



**British Columbia Teachers for
Peace and Global Education**
Provincial Specialist Association

Summer 2010
WWW.PAGEBC.CA

The GLOBAL EDUCATOR



Going for the Gold

Illustration by:
Mary Bechler

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British Columbia Teachers for
Peace and Global Education
Provincial Specialist Association

The GLOBAL EDUCATOR

Submissions

The Global Educator, journal of B.C. Peace and Global Educators (PAGE), is published twice yearly, and welcomes unsolicited articles and graphics by December 15 (for the winter issue) and June 15 (for the summer issue). Guidelines are as follows:

Submissions should be made directly to the editor, Patrik Parkes, by email (pageditr@telus.net), as Word (.doc or .docx) attachments and/or pasted into the body of the email message.

If an article contains web links, they should appear at the end of the article. Please convert any web link over 25 characters to the "Tiny URL" format (see www.tinyurl.com).

Note that *The Global Educator* is not an academic journal: articles are expected to follow 'journalistic' style guidelines, and not to contain academic citations – although authors should keep a bibliography on hand for interested readers who enquire.

There are no strict length guidelines for articles.

Submissions to *The Global Educator* will be made available to other BCTF publications unless the author requests otherwise.

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UNICEF Canada, Policy Advocacy Group

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“Global Education is education that opens people’s eyes and minds to the realities of the world, and awakens them to bring about a world of greater justice, equity and human rights for all.”

Global Education is understood to encompass Development Education, Human Rights Education, Education for Sustainability, Education for Peace and Conflict Prevention and Inter-cultural Education; being the global dimensions of Education for Citizenship.”

The Maastricht Global Education Declaration, 2002

For more information about PAGE, visit our website: www.pagebc.ca

Editorial: The World Goes Insane

Patrik Parkes

Surrealist poet Nishiwake Junzaburo compared the rarity of poetic inspiration to “seeking a flamboyantly attractive woman when one is wandering around a hedge in the country; or as difficult to find as a man who can weep at a festival”. In our own lives, there are, nevertheless, things we can do to optimize contact with inspiration. As a music listener I do so by way of CITR, where I often come across ephemeral treasures. In one case it was something like a folk song, sung by someone like an edgier Roger Whittaker, or perhaps a raspier Al Stewart. The refrain ended with a line like “... and the whole world goes insane”. I don’t know what the verses were all about, nor did I catch the song title or name of the artist. Unfortunately, this was before the age of podcasts, so I couldn’t go back and check, and I haven’t come across the song since. But before too long, if I don’t find out what it was, I’ll have to write it myself.

Insanity has always been with us, but only when it is accepted as mainstream wisdom can we truly say the *world* has gone insane – as it has, apparently, in Canada. I was reminded of this during my June graduation ceremony at SFU. (My MA project, incidentally, was concerned with literary surrealism and absurdity, to which I find more and more congruence with everyday life.) At that ceremony, SFU conferred an honorary doctorate upon a Senior Fellow at the Fraser Institute – a move I felt somewhat diminished the value of my own credentials. Can I file for damages? In any event, I should remind you that this is the same Fraser Institute that promotes the work of Ann ‘cover-the-world-in-DDT’ McElhinney.

In another case of misplaced institutional recognition, I predict the CRTC will soon approve the broadcast application for a veritable *Fox News North* – much more quickly, that is, than it took them to approve *Al Jazeera Eng-*

lish, which contains actual journalism. Behind the new channel is Kory Teneycke, former director of communications for Stephen Harper. In a press conference, Teneycke described Canada’s current television news offerings as “complacent and politically correct” and stated that his new channel will be “unapologetically patriotic” – which means it will lick the boots and other parts of the most right wing of our right wing militarist minders in the US. Incidentally, one has to wonder why he did-

of Journalists report restricted access to federal and provincial ministries. These days journalists get canned messages – photos and video footage – and often present these messages “without the caveat that they are not real journalism” Reporters, according to Buzzetti et al., “have been loath to complain about this problem”, which is not just about “deteriorating working conditions for journalists” but “the deterioration of democracy itself.” Buzzetti et al. call on journalists “to stand together and push

The CBC has become an uncritical transmission service for power.

n’t just move there. And isn’t it weird that ‘patriotism’ in Canada means patriotism for another country?

