



FILM REVIEW

Fed Up (PG), a documentary on obesity, asks us to stop blaming the victim—the overweight individual—and instead blame the food industry, demonizing it the way we did the tobacco industry. The film argues that obesity rates rose at the same time food companies began manufacturing low-calorie and low-fat food options but increased sugar, which is addictive, in those foods. It challenges viewers to cook more and eat more real food. Oversimplified, it still tells one important part of the obesity epidemic story.—*Anna Groff*

BOOK REVIEWS

North America: Seeking Places of Peace by Royden Lowwen and Steven M. Nolt (Good Books and Pandora Press, 2012, \$11.95) is the fifth and final volume in the Global Mennonite History Series initiated by Mennonite World Conference in 1997. This, and the series, is a treasury of historical information.—*Gordon Houser*

Pursuing the Spiritual Roots of Protest: Merton, Berrigan, Yoder and Muste at the Gethsemani Abbey Peacemakers Retreat by Gordon Oyer (Cascade Books, 2014, \$33) goes into great detail to report on an unprecedented gathering of 13 peace activists in the fall of 1964 at the Tappist monastery where Thomas Merton lived. Catholics, including the Daniel and Philip Berrigan, and Protestants, including John Howard Yoder, met over three days to discuss the spiritual roots of protest. A fascinating and enlightening account by Oyer, a Mennonite.—*gh*

Hauerwas: A (Very) Critical Introduction by Nicholas M. Healy (Eerdmans, 2014, \$23) offers a critical, though friendly analysis of the work of Stanley Hauerwas, who is read and appreciated by many Mennonites. Healy writes that “Hauerwas is indeed an insightful Christian thinker and a splendid social ethicist, but theologically his work is surprisingly thin.” Healy’s critique is incisive and helpful, though his Roman Catholic bias shows.—*gh*

Will the Internet remain free?

Thus far, those of us who use the Internet have enjoyed free access, as long as we have a phone line, cable line or Wi-Fi connection. We can communicate what we want without it having to pass the muster of the government or some corporation. But that could change.

What we have enjoyed is called “net neutrality,” which is “the principle that Internet service providers (ISPs) and governments should treat all data on the Internet equally, not discriminating or charging differentially by user, content, site, platform, application, type of attached equipment and modes of communication,” according to Wikipedia.

There has been much debate about whether net neutrality should be required by law. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has been considering a rule that would allow ISPs, such as AT&T, Comcast and Verizon, to offer content providers a faster track to send content. This would end net neutrality.

In her article “Can We Keep the Internet Free?” (*Yes! Magazine*), Candace Clement expresses alarm about this possibility. If the FCC rules in favor of the ISPs, she writes, it would give them “the freedom to favor their own offerings over those of their competitors.”

She quotes from a *New York Times* editorial: “In this new world, smaller content providers and startups that could not pay for preferential treatment might not be able to compete because their delivery speeds would be much slower. And consumers would have to pay more because any company that agrees to strike deals with phone and cable companies would undoubtedly pass on those costs to their users.”

This follows a pattern observable throughout history: The rich get richer, the big get bigger. The smaller and those without get poorer and smaller.

Many have seen the Internet as a democratization of communication. The previous, one-way media—broadcasting, print and cable—were supplanted


by the two-way, networked communication style fostered by the World Wide Web. As Clement writes: “It’s not about one company or one wire or one tower sending us information. It’s about all of us communicating directly with each other.”

The basic idea of net neutrality is this: When you visit a website, the phone or cable company that provides Internet access shouldn’t get in the way. Information should be delivered to you quickly and without discriminating about the content. With changes, ISPs could split the flow of traffic into tiers, offering priority treatment to big corporations who would pay higher fees. That would mean a fast lane for the rich and a dirt road for others, harming small businesses and other users.

Net neutrality does not necessarily mean complete freedom. The adoption of net neutrality law usually includes allowance for discrimination in limited conditions, such as preventing spam, malware or illegal content.

Chile became the first country in the world to pass net neutrality legislation in 2010. But that law allows exceptions for ensuring privacy and security.

Once the FCC releases its official proposal, there will be much public comment. “If the initial reaction is any indicator,” Clement writes, “millions of people will weigh in.”

The solution, says Brian Knappenberger in the *New York Times*, is simple: “We should classify broadband access as a utility. Internet providers should be considered common carriers, just as cellphone companies are for voice access, which they are not allowed to block or degrade. The Internet should be a level playing field.” 



Gordon Houser is acting interim editor of The Mennonite.