

SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

Divisive issue tests the limits of and commitment to democracy

Re: "Harper's attempt to put the lid on MPs' debate is undemocratic," by Sheila Pratt, Opinion, Feb. 20.
As the same-sex marriage battle intensifies, each side is trying to tar the other by using the same brush, that all-too-convenient, sweeping tool called "democracy." Shame!
If Conservative Leader Stephen Harper's attempt to curtail freedom of expression is undemocratic, then surely so

is Paul Martin's insistence on a "united Liberal yes vote."
We can't have it both ways.
True democracy must never be used as a political tool of convenience and twisted into something it was never intended to be. A forced vote on such a controversial issue, be it positive or negative, is not representative of the will of the people.
It's time all Canadians were given a

voice on this very controversial issue. True democracy demands a national referendum.
Betty Tordoff, Sherwood Park

Fastening loose cannons

For Sheila Pratt to equate Harper's call for his MPs to vet their speeches through him with Martin's refusal to allow a free vote is a real stretch.

Harper has not tampered with the free vote but he must, as leader, do his best to avoid any loose cannons spewing forth insensitive comments.
Liberals, Pratt included, would like nothing better than to have the opposition speaking out, fomenting the situation and making good cannon fodder for the left.
Harper seeks to avoid, or at the very least minimize, vitriolic behaviour while

still allowing members a free vote.
When it comes to destroying democracy, the Liberals have written the book on this subject. Disallowing representatives to fairly represent their constituency is hardly democratic, yet Pratt says so.
I find it difficult to understand why *T Journal* would give so much ink a space to her myopic ranting.
Dennis Dunford, Sherwood Park

Canada's marital dispute

Exclusivity preserves the Marriage Club

Advocates of same-sex marriage would have us all believe that this issue is primarily one of "equal rights" and therefore irrefragable.
What opponent could dare criticize it and hope to remain credible?
What's lost in the rhetoric is the fact that all Canadians already have equal rights relating to marriage. To apply the term to same-sex marriage is a subtle and intentionally misleading misnomer—a tactic we've grown used to seeing from the homosexual lobby. It's not equal rights, but "special privileges" that are really at stake here, and whenever special privileges are sought by any group under the guise of "rights," it's generally at the expense of someone else—usually the taxpayer.
But in this case the taxpayer is spared since the cost to extend benefits to same-sex couples is likely small. Neither would religious groups be directly imposed upon—moral questions aside—although one can understand that churches are raising the alarm at the sight of wolves gathering.
The group with the most to lose is currently an exclusive club consisting of pairs of people, each couple one male and one female, united in marriage in the eyes of the state, and generally in the eyes of God. If the Marriage Club cannot remain exclusive, then the club's founding premise is lost, its *raison d'être* ceases and its rights are eroded.
The reason any exclusive club is formed stems from the differences (inequalities) of one group from the rest of society. If the Marriage Club must accept homosexual couples, then the very difference that makes it exclusive becomes moot. The Supreme Court has effectively said that it does not recognize differences between individuals or groups, and organizing along these lines will not be tolerated. In other words, everyone who wants into the Marriage Club should have the "right" to get in—homosexuals for now, and perhaps others later. The situation reflects the frightening spectre of Pierre Trudeau's "just society" (another misnomer), where everyone must be equal, whether they are or not, or whether they wish to be or not, and where exclusivity is not tolerated, even the natural mutual exclusivity of the sexes.
It's hard to understand why our Liberal government feels it should tread on the rights of married couples to satisfy the homosexual lobby.

M.E. Jensen, Sherwood Park



'Marriage' not exclusive domain of churches

How many times must it be explained that same-sex marriage legislation will not force any church marry anyone it does not wish to?
The Catholic Church has always refused to remarry divorced people, yet Archbishop Thomas Collins insists the churches are threatened by this legislation ("Let Catholic voice be heard," *Ideas*, Feb. 19). In his view, freedom of religion must include the church's right to impose its own definition of marriage on everyone, according to "the wisdom spiritual traditions."

There always has been a legal component to marriage, which in fact predates the religious.

The Catholic Church now would co-opt the word and make it valid for same-sex couples regardless of religion, claiming this action to be a religious right outside legal jurisdiction.

The churches have the right to "value-added" sanctification of marriage but not to exclusive use of the word which has a social, secular and psychological connotation involving respectability and societal acceptance.

It would be a grave mistake to let churches to define marriage.

It is more than a little disingenuous for the archbishop to cite a liberating theology bishop as part of his argument for Christian engagement in society as the Catholic Church regularly excommunicated activist priests as preferred not to challenge authority no matter how brutal. The word "mitigant" applied to secularists is also inappropriate considering the close association of religion and war throughout history.

Doris Wrench Eisler, St. Albert

And where do hermaphrodites fit in?

'Other' sexes need consideration too

Most people tend to think that there are only two sexes: male and female. It should be remembered that one child in about every 2,000 births does not fit easily into either of these two categories.
This may be caused by differences in

how the chromosomes divide or the timing of various developmental processes. Most such infants, with the advice of physicians and perhaps surgery, are assigned a gender by their parents.

However, not all these assignments work out as the children mature. Some "girls" feel more comfortable as "boys" and vice versa; and some individuals do not fit well in either category.

With Alberta's population at nearly three million, one out of 2,000 births

equates to about 1,500 citizens who are not female or male, but some combination of the two.

If we decided to test each couple contemplating marriage to determine if they are "truly" male and female, there would be some that would fail any such test.

The most just decision, and the easiest, would allow any two consenting adults to marry.

Robert Holmberg, Athabasca

The sanctity of marriage

The church says it is trying to protect the sanctity of marriage. The definition of sanctity is "the state of being very important and worthy of great respect."

Are television reality shows where someone competes to marry someone else's father protecting the sanctity of marriage? Is having movie stars marrying 10 times over and getting divorces protecting the sanctity of marriage?

The Conservatives say the act of marriage is to produce children. If so, childless heterosexual marriages should be ceased.

Rene Stafford, Edmonton

Pair-age

The word "marriage" has a history and a meaning that has been in existence for many years.

However, many people do see the need for homosexuals to have the right to a committed recognized relationship, with all its legal rights.

Therefore, I propose simply giving these gay and lesbian relationships another term, namely "pair-age." All would know that pair-age is a loving commitment between a homosexual couple, and everyone who is heterosexual would continue to have their word "marriage." If our politicians would put this common-sense suggestion forward, fewer people would be so very irate and upset.

Gwan Davies, Edmonton

Religious traditions and common law

Marriage in this country stems from Christian ideals contained in the Bible, which Christians believe to be the word of God. The Bible condemns the homosexual lifestyle. So, as I take a step back, I see gay couples fighting to be a part of a tradition, and a belief that does not approve of their relationship. So why bother? Why do they want to take part in a tradition of a religion that they rebel against? It makes more sense to be recognized as a couple under the law, than try to be seen as a couple under God.

Keith Trautman, Sherwood Park