Anyway, Teneycke does have a point that Canada’s mainstream news sources are complacent and politically correct – although not in the way he intended. Don’t count on CBC’s *The National*, for example, to provide any critical insight – especially not with Peter Mansbridge now part of the secretive Bilderberg strategy group, whose PR strategy, in the words of Charlie Skelton in *The Guardian*, “has been to arrest, harass and search journalists”. As Truman Charles writes in *The Georgia Straight*, “who does Mansbridge think he is – claiming to be a national journalist and attending a world conference without reporting back”? (Message to Peter Mansbridge: do the right thing and resign.) With some exceptions, such as Radio 1’s *The Current*, CBC has become nothing but an uncritical transmission service for power. Instead of critical insight, we get propagandist drama (i.e., *Afghanada*), embedded reports from our military outposts, and embedded reports from legislatures.

Writing of mainstream journalism more generally, Helene Buzzetti and colleagues of the Canadian Association

back by refusing to accept vague email responses to substantive questions that require an interview with a cabinet minister or a senior civil servant” and to “stop running hand-out photos and video clips.” But will they heed the call?

You don’t have to look too far to find examples of lopsided mainstream ‘journalism’ that fails to ask any of the big questions. You may recall my email correspondence with the CBC’s Terry Milewski, printed in the winter 2009 issue of *The Global Educator*, over his strangely uncritical – indeed, *warmon-gering* – coverage of the bizarre furor over Iran’s suspected nuclear weapons program. As Gwynne Dyer – a real journalist – has recently pointed out, we could raise exactly the same concerns about Argentina, Brazil, Germany, Japan, and the Netherlands. But who at the CBC wants to mention that? There seem to be a lot of obvious things that don’t get serious treatment by Canada’s mainstream media. Some obvious examples are the fact that our ‘allies’ commit war crimes, or – as Libby Davies recently pointed out – the fact that Palestinian land is occupied.

For her digression, the mainstream media really did a number on Davies. For example, Canwest’s Mike De Souza

Editorial: The World Goes Insane

reported that she “appeared to question the Jewish states’ right to exist” (she didn’t), and the CBC’s Greg Rasmussen focused on so-called Jewish opinion (i.e., against Davies) while failing to consult

about twelve years of their lives with us, five days a week, ten months of the year – so if our democracy is in crisis (and it is) we need to take at least part of the blame. Where did all these uncritical

it with renewable energy, and the rest won’t take up the challenge until it’s all gone. So maybe, if I really care about the planet and the people around me, I should go out and buy a Hummer, and join a Hummer club so I can hang out with my Hummer friends and encourage everyone to use up all the oil as quickly as possible. Tanks and fighter jets use up a lot of fuel, too, so maybe I should join the Conservative Party. Or maybe I should join the Fraser Institute, and talk up how much good capitalism has done the poor.

Maybe, if I really care about the planet, I should go out and buy a Hummer.

the opinions of Jewish organizations that oppose Israeli violence or that concurred with Davies’ assessment of Israel, such as Independent Jewish Voices. Admittedly, Davies’ own performance was unimpressive, as she failed to make advantage of what we in the business call a ‘teachable’ moment. Nor did it help that her own NDP contains people such as Thomas Mulcair, who like to repeat the racist, rightwing line about Israel being the “only democracy in the Middle East”. In any event, not much good came of this fiasco, and I can only remark: Libby, next time stand your ground, and please dump your creepy party. As Dr. Hannah Saffron, a Jewish Israeli visiting scholar to UBC, writes in *The Georgia Straight*, Davies was merely speaking “the truth about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict”, and silencing her “would be similar to telling any Canadian to deny the existence of First Nations here before European settlement”.

Again, the topic here is insanity – as in bizarre misrepresentations of the world promoted by public institutions as ‘normal’ or ‘sane’. One might even call this fascism. But rather than focus on what to call it, the important question is what to do about it. Obviously, we can support journalists like Helene Buzzetti, who take their role seriously and ask the big questions. We can seek out real journalism, in sources such as *The Georgia Straight*, *The Tyee*, or CITR’s *News 101*, where I first heard mention of Buzzetti’s article by way of *The Tyee*’s Colleen Kimmitt. As well, we can start taking our own role seriously, and start questioning our practice as teachers. Most people spend

journalists get their schooling? If we were doing an adequate job, how come Canadians do poorly in international comparisons of political literacy? In any other country, it would be a scandal if a political party refused to partake in all-candidates meetings: why do Canadians then elect such a party as their government? If some of the blame can be apportioned to teachers, it should also apply to the institutions that train us. As I’ve mentioned before, it’s possible to graduate from SFU’s teacher certifying Professional Development Program without having to take courses in philosophy or sociology of education – in other words, without being asked to consider the role of our profession. This is clearly unacceptable, and we need to work to change it. On the other hand, attempting to define and resolve an insane complacency often feels like Albert Camus’ characterization of the absurd: like “a man armed only with a sword attack[ing] a group of machine-guns”. One might thus conclude, in the words of songwriter Nick Currie (aka Momus), “I’m wrong, the world is right”. So why not give up?

