

SPECTRUM

Pride, a Deeper Love...

Our Families, Part 1

"He told his parents that he was gay, and was shocked and outraged when his parents condemned his sexual orientation and forced him to undergo psychiatric therapy."

*Note: the names of people have been changed to protect their privacy. Strict confidentiality has been insured.

When an individual comes out, he or she is dealing with a three part process, that impacts on his/her life and the lives of family and possibly friends. The first is self-acknowledgement - realizing that you are gay, lesbian or bisexual. Some people grasp this at an early age, while others take much longer to come to terms with this aspect of themselves. The second

step is self-acceptance - accepting yourself for who you are, not what you are. This often involves overcoming the negative and homophobic values and attitudes that one has been raised under, and consequently must deal with. It is this second step that many men and women find hardest to accept, and is the center of why some young homosexuals and bisexuals commit suicide (a later issue to be dealt with). The final step in the coming out process is disclosure. Telling people that you are gay, lesbian or bisexual is the second hardest thing to do. In this

issue, the subject of disclosure is on family members; your parents, siblings and possibly close relatives.

"I don't see any reason why they have to tell anyone. They can just lead their lives without making such a big deal out of it." (from *Our Sexuality*, by Crooks & Baur, 4th ed.). The above quote is one that is often used by many heterosexual individuals, especially family members, who are most often hardest hit by the implication that their son, daughter, sibling, niece, nephew, etc. is not who they expected them to be. Many day-to-day situations do not warrant the revelation of one's sexual orientation. However, in family interactions, this is a significant stage in coming out. The family has long been a source of support for all of us at some time in our lives; socially, spiritually, psychologically and on occasion, financially. When family members are told that their child/sibling is of an alternate sexual orientation, the reactions are highly emotional and/or fraught with numerous scenarios, from the benign to the horrific. Parents are usually the hardest hit by this process.

Parents expect many things of their children, with some expectations left unfulfilled. In children, parents see a second chance at life, a chance for their son or daughter to be in a better position than they were. Yet, children are not completely malleable, and quite often have other plans for their own lives. When parents are confronted with the fact that their child is gay, lesbian or bisexual, a whole range of images and ideas will run through their minds. For many, it is an ending to an ideal dream of "normalcy" for their son or daughter; no heterosexual marriages, no chance for grandchildren, and an end to how others will view them as a "normal" family. Other parents will view it as a sign of their inadequacy to be "good" parents; "Where did we go wrong?" is the cry that some parents vent to the world. There are several beliefs that are challenged when one comes out to one's parents. It is these beliefs that are behind parental support and/or rejection of a homosexual/bisexual child.

One belief stems from a religious

point of view. Many of our parents were brought up during a time when homosexuality and bisexuality were considered sins. Religious parables and dogma have been laid out as full examples of how homosexuality and bisexuality were considered offensive in the eyes of God. A return to God, a denouncement of the homosexual/bisexual nature of oneself and a return to the proper and "normal" life was how many people dealt with the subject. Parents under this belief system, come under three divisions; those who completely reject their child, those who reject their child's same-sex orientation, but accept them, and those who support them completely. *B wanted to come out to her mother, a devout Christian, in a gradual manner. Unfortunately, she was ousted by a relative who was also a lesbian, and who renounced her sexual orientation when she passed away. This placed a lot of stress on the family situation, since in the eyes of her mother, B was not going to Heaven if she continued being a lesbian. The situation was aggravated further when B "married" another woman; in her mother's opinion, she mourned the "death" of her daughter. *P came out to his parents, who did not fully understand what it meant to be gay. They all agreed to have him examined, in order to find out what caused this "condition" and what could be done about it. The medical examiners confirmed that he was gay, and determined that nothing could be done about it; barring reporting him to the authorities for incarceration, which they could not do due to client confidentiality (at this time homosexuals were still considered criminal). P's parents, however were remarkably enlightened, and his father understood and supported him. Whatever the situation, religion has long been a bone of contention in the issue of homosexuality and bisexuality.

A second perception comes from the field of psychology, and the subject of homosexuality/bisexuality-as-mental-illness. This theme rose around the early 1800's, and past "cures" were touted ranging from mutilation (e.g. castration, lobotomy) to psychological therapies (e.g.

various forms of aversive therapy, such as shock treatment or nausea-inducing drugs, other forms of behaviour modification). Many theories of how and why people "became" gay, lesbian or bisexual were declared, such as the domineering mother theory and even a theory stating that established homosexual and bisexual men and women actively recruited innocent and unknowing young men and women into a same-sex orientation. The American Psychiatric Association and Canadian Psychiatric Association removed the subject of same-sex orientation from their list of mental disorders in 1973. Unfortunately, some current mental health practitioners still adhere to the traditional view that it is an illness. Parents who come under this category, perceive their homosexual or bisexual child as "sick" and in need of medical "help". There is no evidence to support the theory of homosexuality/bisexuality as a mental illness. In fact, researchers Alan Bell and Martin Weinberg in 1978, stated "...homosexual adults who have come to terms with their homosexuality, who do not regret their sexual orientation, and who can function effectively sexually and socially, are no more distressed psychologically than are heterosexual men and women." A possible implication here, is that negative societal perceptions may be a major factor in why homosexuals and bisexuals have such negative self-perceptions. *K lived in a small town and came out at an early age. He told his parents that he was gay, and was shocked and outraged when his parents condemned his sexual orientation and forced him to undergo psychiatric therapy. He left his parents and now lives on his own, having little to do with his mother and father. *C told her parents that she was bisexual, and they were incredibly supportive of her decision to come out. However, her brother does not speak to her any more, stating that he did not want to have anything to do with her "kind".

