

SPECTRUM

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So where is the money?

ALLOTMENT! In 1987, the NB government set up a trust fund under the Victims Services Act, but not one non-profit group has received one cent of this money.

by Rita Boudreau

Talk about government Bullshit! If you ever have the opportunity to hear Frank McKenna whining about why no one likes him anymore, cite him this example.

In June of 1987, the provincial government set up a trust fund under the Victims Services Act. Every time someone is found guilty of a crime, the judge has the authority to impose a \$35 fine, in addition to the criminal's sentence.

The \$35 is called a victims surcharge. This has been going (or has been supposed to be going) into a trust fund set up for the victims of violence—the vast majority of whom are women and children. According to the Victims Services Act, the money "shall be held in trust for the purposes of this act in a separate account in the Consolidated Fund."

So where is this money? Your guess is as good as mine on this one. It has been five years since this legislation was passed.

There have been rumours that the McKenna government has spent the money. There were also rumours that the McKenna government was pulling a stunt similar to what it did with the environmental trust fund. In that case the McKenna government tried to make itself

seem like Mr. Wonderful by setting up an environmental trust fund. An investigation by the media found that the money was being spent on government programs already in existence and not on new initiatives like it was supposed to be.

So, that brings us back to the question, if the government hasn't been using the fund for its own purposes, then where is the money? Not one non-profit group has received one cent of this money. In fact, no one even knew about the money until the information was leaked by a group of women in Saint John trying to set up a rape crisis line about a year ago.

Now, to get to my original statement about government bullshit. In a recent government back patting, aren't-we-wonderful-type publication, there is an article entitled "NB GOVERNMENT ESTABLISHING VICTIMS FUND."

(Newsflash, Frank, the fund was established five years ago. You've just decided to get off your butt and make it look like you're doing something with the fund after shit has been hitting the fan in the media for the past six months).

Anyway, the article goes on to explain that our wonderful government (heavy sarcasm) headed by Frank McKenna has done victims

of violence a great favour by setting up this trust fund (the fact that they have been sitting on the money for five years is not mentioned, of course). The fund is nearly a million bucks (assuming that the money is really in its trust fund).

Now, I'm getting to the good part. The article goes on to mention that a committee has been established (yea, the committee that was supposed to be established five years ago) and "will review applications for funding from community groups and organization and make recommendations to the Minister (Bruce Smith)." Well, ain't that special.

THEN, the article sort of drops the bomb shell that HALF the money from this trust fund will go to the existing victims services program which has been around for years and funded by the government. Mmmmm, I seem to see a similar pattern developing here. Yes, I can hear the words "environmental trust fund scandal" some-

THE WIMMIN'S ROOM

where at the back of my mind. However, I digress again.

Now, I will be so bold as to point out that funding government services was never the intention of the act. In fact, a lawyer is currently checking to see if what they are doing is even legal. Now can you say: "ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST FUND SCANDAL - PART 2."

Even if there is some loophole in the Act that makes it technically legal to take half of the money intended for non-profit groups and give it to the government, I still think it's pretty shitty. With the hatchet job Frank McKenna did on funding to the Fredericton Rape Crisis Centre, counselling for abused children, teenage mothers,

street kids and all the other non-profit services, the least he could do is allow them to have money that was allotted to them by his own legislators.

P.S...For those of you involved with groups that could use this money, the committee members are Dr. Sandra Byers of Fredericton, Roland Crook, Sackville, Paul Picard, Edmundston, Catherine Hentschel, Beresford and Dr. Donna Spalding of Hampton. Or you can contact Bruce Smith at the Department of The Solicitor General at 453-2768 or Doug Naish who is with the Victim/Witness Assistance Program. With any luck, you may see the money sometime before another half decade passes.

METANOIA

A pluralistic nation

OPINION! The desire to accommodate all religious beliefs has the unfortunate consequence of publicly affirming none.

by John Valk

Canada is a pluralistic nation. Within its borders are peoples of distinct racial and ethnic origins. In this unique mosaic all Canadians are taught to tolerate others, that all beliefs are to be held in equal respect and that no belief is to be imposed on another. The cultural diversity in this country makes Canada a beacon of hope in a world not unfamiliar with racial oppression and "ethnic cleansing".

Canadians in general affirm the basic principles of liberalism. We grant others the room to believe what they wish, without fear of oppression or recrimination. We are a free and open society. But, are we as free, open and tolerant in the public domain as we think?