A while back, when I was still into bumper stickers, a gas station attendant took exception to the anti-WTO message on my car. He argued that if I wanted to make the world a better place, I should cheer on the WTO, because the sooner we let them screw things up, the sooner we can have a revolution. And maybe he had a point. I’ve since had similar feelings about our consumption of fossil fuels. That is, maybe we should just get on with using up all the oil, because very few of us are interested in a collective effort to replace

Why, you ask, haven’t I done these things already? The answer, dear reader, is that morons make dismal company. I would much rather work with the rare and inspiring people who love this planet, and are willing to do the difficult and rewarding job of improving life for their fellow beings. And so, until further notice, I reserve the right – while it’s still a right – to be sensible. 🐦

Ann McElhinney on DDT:
<http://tinyurl.com/2uqzd6l>

CITR *News 101*:
<http://tinyurl.com/28wkovv>

Helene Buzzetti on muzzled journalism:
<http://tinyurl.com/24r86hk>

Independent Jewish Voices on the Libby Davies fiasco:
<http://tinyurl.com/25cctf9>

Maclean’s on *Fox News North*:
<http://tinyurl.com/2csrmdc>

President's Message

Critical Thinking and Civic Engagement

Susan Ruzic

Critical Thinking and Civic Engagement is the title given to the incredible PAGE panel to be held at this year's fall conference in Surrey, BC on October 22, the provincial PSA day. We have partnered with the City of Surrey, the Surrey School Board and the Surrey Teacher's Association to include workshops on media literacy, social justice, critical thinking and civic engagement. For more details, visit <www.pagebc.ca>.

Many of our conferences and workshops have arisen from issues in our

standing the civil societies of disparate cultures, and comparing the effectiveness of their democratic institutions.

Dr. Chris Shaw, Professor of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences at UBC who does basic research into neurological diseases (ALS and Parkinson's) and is co-founder of the initial opposition to the Olympics, No Games 2010, and co-founder of 2010 Watch, a web based watchdog site.

Dr. Özlem Sensoy, Assistant Professor of Education at Simon Fraser University, has written most recently about free speech, in particular lending her

recently read that the word consumer has replaced the word citizen in many documents today. Language is a powerful and subtle way to indoctrinate. I discovered this when doing an action research project during my diploma program in global education. I looked into the language we use in a culture of war versus the language used in a culture of peace. My students and I discovered that in today's North American society, our language is full of hundreds of militaristic words. For example, "I bombed my test", "My dad is going to kill me!" etc. The students realized they have the power to change these current realities. They thought of peaceful phrases that they could use instead of the ones most commonly used. It is in relatively simple ways, by looking closely at what is going on around us, we can take back our visions of how we would like to see the world.

If you have been following the PAGE website, you will know that we have been critically examining the issue of embedded reporting and how it is currently being used with Canada's mission into Afghanistan. At the CBC, embedded reports are presented uncritically, and the PAGE executive felt that this is something we should all be concerned about. We have written to the president and CEO of CBC, Hubert T. Lacroix, and you can read more about our campaign in this issue of *The Global Educator*.

I hope that this issue of *The Global Educator* again inspires and rejuvenates, encouraging you to continue with wonderful work you do each day with your students. I look forward to seeing you at our fall conference where further inspiration awaits. 🐦

"Knowing is not enough; we must apply, Willing is not enough; we must do"

– Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Students who can critically examine the world around them protect the future of democracy for all of us.

schools and communities that have left us realizing that people do not always understand these issues completely and that they require more information. There has been confusion about differences between social justice, social responsibility, and social service, and whether international travel is considered global education. Is it necessary to examine tried and true, ministry mandated curriculum? As globally and locally minded educators, we believe that it is of utmost importance to ensure that critical thinking be woven into all of the existing curriculum. We also want to offer help to those teachers who may be struggling with how to do this. Our workshops have experienced facilitators and our panel has the following amazing speakers:

Dr. Henry Milner, a noted scholar of comparative politics and author of "Civic Literacy: How Informed Citizens Make Democracy Work", in which he argues that a society's level of civic literacy – the knowledge and capacity of citizens to make sense of their political world – offers a better basis for under-

support to the cancellation of visits to university campuses by controversial speaker Ann Coulter. She states that sexism, racism, ableism, heterosexism, classism and anti-semitism are not about individual acts of discrimination. They refer to systems of privilege that "normalize" a particular way of talking about and thinking about particular groups of people in society.