Two other belief systems, and the continuation of the family issue will be discussed in next week's issue of the Brunswickan. ■

NOT that you asked... by Frank Pearce

"I don't know what economists our government is listening to, or where they were trained, but they quite simply don't have a clue about history."

A little piece of advice for you, folks: get a secure job and save your money. The reason is simple; within our lifetimes there's going to be another Depression. True, the saving of money will hasten that Depression, but since the thing is inevitable anyway, you might as well be one of those who'll be ready for it.

The sad fact is that so long as our country continues to practice supply side economics a Depression is the only possible result. I don't know what economists our government is listening to, or where they were trained, but they quite simply don't have a clue about history. Back in the twenties the Western world was supposedly doing great; the middle class was reaping the benefits of a producer oriented economy that had been dominant for decades. Of course, beneath the middle class was the ever-expanding lower class, which was completely unable to purchase the consumer goods of the period and, as a result, were completely ignored by popular culture. The end result was that the lower class expanded to such an extent that the middle class was no longer able to support the economy. So, we got the Depression, which only took us a global war and nuclear weapons to end.

The type of economy we're running with now is based upon the premise of making it easier for manufacturers to produce. The problems with this theory are many. One of these problems is the economic scheme's effect upon the distribution of money. Under supply side economics, the rich get an increasing portion of the nation's money, while the poor get an even smaller portion than previously. Ludicrous as it may seem, there are actually economists out there who say that this is a good thing.

As outrageous as that may be, however, it is only a result of the real problem. The idea of making it easier for manufacturers to produce inherently means that the manufacturers must have a free hand in dealing with their largest expense: labour. This means that unions must be weakened, and that wages must fall. Once this is done, those most effected are pushed to the fringes of the middle class and towards the lower class. So, all of a sudden, Canada will find itself with a rapidly enlarging lower class. Lower class, by the way is just a euphemism for poor, and the problem with the poor is that can't afford

to buy anything beyond food and shelter. So, some time later this decade or the next, we'll be right where we were in the thirties, with most of the nation's money in the hands of the rich manufacturers, who now find that there's too little money in the public's hands to afford the purchase of their products.

So how can an economist argue in favour of such an obviously doomed policy? It's quite simple. Although supply side economics may be a disaster for the country as a whole, there can be no denying that it is good for the rich. Many economists, not being fools, know that it is the rich who have the money to pay them, and so in order to get a job they convince themselves that what is good for the rich is ergo good for the country. Unfortunately, as any half-decent logician could tell you, this does not necessarily follow, and thus these economists are effectively doing Canada a disservice.

As self-serving as this excuse is, it is essentially the same as that used by Canada's politicians. True, politicians do not need the rich, theoretically, to get elected. But the truth is that politicians feel a need for the money which business interests can pour into their coffers, and they also know that it will look good on them if they can attract business to the country or their region. They do this by offering concessions, by making it easier for manufacturers to produce goods. In the short run, this may look good to the general public. After all, these industries are providing jobs. But what type of jobs are they? They will generally be low paying jobs, as industry will try to maximise profits by keeping salaries down, all with the connivance of the government.

Two federal elections ago Bud Bird of the Progressive Conservative Party made an appalling blunder during a speech made at the UNB Cafeteria. In his argument in favour of free trade with the United States he used the example of how it would be such a boon to businesses such as Dunkin' Donuts. Isn't that a fear that many of us have, that our university degrees will earn us jobs at Dunkin' Donuts or some other equally dead end job? If Mulroney, Campbell, and now Chretien get their way and we continue to be bludgeoned with supply side economics, then even the Dunkin' Donuts jobs will be hard to find. ■



Daycare and Graduate Students

Operating Grants and Special Purpose Grants

by Timothy T. Buskard, President of the GSA

The GSA has supported the College Hill daycare Centre from the beginning. This year the format of that support will be to subsidize those full-time graduate students using the service. The value of the subsidy will be based on the number of children in the daycare center and which program they are in. The subsidies will be given out at the end of each of the three terms and receipts will be required. The cost of daycare is expensive and the GSA is trying to help out our members. We can only extend this subsidy to those students using the CHDC at this time since we have made a commitment to getting and keeping daycare facilities at UNB Fredericton.

The GSA has changed its funding policy for societies and to get the Executive out of the party business. This Executive has decided to create Operating Grants for Academic Societies (i.e. Department Societies). Those academic societies which register with the GSA (including membership list, Executive List, constitution, and budget) will receive operating funds to hold events and to do with as they see fit. The final details of how the operating grants are to be dispersed are being discussed by the Executive and will be made public in the new year. The December 2nd deadline is not being enforced but once we have decided the final format of the operating grant allocation,

we will disperse the funds immediately. The unused funds will be added to the special purpose grants account.

Special purpose grants can be applied for by any graduate society at UNB. These funds are for events that are put on by that society which are open to other students and/or faculty. The funds are limited and are distributed on a first come, first served basis. Applications must include a description of the event and a complete budget. The Executive will review the application and respond as soon as possible. To ensure that your society receives any funding before the event, allow at least one month for processing and possible inquiries from the Executive.