

Blood and Thunder Continued From Previous Page

heat strikes the sprinklers, and not smoke.

In the end if smoking in the kitchenette is banned so be it, but, if the ban ricochets into my room I will defy it. Let us seek the worries of the kitchenette problem but let's avoid the worriers. They are haters of liberty and loathers of individuals. They wish to politicize everything. We should wipe the gnostic smirk of self-righteousness off the faces of the moral-buttskins. Anyone who thinks he has a better idea of what's good for people than people do is a swine. (And a memo to those who started this storm and are graduating: Pull your pants up, turn your hat around, and get a job.)

Nick Lakoumentas

Stop the
Liberal Axe!

To Whom It May Concern:

The liberal government has announced massive cuts threatening every social program that exists in Canada today. It is, without question, the most savage assault ever launched against social services by any government in Canadian history. The Liberals' "Social Reform" package will lead to a doubling of post-secondary tuition, the slashing of U.I. and welfare, and the closure of hospitals. These cuts are an attack on workers, students, the unemployed, the elderly and the poor in general. Such "reforms" must be opposed!

The Liberals are planning a series of hearings across the country around this so-called "Social Policy Review". Federal Human Resources Minister Lloyd Axworthy and other Liberal M.P.'s will be appearing at these meetings. They will be arriving in Fredericton on Dec. 15. The Fredericton Branch of the International Socialists is organizing a demonstration outside of these "meetings" to oppose the cuts. We want to relay two important messages to the Liberal government: First, that this "consultation" process is a sham. The meetings are neither democratic, nor truly open to the public. The people who will most be affected by the cuts will not be able to participate in these hearings. Besides, the Liberals have already made up their minds to destroy our social safety net. Paul Martin made this clear when he threatened drastic budget cuts "through hell or high water." Second, that we oppose all of the cuts. We will not allow the Liberals to "solve" their economic crisis on the backs of workers, students, and the poor.

These hearings are clearly being set up as a justification for massive cuts to social services. They must be met by vocal, militant protests. It is clear that there is a widespread willingness to fight the cuts in this country (see Nov.'s *Socialist Worker* for more details). Let's add Fredericton to the list of cities which will not take these attacks sitting down. We need endorsements and, most importantly, your participation.

Rally at the Fredericton Inn, 1315 Regent St., Thursday, Dec. 16 at 12 pm.

If you have any questions, or would like to confirm your endorsement or participation, please call me at our office at 454-7126. If you would prefer to FAX a response, do so to (506)453-4538 [Attn: Scott Jack, I.S., 454-2772].

SPECTRUM

Pride, a Deeper Love...

by J.

Societal Backlash by J.

There are two questions that I want to address this issue, since they do affect the homosexual and bisexual community in their general message and content. The first question is an extension of Darren's article from last issue, concerning having homosexuality and bisexuality "shoved in society's face". The second question concerns a discussion that I had with a group of people, in which a particular section of the discussion had my undivided attention. This one dealt with the subject of homosexuality and bisexuality as some sort of genetic disease.

To begin, the first question is one that I have heard quite frequently from many people, most of whom are heterosexual. The current trend of gay, lesbian and bisexual visibility is, from our point of view, a welcome balm to the previous situation in which we, as a subculture, were kept in the closet. Very little was printed about homosexuals and bisexuals, in terms of who we are, our lives and our "culture". The most one heard of in terms of gay, lesbian and bisexual literature, television and other media, was the focus on our sex lives and stereotypical behaviours; mostly written by heterosexuals who don't really know what it is like to be homosexual or bisexual. In recent years, however, many people have come out in societies throughout the world. Some changes in politics and religion, among other societal agencies, have produced a situation in which we, as homosexual and bisexual men and women, can express who we are. Granted there have been several obstacles that had to be surpassed, but in general, some changes have taken place. Yet, there has been a marked grumbling among many people about the homosexual and bisexual community. Statements such as "I'm tired of having this gay/lesbian/bisexual bullshit shoved in my face all the time", "I don't want to see/hear about THEIR sexuality/sex lives etc." or even the quote from Darren's friend, "I'm tired about hearing about all this gay stuff" are just a few of the things that have come about through the years.