It is imperative that we critically examine the materials we use to teach and to always make sure that we teach both sides of an issue so that our students can get the information they need to make important decisions. This is the premise of a full and fair and open minded school system that encourages and teaches students to become fully engaged, critical thinking citizens. Students who can critically examine the world around them can then protect the future of democracy for all of us, for a world unquestioned leads to environmental and human rights disasters when profit above else becomes the end goal and consumerism becomes the mantra.

It was disconcerting to me when I

The Universal Declaration of Rights and Responsibilities of Dependence

Pummy Kaur

We, the people, of planet Earth, and all its creatures, plants, bodies of water, lands, and air within the living biosphere, as well as its sun, solar system, galaxy, universe, the cosmos and time, and the source of all these, are utterly and completely dependent upon each other for our existence. In our utter dependence upon all that is in the space-time continuum we humans have rights and responsibilities to all else that exist, hereafter called "Others".

We have the right to have our basic physiological needs met, and we have the responsibility to ensure we not deprive Others of what is essential for their physiological make up.

We have the right to live in safety, and we have the responsibility to ensure our actions do not diminish the safety

of Others.

We have the right to the comforts of community, and we have the responsibility to let the communities of Others be as they see fit.

We have the right to hold ourselves in good esteem, and we have the responsibility to also hold all Others in

ing with the self actualization of Others.

We, the people of planet Earth dedicate ourselves to protecting the life of all that exist, for without existence there is no "we the people". We, the people of planet Earth, dedicate ourselves consciously to exercising all of our rights

We dedicate ourselves to the concomitant responsibilities that accompany these rights of complete and utter dependence.

equal or higher esteem.

We have the right to self actualize, and we have the twin responsibilities of ensuring we raise our children in ways that will ensure greater self actualization for our species, and of not interfer-

ing with passion for peace, justice and equity.

We dedicate ourselves to the concomitant responsibilities that accompany these rights of complete and utter dependence. ➤

Cover image: Going for the Gold

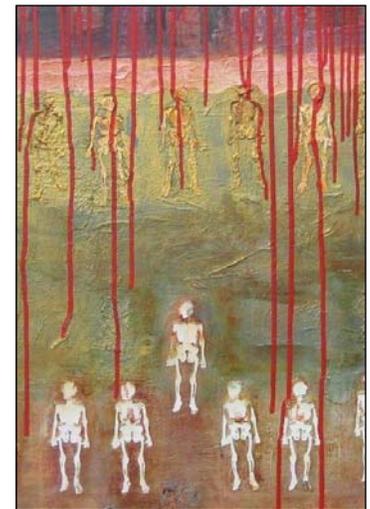
Mary Bechler

"Going for the Gold" is a painting that I worked on before and during the Olympics in Vancouver. I was very critical of the Olympics and spent a lot of time researching and understanding the negative effects the Olympics would have on our economy and environment. I believe this is reflected in "Going for thr Gold".

My process is an unconscious one.

Very much like the surrealists of the past, I let chance dictate where the painting will take me. I work quickly and only after the painting is completed do I contemplate what the meaning of the work might hold.

I am a Visual Art Graduate from Simon Fraser University. I have been teaching art in Burnaby for the last twenty years, the last ten of those at Burnaby Youth Corrections.



Form a Local PAGE Chapter



IT'S EASIER THAN YOU THINK!

Perhaps you've been thinking about forming a PAGE LSA (local specialist association) in your district. There are a number of advantages to becoming a chapter.

- Firstly, it provides your district with a direct link to the PAGE PSA Executive, so you get all the news about PAGE initiatives.
- Secondly, your chapter will be asked about your concerns before each executive meeting, and these will be brought up for discussion / action at each meeting.

- Thirdly, a representative from your chapter could attend PAGE executive meetings and report LSA news.
- Finally, your LSA PAGE news will be included in our provincial publications, generating support and interest in your activities.

How to Form a Local Chapter

Have a meeting of interested teachers in your district. To form a chapter, you need to ensure that most of your members are also PAGE members. Elect some executive members. This can be any number you want, as long as the PAGE PSA has one main contact person.

Write a letter to our president, Susan Ruzic, telling her that you wish to become a chapter, and provide him with the names, addresses, emails, faxes, etc., of your executive members.

At some point, ratify a constitution. The easiest way to do this is to use the "Constitution for a PSA chapter" in the PSA Guidebook (available at

bctf.ca/about/psa/guidebook)

That's it! Becoming a chapter is easy, and it's a great way to be more in touch with what is happening in the area of peace and global education around B.C. 🐾



Subscriptions

\$32 print / \$26 digital 1 year
\$55 print / \$45 digital 2 years
PAGE BC members: Take \$2 off for 1 year, or \$3 off for 2 years

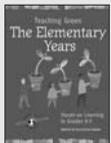
Green Teacher

Discounts for PAGE BC members!

