

SPECTRUM

METANOIA

With John Valk (Campus Ministry)

Our new world order?

In a recent Globe and mail article, John Allemang wrote about the "Rise of a New Puritanism". A tough new orthodoxy of the 90's is becoming apparent: environmentalism. If you smoke in public, use styrofoam cups, waste natural resources, drive or idle you car unnecessarily be prepared to endure the wrath of the purists. If "green" is not your act expect to be harassed, castigated, ostracized, even slandered by the overzealous.

And so, a new type of public moral standard or value is bearing down on us. And, most support it. Polluters have very little public sympathy; we mean to stop them. Individual rights or conveniences are expected to take a back seat to communal (global) efforts to save the planet. We are impatient when our physical environment is threatened.

We are less impatient, however, when our social environment is threatened. When our families, children, the unborn, the poor are abused and exposed to violence and aggression, or lack proper protection and adequate resources we invoke our free enterprise doctrine: "survival of the fittest". That notion has prevailed for quite some time.

What is different today, however, is that we speak of having entered a New Age, a New World Order. A new era of peace and prosperity, whose potential is almost limitless, is said to be emerging. But, there is an irony. No sooner were these notions uttered and we were plunged into a war whose devastation has yet to be fathomed.

It should surprise no one that the large Iraqi military threat is due in part to Western technology. How many German, French and Amer-

ica enterprises have not supplied advanced killing expertise to Iraq? How can that be? How can a small nation, whose political, cultural and social values are so different from the West, gain access to military hardware that is potentially so devastating? What was the motivation of these corporations? Philanthropy?

The production of military hardware is a thriving business. Tremendous profits can and are gained in this endeavour. Many personal fortunes are made from these weapons of destruction. We know that more of the world's money is spent on guns, tanks and bombs than on food, medicine and education. All of this has been pointed out before. None of it is new.

Think now of the many Allied men and women who will be killed by the very bullets and bombs produced by their own compatriots. We are about to reap what we

have sown. When it comes to weapons production it is not buyer beware, but seller beware.

We have, thus, allowed profits (quick and huge), and high salaries that go along with them, to be the determining factor. In fact, it is largely profits and salaries that are the measuring stick of what we determine to be "successful": not what you do, but what you make. That has spilled over into our educational world. How many students are not being enticed by high salaries, yet are uncritical of the use being made of their skills? How many are not being groomed to work for corporations that participate, directly or indirectly, in the proliferation of machines of destruction? And furthermore, how many of these companies are not being sought as benefactors of our Canadian universities?

Yet, we continue to speak of a "New World Order". That has a

rather hollow ring if we are unwilling to set standards for our buying, selling and investing. Developing our technological expertise is a good thing when used for the benefit of humankind. However, if we allow our own greed, apathy and ignorance to prevail, our expertise will lead to its destruction. Will the many body bags returning from the Gulf shock us into a re-evaluation of our priorities?

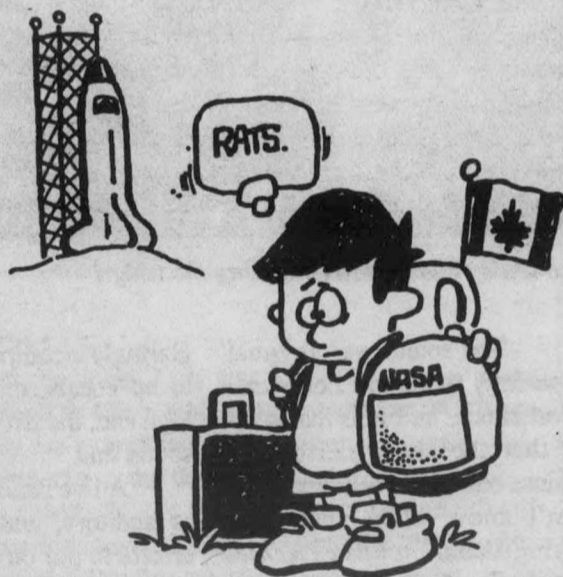
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