The great desire to accommodate all religious beliefs has the unfortunate consequence of publicly affirming none. Instead, we privatize them. Religious beliefs, values and morals — what many affirm to be true, right and good — are relegated to the periphery of public life. The very religious framework out of which many con-

duct themselves, even in public, is frequently reduced to no more than private "opinion" - mere "belief".

In the public forum, on the other hand, we speak of facts, "value-free" knowledge and (political?) correctness. We uncover what is "true, good and right" by means of reason. Only information (facts) gathered according to rational methods are given public consent. Personal religious beliefs about what is right or true is not, unless they attain sufficient political lobby.

It is also to these "rational", or empirical, facts that the public tends to respond. For example, research has established as fact that 80% of students are sexually active. Many AIDS committees, therefore, implement programs which respond solely to that statistic. Less attention, however, is given to another fact. Some (and not a minority) affirm that the AIDS crisis is less a medical and more a sexual lifestyle issue. They believe that abstinence rather than condoms ought to be

Continued on page 10

Superstition? What a scream

HALLOWEEN! An exploration into the obscure roots of Halloween and the dark mystique of superstitions

by Sherry Morin

See Dick and Jane. See Sherry. See Sherry not see Dick and Jane. See Dick and Jane scare Sherry. See Sherry scream.

October 26 was the scariest day for Brian Mulroney; Tomorrow is the scariest day for everyone else. What's most scary about October 31 is that we can't avoid the terror by simply staying away from the voting polls.

In keeping with the "spirit" of Halloween, this column explores the obscure roots of superstitions, hopefully to the end that our fears will be eased... As perhaps more Canadian politicians should note, apprehension among the public dissipates once the unexplained is explained to them. It's too late for me to explain the Accord in this article, but I'm just in time for the other realm of The Unexplained- Halloween and Superstition.

A superstition can assume one of three forms. The most common is the ritual, followed by the taboo and the omen. Our customary celebration of Halloween is a ritual. It began with the Celts, whose calendar designated October 31 as the day for honoring The Dead. This custom was diffused into Old English cultures. There, the term "hallow", meaning "saint" or "holy man", was a common word of the day. Hence, the last day of October became known as "All Hallows' Eve".

On this date, The Dead supposedly assumed the forms of animals who lurked among the living. Since Christain doctrine disdained the "pagan" belief that souls could be condemned to the secular world, Pope Gregory IV re-christened

October 31 as "All Saints' Day" in 837. Some countries, such as Italy, went along with and retained the Pope's version. North Americans, of course, preferred the Pagan version. This may point to an inherent propensity for evil-doing, as you'll see below.

The notorious New England witch-hunts are a very black chapter in North American history. In 1692, Salem, Massachusetts residents became famous for arresting and/or imprisoning several hundred persons of the surrounding community. Nineteen were hanged. Giles Corey, because he wouldn't present his plea to the make-shift Salem jurors, was pressed to death. Corey and the others' fates were the consequence of a rumor started by over-imaginative children. The children, in self-protection under questioning by authorities, had provided names and false evidence which placed many innocents under suspicion. At the time, Salem residents were fearful of French and Native attacks on the New England region. This insecurity, combined with rumor, provided the perfect test-tube for exponential growth of superstition and scapegoating. In essence, superstition is a social virus fed by fear.

With the exception of the Salem atrocities, superstition hasn't always proven harmful. Superstition can also be used in a positive way that psychologists might label the "self-fulfilling prophecy." Before

performing an action, some people prepare themselves with a "prop" such as a lucky pair of sneakers, or a specific ritual such as crossing their fingers, in order to help them perform the action to a better degree. It is safe to say that there are no mystical forces at work here. Nevertheless,

superstition can improve performance. If a basketball player wears his lucky shoes in a game and wins the game, he may associate his winning the game with the fact that he had worn a particular pair of sneakers.

This process is called attribution. In subsequent games, wearing the "lucky shoes" may provide the player with extra confidence, thus allowing him to win more often. This is a common phenomenon. We often attribute our fortune or misfortune to arbitrary objects, actions or events; this is probably how all superstitious behavior originated. B.F. Skinner offered evidence for this idea in 1948. In a series of experiments, he encouraged the repetition of, or "reinforced" so-called superstitious behavior in pigeons. Skinner might call superstition a sometimes-pesky, sometimes-helpful "side-effect" of the evolutionary learning processes which help us to adapt to our world successfully.

Often, superstition has spiritual

Continued on page 9

SEE SHERRY SPEAK