

Spectrum

METANOIA
BY JOHN VALK

Amusing ourselves to death

The entertainment industry is big business. Film, music and sport have become big ticket items. Their stars, leaders and managers are wealthy, highly persuasive and socially pervasive. They are today's cultural shapers.

The time, energy and money we devote to this industry indicates its high priority in our lives. Today's new "temples" include, in addition to our already omnipresent banking towers, ultra modern sporting facilities and concert halls. These attract millions -- people and dollars.

These facilities are "temples" because of what is said and done in them. They attract large and devoted crowds, complete with required dress (team jerseys, coats, T-shirts, hats), and not infrequently expected frenzy (yelling, screaming -- religious fervour?) Their "high priests" -- leading rock, sport and film stars -- have overwhelming formative influence. Their behavior is modelled, and their every words are deemed as "wisdom from heaven." Many offer personal salvation (do what you like and feel good about it), other economic salvation (to cities which house them). Some guarantee only their own riches.

No doubt entertainment is a legitimate part of our lives. But according to Neil Postman, we are "amusing

ourselves to death" (the title of his book) because of it. Has something happened to much of it that now threatens the very fabric of our society? Is there something about the way we entertain ourselves today -- with TV, sports, music, film -- that numbs us to things that would otherwise seem shocking, even scandalous, or diverts our attention from major issues to frivolous matters? That appears to be the case in what we have come to accept, even expect, in some areas of our lives.

Politics is a prime example. In many ways this important human activity has today become little more than a media event, some would say entertainment. Complex policies, platforms and issues become ten-second news clips consumed while we eat breakfast, drive in our cars, or wind down from a hectic day. Election campaigning is not infrequently reduced to expensive and polished TV advertising, where looks, attire and opponent-bashing is expected to sway our votes. Even election debates are reduced to vague promises, party cliches and shouting matches. Ironically though, many base their decisions, even the future of our country, on these. The extent that our politic activity and nature is reduced to TV image, and entertainment, is the extent to which we

"amuse ourselves to death."

Sports dominate our lives. Many have detailed knowledge of the names, faces and statistics of sport figures. The young emulate, even worship, sports heroes. How many of them, or even adults, have that same familiarity with historical events, religious movements or third world devastation? The "high priests" of sport would have us believe that only it -- with its focus on the here and now -- is important to our lives. And we have accepted that all else is "boring". The extent to which we accept this outlook on life is the extent to which we are "amusing ourselves to death."

Hollywood, year after year, offers us, for our meaningful moral, ethical and spiritual development, Rambo,

Pretty Woman, soap operas and games shows. And then we are mystified by the increase in crime, violence, sexual disease, abortions and suicide. Yet, in the midst of it we learn that rights have priority over responsibilities, that condoms make good sense for vulnerable and impressionable youth, and that the value of work lies in the entertainment, cars and clothes it will buy for the weekends. The extent to which we absorb this sort of thing, is the extent to which we "assume ourselves to death."

In our rapidly changing society, we place much faith in industrial development. But this form of development has not brought with it human development -- healing combined with authentic freedom -- as

promised by politicians and the capitalist elite. Instead, we are faced with increased unemployment, even underemployment. For many who do work, a longer not a shorter work week is common. How did we get this way?

Meaninglessness, whether in our studies, work or leisure, is not a small problem today. Neither is moral bankruptcy and spiritual poverty. Students today, much to their credit, are cynical of what is frequently shoved at them. That healthy dose of cynicism, combined with a unique perception and discernment on their part, will be needed for them to rise above a culture that risks "amusing itself to death."

WIMMIN'S ROOM
BY LIZ LAUTARD

Image problem

After reading an article in the Atlantic about the feminist movement's identity crisis and the negative image feminists get stuck with, something occurred to me. Actually, it occurred to me while talking over these issues with a friend a week or so ago. The feminist movement is so

busy battling sexism, participating in marches, writing letters and making phone calls, it is no wonder we get labeled as a group of angry women. It is our anger, depression and cynicism people often see in the public sphere (society). And, it is in our private sphere that people often do not see where we enjoy the benefits of being feminists.

We may be angry, but as feminists we all share the same goal of freeing women from their oppression (although we may disagree as to the causes of women's oppression and/or how to go about eradicating it). This goal may frustrate us sometimes because we think we will never see ourselves getting any closer to it. But, we keep on going and fighting (we can not help but fight). As feminists, we are all too aware that "ignorance is not bliss".

It is important to remember during your struggles to celebrate your vic-

tories (big and small) and to celebrate what positive things come out of your involvement with the feminist movement. Remember the feeling of empowerment when you do something for yourself as a woman, remember the sisterhood you feel with other women who share your goal and, most importantly, remember you are not alone. It is so easy to feel alone, like you are the only one who sees what is going on. But turning around, looking through the paper or across the room, you will see a sister who is on your side and feels the same way you do.

Before I go I wanted to tell you there is going to be a Candidates' Debate on Women's Issues on Sunday, October 17th in the MacLaggan Auditorium, room 105, beginning at 7:00 P.M. The National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) Voter Guides will also be available. See you there!

