

# RIDE

## Lesbigay: going mainstream

Fifteen years ago we would never have seen, much less heard of, any issue or topic with regards to homosexuality. Now it seems that you can not turn on the television, radio, or read literature that does not have some story with lesbian content. Through many trials and tribulations, from the riots of Stonewall to the International AIDS Conference in Vancouver, progress has been made to increase social recognition of lesbians. This "mainstreaming" of the lesbian community has both positive and negative sides.

A well-worn cliché - "You've come a long way, Baby!" is an understatement to say the least. Little by little, equal rights, recognition and education have been fought for and won by the lesbian community. The coming out of some positive role models, including Martina Navratilova, Sven Robinson and Candace Gingrich, as well as gay-positive advocacy by friends and families of lesbians have helped develop more equal footing in society. This has demonstrated that, as a community and as individuals, we can fight against discrimination in many facets of society. In some cases, for example, same-sex partnerships have been given the blessing of some religions.

The repercussions of lesbian activism have, at the same time, been felt through the vocal vitriol of the religious right, the hate crimes perpetrated in the name of "traditional values," and the intolerance of some members of society. And while marketing has caught on to the gay dollar and promoted homophobic advertising, the use of homoerotic images in commercials can be interpreted as a desire to acquire profit from a once-inaccessible group of people.

It is a two-edged sword: with pride and cheers also come frustration and sorrow. The mainstreaming of gay content in television, movies and videos sometimes overloads the senses. In a way, it is as though lesbian issues, lives and points of interest are merely a way of jumping onto the political correctness bandwagon.

We do have a long way to go, and the road to equal placement and acceptance has a number of obstacles to overcome.



Metanoia  
John Valk

## Our metanoia, the changing years of university

People go to university to change. Oh, we seldom put it that way. We speak instead of learning, of gaining a skill, of preparing for the job market. But in so doing, we are changing. A student will be a changed person from the day he/she enters UNB to the day of graduation.

It might be useful to ask ourselves how we will change? Or, better still, how do we want to change? What will be most important? What will we strive for: more knowledge, more power, more independence, or more awareness of the self?

Metanoia is a Greek word meaning change. Life entails change. Even if we choose to do nothing, we change: we age. But few of us choose such a course of (in)action. Merely letting the world pass by hardly seems appealing, at least not in the long run. So we seek change, we seek to alter our current situation. Through education, we seek to be changed.

Metanoia also means conversion. This is a more difficult notion, because the word "conversion" is not much appreciated today. Conversion is largely linked to religion, and then mostly to church.

All too many people seek to avoid these, but in so doing do they avoid conversion?

Conversion has to do with changing our perspective, our outlook on life. It has to do with perceiving life differently than before. It is a change of heart, an awakening. It may result from something experienced, perhaps something that has shocked us and it leads to a change in behaviour, attitude, and thinking.

Will we be converted through education? A student is exposed to a host of thoughts, ideas and life choices, not always found in such rich variety outside the university setting. Such exposure elicits change. But what will be the nature of that change? What will be awakened in us? Will we be converted, and to what?

We may be converted to individualism, where the self counts above all else, or to the power and influence of the marketplace, where economic prosperity counts above all else. We may be converted to the view that work is merely a means to a materialistic end, where power, influence and material gain count above all else. All such

conversions create a certain kind of person.

It has been said that work or study is most meaningful if the fruits thereof are shared with others. Try as we might, however, our actions indicate that we really don't believe this. We are inclined to believe that our greatest happiness lies in possessing and having things or skills - for ourselves. So the change we are seeking, or the conversion taking place, is largely self-centred.

In our society we have many choices. In this vein, therefore, an individual could choose to undergo a more radical change, a more radical conversion, a real metanoia, converting from self-centredness to globally-centredness.

Education plays a crucial role here. Learning would no longer be seen as a means of solely gaining individual power or material prosperity. Instead, it would be seen as a means to serve others, rather than merely oneself. Gaining insight, knowledge, training and skills becomes, therefore, a means to serve humanity in general, one's community in particular, and the environment as a whole.

It is true that this sort of

conversion deals with religion or spirituality. Religion or spirituality has not merely (and sometimes not at all) to do with church attendance. It has more to do with our whole perspective on life. It has to do with recognizing that there is more to life than the here and the now (the secular), and more than the satisfaction of individual desires.