\$2 off any one-year and \$3 off any two-year subscription

A quarterly magazine for teachers who are working to promote environmental and global awareness in Grades K to 12. Each issue offers perspectives on the role of education in creating a sustainable future, practical cross-curricular activities, and reviews of the latest teaching resources.

Also from Green Teacher: Resource Books for Educators



Teaching Green – The Elementary Years
Teaching Green – The Middle Years
Teaching Green – The High School Years

Hands-on Learning in Grades K-5, 6-8, 9-12
 240-256 pp., \$25.95 + \$4.50 s&h

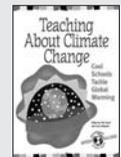


Each book contains over 50 of the best teaching strategies and activities contributed to *Green Teacher* magazine – a wealth of hands-on, kid-tested ideas from educators across North America.



Greening School Grounds provides instructions for a variety of schoolyard habitat projects, practical tips on planning and fundraising, and dozens of outdoor classroom activities and curriculum links. 144 pages, \$20.95 + \$3 s&h

Teaching About Climate Change offers a framework for teaching concepts of climate change, and a variety of teaching strategies and hands-on activities for engaging K-12 students in learning about and taking action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Available in English or French, 80 pages, \$14.95 + \$3 s&h



10% off books if you buy more than one title!

Green Teacher, 95 Robert St., Toronto, ON M5S 2K5
Phone 1-888-804-1486 **www.greenteacher.com**

PAGE Financials

Ending May 31, 2010

Income	Current Month	Current YTD	Original Budget	Percent Used
Income surplus	0.00	-5,562.05	-5,562.00	100.0
Other surplus outside account	0.00	0.00	-3,330.00	0.0
Membership/subscriptions fees	-85.00	-2,702.30	-1,744.00	154.9
BCTF grant	0.00	-4,750.00	-4,750.00	100.0
Interest Income	-1.26	-12.71	0.00	0.0
Other	0.00	-1,502.12	0.00	0.0
Conference fees	0.00	-325.18	-4,500.00	7.2
Total Income	-86.26	-14,854.36	-19,886.00	74.7
Expenses				
Meeting-executive	0.00	0.00	1,000.00	0.0
Meeting-subcommittee	0.00	0.00	750.00	0.0
Meeting-annual general meeting	0.00	0.00	1,000.00	0.0
Publication-journal	0.00	5,663.36	4,500.00	125.9
Publication-newsletter	0.00	0.00	1,500.00	0.0
Operating	0.00	1,500.00	1,000.00	150.0
Chapter support	0.00	0.00	1,000.00	0.0
Scholarships	0.00	0.00	500.00	0.0
Miscellaneous	0.00	25.00	636.00	3.9
Conference-operating	0.00	1,128.58	1,000.00	112.9
Conference-facilities	0.00	0.00	1,000.00	0.0
Conference-catering	0.00	100.00	500.00	20.0
Conference-printing	0.00	0.00	500.00	0.0
Conference-promotions	0.00	930.00	500.00	186.0
Conference-committee costs	0.00	0.00	500.00	0.0
Conference-entertainment	0.00	0.00	500.00	0.0
Conference-speakers	0.00	2,222.66	3,500.00	63.5
Total Expenses	0.00	11,569.60	19,886.00	58.2
Total	-86.26	-3,284.76	0.00	0.0

To become a PAGE member

Fill out an application at
www.pagebc.ca.

Our website also features information about upcoming events, lesson plans, resources, etc.

Moved?

Update your contact information with the BCTF via email. Complete the forms at:

www.bctf.ca/About/membership/ChangeOfAddressForm.html

Gandhi Peace Award Nomination Form



The Surrey Chapter of the B.C. Peace And Global Educators (PAGE), a professional association within The BCTF, requests nominations for the annual Gandhi Peace Award, to be presented to youth who are in Grades 10, 11, or 12. Nominations may be submitted anytime; however, only those sent by September 15th will be considered for the current year's award. The recipient (s) will be announced on the anniversary of the birth of M.K Gandhi, October 2nd, and the award will be presented on the third Friday of October, at the

annual PAGE Conference, following the key note address.

The nominee should be someone who sincerely models a life of non-violence, compassion, seva (service to community and Life), simplicity, humility, and shows an understanding of the big picture (politically, socially, philosophically, and spiritually). It is not necessary that the nominee demonstrate all of these to the same extent; however, it is desired that the nominee be sincerely aspiring to live up to these ideals.

The information submitted in the nomination form will be used to pro-

mote the award and the P.A.G.E. Association in the future. By signing below it is understood that the signatories give permission to use the information submitted to promote the awards and PAGE in the future.

