

SPECTRUM

Developing a concept of enough

A recession is no picnic. Numerous Canadians feel its pinch in one way or another. Bankruptcies and pinkslips take their toll - on individuals, families and communities. Our sense of security, well-being and self-esteem can be shattered when prosperity turns into hardship.

Recessions erode confidence. Rather than spending our money, we hang on to it, wisely reducing our debt. Neither are we sure about tomorrow. There is a reluctance to try new ventures.

Recessionary times can also produce a myopia of sorts. We tend to view the economy almost entirely in terms of expansion. Our economy is most healthy, we say, when we produce and buy "things". This productivity needs to be stimulated in times of recession. Our economy has to be "in motion". Growth is the sacred word.

But, we also know that growth is not limitless. We cannot continue to expand forever, at least not in the way we are doing it now. In a rather stark way we are realizing that the fragile earth cannot sustain endless growth.

In that sense, belt-tightening, almost an instinctual reaction in a recession, is not such a bad thing. The policy "if you don't need it, don't buy it," may not stimulate the economy, but it may go some distance in preserving the environment.

We are not accustomed, however, to think that way. We buy on impulse, and we buy "things" - material products. We surround ourselves with conveniences, toys and luxuries. And, we have convinced ourselves that yesterday's wants and desires are today's needs. But are they?

Do we ever have enough? When can or should I say "I have enough; I really don't need more things." But such thoughts are generally not part of us. Marketing and advertising would rather that we not ask ourselves these questions.

The economic strategies, goals and visions we have adopted in our Western way of living bring many advantages, no doubt. But they also bring disadvantages. The great material party of the 70's and 80's is over, states Tom Sine. It can be sustained only at our peril. It takes a drastic toll on the environment, and on the disadvantaged, mostly those from the Third World.

Recessionary times, as painful as they are, may be the occasion in which we need to reassess our priorities, our orientations. Indeed, some have done just that, and made some startling discoveries. This past Christmas, rather than spending money, some people spent time on each other. Time became the commodity: family time, dinner

time, play time. People did things, rather than buy things. Their focus was on each other. And, it was surprisingly enjoyable.

That sort of focus does not require much money. It is also people and environment friendly. Can we determine the value of such activities? Not if we use the standard measurements of the market place. Here all things are assessed in terms of their dollar value. Meaningful activity and work is that which generates money. Interaction with people becomes the means toward a monetary end. Such an approach is, however, limiting. Things

(money, products) rather than fellow humans become the focus.

There is another criteria by which we could assess what is or is not valuable: easing the burden and suffering of people, especially the less advantaged, and ensuring the survival of the planet. Endeavors in these areas will generate wealth of a considerably different nature. Meaningful work becomes that which puts a human face on all our interactions.

Of course, this kind of focus will result in less productivity, at least in the way we are used to understanding it. But, removing the

Feminist reflections on 1991

1991 was a difficult year for feminism. We saw Anita Hill and Patricia Bowman fight brave fights against sexual harassment and acquaintance rape. Closer to home, right here in Fredericton, 1991 saw six teachers from F.H.S. publicly charge sex discrimination. All of these events have had positive impacts - men and women are more aware of the facts that these events occur, and that for one reason or another, women have found it difficult to go public. I won't be surprised if fewer women choose to go public now, following the treatment of the women who did. I don't know if Clarence Thomas sexually harassed Anita Hill any more than you do - what I do know is that she is as believable as he is - yet she was dismissed as 'crazy' and 'in love with him', etc. Patricia

Bowman's case was lost largely because of important gaps in her memory. In her interview with Dianne Sawyer on Prime Time Live, Ms. Bowman suggested that she was suffering from Post Traumatic stress disorder. She even made the point that if she were to make up such a story, she would have, no doubt filled in the blanks. Once again, I wasn't on the bench with Ms. Bowman and Mr. Smith - but I would like to know why her story was dismissed - and he was thought to be telling the truth. As any rape victim can tell you - rape is a very traumatic event. Many women suffer for years afterwards - and go through exhaustive therapy to heal the wounds.

It has been long known that a 'glass ceiling' exists for women and minorities trying to advance in

threats to our environment, healing dysfunctional families, eliminating poverty and living meaningful (non-consumptive) lives brings productivity of a more meaningful kind.

Developing a concept of enough may be the creative alternative we

need to deal with recession today. Focusing less on acquisition, consumption and status and more on community, celebration and spirituality will undoubtedly change our lives. And, I would dare say, even for the better.

The Wimmie's Room

the work place. This refers to an unspoken rule that bars women from the top jobs and salaries.

I accept the possibility that a man was the best person for the one-year vice-principal job at F.H.S. What I don't accept is that never in the history of Fredericton's only English High School has there been a qualified woman for the job.

What do all three situations have in common? The inability of our changing society to take women

seriously. Women still earn, on average, 35% less than what men earn. One in ten women is beaten by her spouse or partner. Until men and women are on an even playing field - situations like all of these will continue to exist, and until all people are held responsible for their actions and punished accordingly - women will continue to be victims. The question is - will you be there to speak up for them?

SWAT: Condom Machines

There is no denying that the most effective way of preventing unwanted pregnancy and the spread of STDs is through abstinence. However, according to a recent study of the UNB student population 82% of all UNB students have had sexual intercourse. Moreover 46% have had sex with a casual acquaintance. Among the sexually active students in this study an average of 4 sexual partners were reported; 22% had only one partner, 34% have had 2-5 partners, and 22% have had 6 or more partners. It was clear however that these students on the whole were not promiscuous. The majority had only one partner at a time and when that relationship ended another partner was found; a process called serial monogamy.

Data from the UNB study also indicates that a large number of the sexually active student population are practising unsafe sex. Approximately 67% of sexually active students have had vaginal intercourse without a condom in the last 4 weeks. The prevalence of STDs is demonstrated by the fact that 8% of UNB students admitted to having at least one STD that was detected and treated.

The UNB SWAT (Sex Without AIDS Today) Peer Education Program is designed to help students acquire the necessary skills to practice safer sex. Several games and activities are used to help students clarify their myths about AIDS and other STDs, identify the risk of different sexual activities, learn how to carry out safer sex, and how to communicate with their sexual partners about safer sex. During the course of each session peer educators ask students what they believe are barriers to using condoms. A common complaint is the inaccessibility of condoms. Many students do not own transportation and have not planned ahead to have intercourse. As a result they are more likely to have unprotected intercourse than to wait until they can get a condom.

This is confirmed by a study of students at Sherbrooke University in Quebec which found that students who use condoms are more likely to not view them as inconvenient. Other factors include the belief that condoms are very effective as a contraceptive barrier to STDs, as well as a generally positive feelings towards condoms. There is a normalization process which must be addressed in order for students to become comfortable with handling condoms and subsequently using them during sexual intercourse. Individuals who are not educated about the benefits of using a condom and whom have never handled a condom before are less apt to practice safe sex.

Through the SWAT Program we attempt to familiarize each student with condoms by encouraging them to open up the condom packaging and to examine the condom thoroughly. A condom demonstration is also provided for students to ensure that they are taught how to put on a condom properly. A comparison of different kinds of condoms is made possible through a display of various products. This normalization of condoms is an important component of safer sex education. Finally, we give each student several condoms to

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