Much of life is mysterious and much of it takes us by surprise. Things happen to us and around us that defy reason or logic, occurring when we least expect them - a friend's death or suicide, an unwanted pregnancy, contracting AIDS - then the harsh realities suddenly set in, and we inquire about the meaning of life, especially our own. We begin to ask the big questions.

And so we return to the original concern. Being at university entails asking big questions. As such, it entails change and conversion. Big questions are not unrelated to what we choose to do with our life, how and where we seek meaning, and above all, what use we make of our precious university years. In essence, a university education entails metanoia.

# Forest Breeze

## Forest equipment companies becoming more environmentally-friendly

A move is on to stop clear cutting. The public is against clear cutting, and companies dependant on wood products are going to have to do something about public sentiment with the danger of a boycott on products made of clear cut wood is present in the marketplace.

The problem is not whether or not clear cutting is correct but that clear cutting has a reputation of rapping our forests. And so, there is a subtle move towards selective harvesting from a group from which people would expect the opposite.

Companies who produce forest machinery are preparing for the wave of "green wood." Green wood is that which is obtained in an environmentally friendly way. This "green wood" has already become a priority for many hardware stores in the United States, and will soon be demanded by the Canadian house-building public.

The first companies to make the switch are the harvesting equipment companies. This switch of equipment has, in fact, incurred the first major changes in harvesting methods. The equipment being produced now is significantly less damaging to the forest floor than the good ol' horse 'n saw logging operations. This process has demonstrated that public relations and new designs must maintain a tricky balance. The first must adhere to environmental friendliness and selective cutting to avert public unrest. The second must meet the industrial need for "rugged equipment...for heavy-duty cutting operations."

I feel the following is the solution companies have come up with: upon the design of a small piece of equipment that is as rugged and durable as a large piece of

equipment, a company can say to industry: "We have a small piece of equipment for your heavy-duty-cutting needs. It will save you money on gas, and it will not be as damaging on your roads." At the same time, the company can tell the public: "Here, we have designed a piece of equipment that is small, great for select cutting, and it hardly damages the soil at all."

So how did I come to this conclusion? In September of this year, I had the opportunity to attend Demo '96, a forestry equipment exposition in Quebec.

At this demonstration, I was like a fish out of water. I had almost no idea what the different kinds of equipment were used for, since my experience in the woods consisted only of tree-planting and a tour of duty as a boy scout. I think this is where I had an advantage over others in attendance: while they watched the equipment demonstrations, I watched the equipment. The fundamental difference was not colour, traction, or the ability to climb up ultra-steep slopes: it was size.

This equipment is small. You can have a complete selective harvesting operation with a vehicle the size of a Ford Ranger and a trailer. If you compare this to the equipment that is being used for much of today's work, it becomes apparent how these changes will help the environment.

At Demo '96, I saw why these companies are concerned about the image of their equipment. Some of it is not rugged enough to withstand the heavy-duty and high-speed work demanded in a clear cutting operation. Some equipment operators attempted to work at speeds, exceeding the abilities of the engine and resulting in the piece of

equipment overheating and burning out. This could be disastrous for a company that produces equipment: if a piece of equipment were to fail because it was designed for selective harvesting and used for clear cutting, the company would live under that cloud forever.

This is why companies want the rugged stuff. For years, it has been proven to be durable, and you can't have too much of a good thing. However, a good thing also can't last forever. And so now we face changes.

What will this do to the industry? It will not have the slightest effect on the shipping, milling and pulping aspects of the forestry. However, woodlot owners and harvesters will have to purchase or lease this new equipment, which will substantially increase overhead costs. This is not going to hurt anyone in terms of job loss; in fact, with selective harvesting, a woodlot

owner or harvester may feel the need to hire more workers. This could be the result of selective harvesting taking more time to cut the same amount of trees than it would to clear cut the same area.

For the companies, money will be the deciding factor. An increased production cost, no matter what the cause, is easily counter-balanced with a percentage increase to prices charged to consumers. The companies are aware of this and will use it to cover the expenses of conversion.

Not only do companies stand to gain financially, environmental improvements will also enhance their public image. While people are concerned about cutting our forests, they also realize the inevitability of it. In response to public concern and resignation, these companies are acting as environmental pioneers - those who ended the rapping of our forests.

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