Let me address these remarks. First, some of this "gay stuff" (gay, lesbian and bisexual) IS shoved in your face. The reasoning behind this is twofold. One: the gay, lesbian and bisexual community has been kept in the dark for so long that its time that we were noticed and acknowledged as part of society. Two: what the general society knows about homosexuals and bisexuals, are mostly stereotypes and (myth) perceptions; therefore what is "shoved in your face" are actual information concerning our community. We live in a world that is seeing many great changes taking place. The homosexual and bisexual movement is but one part of these changes. True, they have been some media focus on the sexual behaviours of our community, but many of the things that have been promoted, are our lives as functional members of society. Our sexuality is our business, but just like heterosexual sex is discussed in society now, so should homosexual and bisexual sex be discussed as well. This of course, does not include any religious viewpoints concerning gays, lesbians and bisexuals.

Second, many of the issues that heterosexuals have problems with, are issues that are not shoved in their faces, and are often taken for granted by them. I've heard several people say that they have a problem with gays, lesbians and bisexuals holding hands in public, kissing and so on. What seems to be the problem? Heterosexuals hold hands, kiss and touch each other in public many times, and it's not frowned upon. Mind you, heavy petting and gross public displays of affection are looked upon as a social faux pas in the heterosexual, homosexual and bisexual community so the small displays of affection are hardly worth screaming about. If you don't want to "hear about" the diversity of people in the world that you live in, then your world must certainly be small and narrow-minded.

The second question is one that I was personally involved in during the past week. The discussion began harmlessly enough, but then switched to equal rights and the various controversial issues in the present. Running the gamut from minority rights to abortion, the issues concerning homosexual and bisexual rights took an interesting turn. The particular statement that got my attention was "Someday soon, they'll find the genetic code that makes people gay (lesbian or bisexual), and then find a cure for it!" Excccccuse me. Hello? What!!!! The basic gist of this statement is that homosexuality and bisexuality is some kind of genetic disease that we can cure. Whether or not being gay, lesbian or bisexual has a biological, environmental or psychological origin is rather a moot point. As a diverse group of people, homosexuals and bisexuals function "normally" in society, contributing to its economy, education, entertainment, medical fields; the list can go on and on. True we don't always contribute

to the procreation of the species, but we can, and do, care for those children who are born or "adopted" by homosexual and bisexual parents. In terms of pigeonholing us as a disease, the medical and mental health community has long abandoned the classification of homosexuality and bisexuality as an illness or disease. Webster's Dictionary, defines disease as "...a condition of the living animal or plant body or one of its parts that impairs the performance of a vital function." The obvious reply would be that the vital function being impaired is the procreation of the human species. However, from this viewpoint, humans were created/evolved to just populate the planet with more humans. What about all the pleasure sensations and nerves and so on, that are part and parcel of sexuality? If we were meant to just procreate, we certainly wouldn't need pleasure nerves. Humanity has been blessed with emotions, feelings and erogenous zones that make sexuality more than just a means for procreation. Homosexuals and bisexuals make up a small part of the general population (10% according to the 1948 Kinsey study, although I question this percentage) so from a survival of the species standpoint, we don't take a large chunk out of the procreation section. Besides, the way the planet is overpopulated with humans, do we really need more?

It's great that we are finally getting a lot of acknowledgement in society, both good and bad (it does promote discussion). The recent years have seen many positive role models coming out and speaking up for the homosexual and bisexual community. Yet we still have far to go; we don't have equal rights, we can't have our marriages acknowledged as a means of expressing our life-long commitments to our significant other, and our children can be taken away from us because we don't fit the "requirement of a family". Homophobia and hatred of homosexuals and bisexuals persists in the world, and it can be expressed through violence, discrimination and fanatical support for "traditional values". Statements, such as those that I addressed today, can indirectly promote hatred through the expression of those statements, and people acting upon them. People not wanting to "hear about all that gay stuff" can prevent communication and understanding of actual gay, lesbian and bisexual experiences, perpetuating misconceptions and stereotyping. The focus on homosexuality and bisexuality as a disease that must be cured, could lead to a mass eugenics movement that may see the destruction of countless lives, both born and unborn. Not to mention perpetuating the belief that being gay, lesbian or bisexual is wrong. Yes, sometimes homosexuality and bisexuality is "shoved in your face", but then again, heterosexuality is also shoved in your face. Is it any different?