Thank you for recognizing the the nominee's special gifts, and for helping us to first honour our young for doing the right things now, rather than punish them for doing the wrong things.

In solidarity for peace and justice,
Surrey Peace And Global
Educators Association 🐦

Please print and complete the following for each nominee:

Name of nominee: _____ Date: _____

School: _____ Grade: _____

School District: _____ City: _____ Province: _____

Nominator(s): _____

Parent /Guardian: _____

Signatures of the following are required:

Nominator(s): _____ Date: _____

_____ Date: _____

Nominee: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian: _____ Date: _____

Content of nomination letter: Please give examples showing how this nominee lives by some of the Gandhian Principles listed above. (One – two sides of 8- 1/2 x 11 paper with 10-12 size font). Include any other relevant information you wish to.

Please send a hard copy and an electronic copy to the Surrey PAGE President Greg Van Vugt (vanvugt@sd36.bc.ca) at Fraser Heights Secondary, 16060 - 108 Avenue, Surrey, BC, V4N 1M1

PAGE Fall Conference Announcement

On the October 22 Pro-D day, PAGE will co-present, with the Surrey School Board and the City of Surrey, a conference entitled *The Future Lives Here: Uniting Schools and Communities*. The conference gets underway the prior evening with a presentation by Stephen Lewis. The PAGE contribution includes an excellent panel on critical thinking and civic engagement, comprised of education professor Özlem Sensoy, neuroscientist and anti-Olympics activist Chris Shaw, and political scientist Henry Milner, whose work appears in this issue of *The Global Educator*. PAGE will also contribute the following workshops:

- ◆ Bringing Global Education in Every Classroom, Creating Cultures of Peace,
- ◆ Introduction to Media Literacy, Thirsty for Water: The Global Water Crisis

- ◆ Strategies for Discussing Controversial Issues, Poverty as a Classroom Issue
- ◆ Parliamentary Debating on War, Violence and Peace

See the back cover for times and locations, and visit www.pagebc.ca for registration details.

Enquiries can be made to:

- ◆ www.communityschoolpartnership.surrey.ca,
- ◆ Roz Johns rjohns@sd38.bc.ca
- ◆ Susan Ruzic sruzic@sd43.bc.ca
- ◆ Bonnie Mackwood mackwood_b@sd36.bc.ca

We hope to see you at the conference! 🐼

The rich despised the songs I wrote which told the poor their worth

Told the shy to speak and told the meek to take the earth

But my downfall came from being three things the working classes hated:

Agitated, organised and over-educated

– Momus (song: “I Was a Maoist Intellectual”)

PAGE Raises Concerns about Embedding Reporting

Patrik Parkes

On April 26, the PAGE Executive Committee sent a letter to Hubert T. Lacroix, President and CEO of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. The letter presented the PAGE mandate “to promote global awareness and non-violent multilateral approaches to international conflict” and stated the importance of critical thought and freedom of expression. The letter expressed concern “that Canadians are not getting the whole story of their country’s military involvements in Afghanistan”, an impression created by CBC reports, on shows such as *The National*, seem less like journalism, and more like advertorial for Canadian Forces. The PAGE letter requested clear disclosure of the ‘embedded’ nature of certain war correspondence, by prefacing all embedded reports with a disclaimer such as:

The following message has been prepared by an embedded reporter, and approved by Canadian Forces.

In a reply dated May 31, CBC Chief of Staff Francine Létourneau gave assurances that our comments are being taken seriously, and our letter would be forwarded to CBC News. As this issue of *The Global Educator* went to press, we have yet to hear back.

In the meantime, a number of mainstream media reporters have been

BC. Peace and Global Educators
www.pagebc.ca

April 26, 2010

Hubert T. Lacroix
President and CEO
Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

Dear Mr. Lacroix,

Peace and Global Educators (PAGE) is a specialist organization for schoolteachers in British Columbia. Our mandate is to promote global awareness and non-violent multilateral approaches to international conflict. Critical thinking and freedom of expression are important for achieving this mandate, and we are concerned that Canadians are not getting the whole story of their country’s military involvements in Afghanistan. Moreover, we are concerned that many Canadians are unaware that reports from Afghanistan are prepared by embedded reporters and vetted by the military. We acknowledge that the CBC website contains articles that address the issue of embedded reporting. However, to better promote awareness, we request that the CBC immediately start prefacing all embedded reports with the following disclaimer, or one that conveys the same meaning:

The following message has been prepared by an embedded reporter, and approved by Canadian Forces.

We hope to hear from you by May 14 with regard to this request. We realize you are busy, but hope you will address this issue of vital importance to Canadian democracy.