POSITIVELY PINK
BY COLIN LONGMAN

Symbols of pride

Quite often I wear a necklace that has six different coloured triangles hanging on it. Someone almost always asks if it means anything and they're always surprised when I say that they're Gay Pride Triangles. I don't know if they're surprised because they're finding out I'm gay as I thought everyone knew by now, or if they're surprised to find out that there is such a thing as "gay pride".

The gay/bi/lesbian community has adopted many symbols that it uses to uniquely identify itself. These symbols are generally widely recognised within the gay/bi/lesbian community but I've found that when asked why a particular symbol is used or what its history is, most can only say that they know it's "gay". The rainbow flag, and its colours, is such a symbol.

Colour plays an important role in any communities expression of pride. In Victorian England the colour green was associated with homosexuality. The pink and black triangles originally used by Nazi Germany to mark gays and lesbians in concentration camps (the subject of a future column) are now popular gay pride symbols and purple or lavender was

used as a gay symbol of pride in the 1960s. The most colourful of our symbols is the Rainbow Flag with its rainbow of colours - red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple. The colours represent the diversity of our community.

Designed by Gilbert Baker of San Francisco in 1978, the flag was created in response to a local activist's call for the need of a community symbol. Baker designed a flag with eight stripes: pink, red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet. Respectively, the colours represented sexuality, life, healing, sun, nature, art, harmony, and spirit.

Baker hand-dyed all the colours in the flag and since the colour hot pink was not commercially available at the time, his eight-striped version of the flag could not be mass produced. The solution: reduce the flag to seven strips!

In 1979 the San Francisco Pride Parade Committee decided to use Baker's flag to demonstrate the gay community's strength and solidarity. They eliminated the indigo stripe so that the colours could be evenly divided down the parade route. The six colours were incorporated into a six-

striped version that, today, is recognized by the International Congress of Flag Makers.

Initially a symbol of pride only in San Francisco, the Rainbow Flag has received increased visibility in recent years. The Rainbow Flag reminds us that ours is a diverse community - a community made of many unique and valuable people of which we should all be proud.

OPINION: STUDENT DISCIPLINARY CODE

From the Office of the Commissioner of Student Discipline

The S.D.C., which has been in force since first approved by the Board of Governors in 1980, provides students with a means of self-discipline. It is not a replacement for the laws governing the community as a whole, but an alternative whereby the University has recognized the special environment it creates and has developed its own Code accordingly.

The Campus Police, a student organization, has the main responsibility for enforcing the Code. Infringements are reported to the Student Disciplinary Committee--all students--who are empowered under the Code to hold hearings and apply sanctions (penalties) on those found guilty of offences. The Code clearly lists the offences covered, including drinking under age, or in unauthorized places, assault or disorderly conduct, damage to property, theft, refusal to show student identification to a C.P., obstruction of C.P., falsification or misuse of an I.D. card, and obtaining meals by unlawful means. The sanctions currently include fines up to \$200.00, restitution for damage, suspension of social privileges and recommendation for suspension or dismissal from the University.

During the 1992-93 academic year no students were found guilty of underage drinking offences. One student was found guilty of possession of open liquor in an unauthorized place. The fine in this case was \$50.00. The requirement of N.B.L.C.C. cards, introduced in the 1987-88 academic year, has greatly reduced the number of offences related to under-age drinking, i.e. 40 in 1987-88.

To maintain the privilege of a blanket liquor license, the University must ensure that the Province's liquor laws are scrupulously enforced: students are asked to cooperate by following these laws.

Students were also found guilty of other offences, including obstruction of C.P.'s, damage to property, trespass on UNB property, failure to identify themselves to C.P.'s or Security, misuse of fire protection equipment, theft on UNB property, acting or speaking in a disorderly, disruptive, indecent or offensive manner, and assault. Fines for these offences ranged from \$50.00 to \$186.00. In addition to fines, four students has social privileges restricted.

The Code also provides for an appeal mechanism to the Board of Deans, which, under the University Act, has a special responsibility for discipline.

The Code establishes a Supervisory Board, which includes representatives from the Board of Governors and from student groups, a Commissioner for Student Discipline (the University Secretary), who is "responsible for the implementation and administration of the Code," and a Technical Advisor, who is usually a member of the Faculty of Law. It also details the membership of the Student Disciplinary Committee and the procedures to be followed in the laying of charges and conduct of hearings. Any student interested in serving on the Committee should contact the Student Union office or the Chair of the Committee, Chris Borden, Faculty of Law (4669). Copies of the Code are available from the office of the University Secretary, Old Arts Building, Room 110 (4613).

Hello? Hello?

If you don't give us submissions for the Opinion column, we won't know what your opinion is.

There's a lot going on (election, Woodsmen's Competition, movies, theatre, River City Shoot-out) so write down what you think, in a submission of 750 words or less, and as long as it's not racist, sexist, homophobic, or an attack of a personal nature, we'll print it.

Prospective Opinions must be received by the Editor-in-Chief before 5 p.m., Monday.