, what's more convincing, a rumour about someone, or the fact that he has a girlfriend? A large number of gay men and lesbians feel pressured into 'straight' relationships. Many lesbians and gay men are married with children. The fact that I have slept with a woman (once), though, does not make me a heterosexual or even bisexual.

An equally large number of us know ourselves to be gay or lesbian, but are afraid of getting getting involved with the established lesbian and gay networks. They never go to the bars, the meetings, the rallies (yet to be seen in Fredericton, but just wait...), or any other organized activity.

The fact that these two large groups do not feel comfortable or safe in coming out does not mean that they cease to be gay. These people are, to a large extent, those who are most often involved in the casual pickups that take place in the "cruising" areas that exist in every community, regardless of size.

A far smaller, but rapidly growing, segment are those who actually get involved. These are the people who go to the bars, the softball games, the meetings, the picnics, and everything else that we do to try and build a community. But even among this group some are reluctant to be too visible. Those of us who proclaim, protest, and organize are but the tip of the iceberg.

Is it proper, then, to speak of a gay and lesbian community? It takes more than a common characteristic to create a community, but to my mind it does not require complete participation. Within any community there are the "do-ers" and the "supporters." I would assert, though, that even if a significant number of gay men and lesbians would not label themselves thus, and would not associate themselves with the community, that there is, nonetheless, enough solidarity for us to legitimately claim to be a community.

Our community is defined, perhaps, by the common characteristic we share, but we share more than this. We all live in a society which continues to deny us our equality. Our life-long partners are denied the basic survivorship rights that even a common law spouse would enjoy. In many jurisdictions we can be fired from our jobs, evicted from our homes or denied them in the first place for no other reason than our sexual orientation. Society would never tolerate it happening to a Sikh, so why is it fair for us?