Kind regards,
PAGE Executive Committee
www.pagebc.ca/Executive.php

contacted in order to find out more about embedded reporting. Former CBC reporter Brian Stewart dismissed concerns that embedded reports are censored, and pointed out that “Many reports over the years have not pleased the military and the general impression given by the news reports over the past year or more is that attempts to defeat the Taliban in Kandahar province have largely failed.” Graeme Smith, of *The Globe and Mail*, was even more directly dismissive, replying simply that PAGE “concerns are misplaced”. He did, however, recommend contacting Sonia Verma, also of *The Globe and*

Mail, who was more forthcoming.

In a telephone interview, Verma indicated she had taken “about ten trips to Afghanistan, some with military, some not.” She explained that being an embedded reporter means that times and locations of activity cannot be revealed, and no photos of detainees can be taken. Embedded reporters can only go on trips approved by the military, and while articles are not directly vetted, reporters can seek feedback so they don’t violate the rules of embedding, and the military keeps files on reporters. Asked if these restrictions are censorship, she replied, “I guess in a way they are.” On whether Canadian media are being adequately critical of our intervention in Afghanistan, Verma believes “we could do better.” She notes that

“the Canadian media has done a lot of embedded reporting, not a lot of unembedded reporting... I think it’s important to have a mix... take that responsibility to have both points of view... it’s true that Canadian media are sitting at Kandahar airport... and not travelling outside the wires much without the military... you have to work independently to some extent to get the full picture.” She also points out that in Afghanistan “there are very real security issues that weren’t there years ago”, and there are “diminishing levels of people who are willing to go to these war zones.” 🐦

Olinda and the Social Justice Lens

Greg Van Vugt and Bob Bussanich

The Olinda School (Association of Assistance to Children of Olinda/AMO) is run by a non-profit group of Canadians and Brazilians. It is located in Olinda, near Recife in the North East of Brazil and was founded by Bob and Claudia Bussanich. Members of PAGE have been supporting this school for many years. The BCTF has developed the Social Justice lens as a way to view (a lens to see through) the work of the Federation. We thought it would be beneficial to show how a project of this nature could be viewed through the Social Justice lens in order to see if the work fully meets all aspects of social justice work. It is a good way to vet one's work, to see if there are ways to improve what one does in the social justice arena.

Following is an example of how the Olinda school meets the BCTF's Social Justice Lens guidelines in all four areas.

Access

As access is the foundation of social justice work, it is very important to the AMO School to be open to all children, but most especially to the poorest in the communities of Rio Doce in Olinda, Brazil. The school's goal is to promote equity. Since its foundation in 1991, the

May be an Active Citizen in Society" (Ajuda-Me a Caminhar Sozinho, para ser un Indivíduo Atuante na Sociedade.") The founders of AMO school wanted to give the children an alternative to working in the streets, loitering or hanging out at home. With the aid of fifteen established school programs the school has created the opportunity for children, ages 4 to 12, to leave the favelas (ghettos) and to become school ready and start their academic life in Grade Two at a public school. On many occasions, however, the AMO school staff has had to help the students and parents through the bureaucratic red tape to obtain birth certificates and Identification cards, giving the students

neighbour city to Olinda. His ideas come through in our school. The education provided is not neutral. It has transformed the community by showing the world that poor students can learn and that they are as ready and able to learn as any other students in the community if given the chance. They are actively participating in their world to change it for the better. The attitudes of classism are broken when our students continue on to public school and high school. The students practice the values and attitudes they learned at AMO school. And what is more is that the children and their parents know they can change the world around them. Good examples of this are their school's

As access is the foundation of social justice work, it is important the AMO school be open to all children.

the human right to existence and then the right to register at a public school, thus opening the doors to leave the confines of the favela.

Agency

We at Olinda school have a special

participation, with other Olinda students, in Peace marches and conferences, marches through the streets to make people aware of the issues of climate change, littering of the beaches, and violence in their community. The parents actively participate in school life. By the very fact that they enrol their children in this school they know they are taking steps to break the cycle of poverty so prevalent in many parts of Brazil.

Advocacy

The Living Values in Education program was introduced as the core curriculum (www.livingvalues.net) to provide the children and their families with positive values and coping skills to improve their outlook on their daily social situation. This program teaches peaceful living as well as the academic basics of literacy, numeracy, and social



AMO school's motto has been "Help Me Stand on My Own Two Feet, so I

place in our hearts for the thoughts of Paulo Friere, who is from Recife, a

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Olinda and the Social Justice Lens

engagement. It creates awareness among themselves and their families, of ways to change abusive and violent patterns of behaviour in their community. They learn and practice these core values within their own contexts. They build the blocks of a more democratic

equity in their community, neighbourhoods and the world.