The

Thoughts on Welfare Reform

by James Kierstead

Premier McKenna is attracting a considerable amount of media attention for the welfare reforms implemented in our province. The jewel in the crown of these programs is the experimental NB WORKS, funded at the taxpayer's expense of 177 million over the five years.

The stated purpose of this program and others like it is to provide counselling, education, training, and work experience to welfare recipients in order that they may strive towards self-sufficiency. This program also serves as a potential model for the federal government's approach to reform on a national scale.

This year the New Brunswick government will spend 305 million on welfare programs or 9.2% of total spending. Currently there are 39,298 cases managed by the Department of Income Assistance, in which 31.1% are single mothers raising families.

Where the statistics really become disturbing is in relation to educational attainment. Of the total number of welfare recipients in the province, 73% have less than a grade twelve education. In a labour market where jobs for low skill labour are scarce, one can understand the feeling of entrapment felt by this emerging underclass. It is estimated that men and women of our generation will change careers an average of seven times during our lives. To be receptive to retraining and skills enhancement, it is imperative that one has a solid education to build upon. In a province where public education has been provided for generations, it is simply criminal that successive governments have allowed the

Was St. Paul Anti-Women?

When the subject of women in the history of Christianity is raised, Paul, apostle and most prolific of the New Testament writers, gets a bad rap. He is often held responsible for 2000 years of female oppression in the church. Two places in particular in his writings (1 Corinthians 14: 33-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-14) are seen to advocate ecclesiastical patriarchy. In the first passage, women are instructed to remain silent in the churches, to be submissive; "for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church." In the second, Paul forbids a woman "to teach or to have authority over a man: she must be silent."

Over the centuries the Christian Church seemed quite comfortable with a literal reading of these texts. It secured divine sanction for male-dominated culture. Of late, however, with the walls of patriarchy crumbling, such literal reading of the texts poses problems.

Some have found the views of Paul, and the church, quite intolerable on this matter, and have disassociated themselves. Others, seeking to remain in the church and effecting changes where possible, have tended to ignore Paul. Both situations are unfortunate. Neither give Scriptures its due, and both write Paul off as hopelessly anti-feminist.

Has Paul been given a fair hearing? Is it possible that the anti-feminist label is unwarranted, that Paul does not universally forbid, for example, the ordination of women to the ministry, the priesthood, and leadership in the church? I would like to touch briefly on the Corinthian passage in this regard, and I rely on some of the thoughts of John Cooper, professor of Philosophical Theology. I leave the Timothy passage for another time.

Sound Biblical exegesis requires that passages be understood in their context, to avoid misinterpretation. The passage in question is not specifically concerned with the place of women. It is concerned with orderliness and propriety of worship. When a person is speaking in a worship setting, there is to be respectful listening — silence from others. Interruptions, especially questions, are highly inappropriate.

The passage mentions specifically, however, that women, not men, should be silent in the churches: "if they want to inquire about something they should ask their husbands at home." Why does Paul say this? It has been understood to mean that women must be excluded from ecclesiastical ministry.

Though the passage speaks about women, it refers more specifically to wives. It mentions husbands, rather than men in general. It has, therefore, more to do with the husband-wife relationship. But why does Paul instruct wives to be submissive to husbands? Is he advocating a patriarchal family structure?

Perhaps Paul is merely recognizing that such a family structure dominates in his society, and at this point does not wish to disrupt

accepted norms for marriage and family. He has made it clear elsewhere (Ephesians 5) that men and women, husbands and wives are equal before God. If he does advocate authority of husbands over

wives, it is certainly not that husbands have autocratic power, the last word on every matter, and ruling authority over women. Perhaps Paul intends more a "spiritual direction-setting authority."

Ephesians 5 states that husbands have "authority" over their wives, as Christ has "authority" over the church. But Christ's "authority" was not that of a Ruler. It was that of a Savior—one who lays down his life for another. Authority is better understood in terms of responsibility (primary responsibility?); ensuring the spiritual maintenance and joy of the marriage.

Today the word "authority" has negative connotations. We are more accustomed to the words equality and rights. But frequently missing from our vocabulary is the word "responsibility". Paul is making a radical statement. In a patriarchal context where husbands easily disposed of their wives, he is saying that husbands have a prime responsibility; that they may have to sacrifice for the sake of the marriage. That is a radical claim even today, where wives frequently sacrifice most.

Nonetheless, Paul was telling wives that they must be silent in the churches. Why? It is not that women could not speak, pray, even prophesy, in the worship setting. Elsewhere (1 Cor. 11: 5, 13) he speaks of them doing just that. So he was hardly advocating silence, as a universal principle. Could it be that there was a kind of speaking in the Corinthian church that Paul found inappropriate, and disruptive for worship?

The early Christian communities offered new freedoms for women. No doubt the new found Christian faith created significant interest.

It affirmed that male and female were equal, that both together were created in the image of God, and that liberation and healing had been secured by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. In worship services, when these were mentioned, there were women who, with little or no previous status or learning, became overwhelmed, posing enthusiastic questions to those around them. The commotion quickly disrupted an orderly service. Paul insisted on an orderly service; disruption was unedifying, even shameful.

Paul instructs the women to maintain required silence, so that teaching and preaching could go on undisturbed and uninterrupted. Questions could be answered at home. Silence and propriety were expected in worship. Presumably this held equally for men as well as women, and equally so today.

Was Paul anti-women? In this context it appears not to be the case. Paul was espousing principles of orderliness and propriety, not the silence of women.

The Pigeon's Right Wing

situation to deteriorate to such a degree.

Two ideas that are at the forefront of any discussion on welfare reform are: LEARNfare and WORKfare. Both ideas require welfare recipients to be broken into two tiers. The first tier contains those that society does not expect to work: the mentally and physically disabled, the elderly, etc. Not only should they continue to receive support but the resources allocated to this group should be enhanced. The second tier which contains the majority, are able-bodied men and women who are fully capable of working or attending an educational facility. The only exemption permitted would be single mothers with children under five.

LEARNfare will require all welfare recipients who fail to meet the current educational requirements of the labour market to undertake educational upgrading. This could be in the form of a high school/college diploma, university degree, or some other specialised program. If the recipient refuses to participate or fails to meet the minimum standards and is without dependent children, then he or she will be denied assistance. The architects of confederation never intended these so called "positive" rights to be included in our constitution because they coerce action on the part of others, a clear violation of Classical Liberal principles.

Education has to be at the root of any reform of the welfare system. The province should set as its minimum objective the attainment of high school diplomas for all welfare recipients who fall in tier two.

WORKfare is the second program of welfare reform, intended for the 27% who do have an adequate education and for those who have gone through the LEARNfare system outlined above, yet are legitimately unable to

find employment.

Recipients would be required to work a few hours per week with one of the plethora of non-profit organisations (NPO's) such as a food bank, women's shelter, etc. This would allow the recipient to still contribute in some way to society. It also helps to inculcate responsibility, self-esteem and the work ethic in its participants. The NPO's of the province who have seen the grant well dry up over the last couple of years, will greatly benefit from a program of this nature. The program can be tailored to the client, so he or she will still have ample opportunity to search for gainful employment.

The taxpayer should be wary of placing these recipients in the private sector, as some employers will be reluctant to hire workers when they can employ a few welfare recipients at the government's expense. Hence, the emphasis on NPO's.

If a worker is successful in finding a part-time job then he or she should be rewarded by cutting benefits on a sliding scale rather than on a dollar for dollar basis, as done now (on more than \$200/month). Health benefits should be included up to a certain level of income to remove this barrier to job entry.

President Clinton said it himself (in one of his more inspired moments) "The best social program this country has ever created is a job." Policy makers should not lose sight of this in the upcoming months. Welfare should never be the end, but the means to an end: gainful employment, independence and dignity.

LOST: One "KAO" disk in the Phed cluster of computers. It's grey w/red striped label. Contains important research. If found return to Phed office. No questions asked. Thanks!