In the Canadian context these values, goals and actions may seem minor, but in their disempowered life in the poorest communities of Brazil the students of AMO school are creating their

AMO students go out of their way to bring newcomers into the life of the school.

society by preparing themselves for their world and understand their roles in the world.

From this awareness, the students learn to advocate for themselves and others and put what they earn into practice by exercising their rights to visit a local shopping centre (freedom of movement) and other community sites that other children take for granted. Usually they are forced to leave due to the assumption that they will steal things because they are from the favela. The students have seen other children go into the shopping centres and know that they themselves have the right to enter. They advocate for themselves peacefully through this simple action.

Solidarity Action

At school, the AMO students care for themselves and others. They learn that standing up with their fellow students during a scary time can be an important part of life. When they welcome newcomers to the school, they are empathetic to the fact that being new is a scary thing for a fellow student. AMO students go out of their way to bring newcomers into the life of the school. By standing with new students, and other students in the community, via marches, beach and community clean ups they show others that they care and are participating in their community. They know these are the right things to do. These actions amongst others are ways that Olinda students and families are choosing to work towards greater

best chances to break the cycle of poverty that they have been born into, empowering themselves, their families, and their communities, and by extension you and I in the rest of the world.

If you would like to support the Olinda School please contact Bob Bussanich at 604-436-0635 or bbussanich@telus.net. 🐦

Because they don't teach the truth about the world, schools have to rely on beating students over the head with propaganda about democracy. If schools were, in reality, democratic, there would be no need to bombard students with platitudes about democracy. They would simply act and behave democratically, and we know this does not happen. The more there is a need to talk about the ideals of democracy, the less democratic the system usually is.

– Noam Chomsky (Chomsky on Education)

Report from the 2010 BCTF AGM

The 2010 BCTF Annual General Meeting was a good one for PAGE. Our message was reinforced with presentations by high profile social justice advocates Chris Shaw and Mary Walsh, and breakthroughs were made in the area of ethical pension advocacy.

On Saturday, March 6, things got off to an auspicious start with a presentation, sponsored by the Committee for Action on Social Justice (CASJ), by anti-Olympics activist Chris Shaw. A parent and educator (professor of neuroscience at UBC), Shaw gave an inspiring speech, reminding us that “the fiduciary responsibility of teachers is to teach our youth to think critically”. But are we taking this respon-

sibility? He concludes, “We have done a terrible job.” Giving anecdotes of lessons at his daughter’s school, all wrapped up in the Olympics, unquestioning and uncritical, Shaw lamented teachers’ failure to acknowledge, for students, “the fact that they’re going to be paying for it [the Olympics] for the rest of their lives”. Shaw, who will join the critical thinking civic engagement panel at this year’s PAGE fall conference, also provided anecdotes of being under police surveillance, and encouraged teachers to do a better job of teaching critical thought, as did Mary Walsh, of *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* fame, who gave a rousing speech on the need to take a stand. Walsh also introduced her critical new documentary, *Poor No More*, which can be borrowed from the BCTF, and would

make an excellent resource for teaching labour standards to secondary students.

PAGE made a splash at the AGM with its famous ethical pensions bookmark and candidate questionnaire, and after years of promotion and networking by PAGE and its allies, the AGM passed a number of ethical pension resolutions. These including the BAE Divestment resolution, which appeared in the summer 2009 issue of *The Global Educator*. Now we need to keep up the pressure to ensure the BCTF executive follows through. Further networking and promotion will result in more successes for PAGE, and every little bit counts. Please make sure to maintain your membership, and help spread the word! 🐦

Suddenly it's repression, moratorium on rights

What did they think the politics of panic would invite?

Person in the street shrugs – "Security comes first"

But the trouble with normal is it always gets worse

– Bruce Cockburn

(song: “The Trouble with Normal”)

Resolutions for the 2011 BCTF Annual General Meeting

The resolutions below have been endorsed by the PAGE Executive Committee. Please feel free to adapt and modify them for presentation by your local to the 2010 BCTF Annual General Meeting.

Resolution #1: Civic Literacy

That the BCTF Executive Committee research the required cost, and possible civil society partners, to conduct a study to determine whether (a) B.C. teacher training programs and employers are effectively recruiting candidates who demonstrate an interest in civic engagement and (b) which B.C. teacher training programs require students to demonstrate an understanding of teachers' role in building civic engagement and political literacy among both their peers and students; and that the BCTF Executive Committee report back, to the 2012 BCTF AGM, with a Recommendation for implementation.

Supporting Statement:

By a variety of measures, civic engagement is declining in Canada: turnout for the 2008 federal election was the lowest on record at less than 60%; over a ten-year period starting in 1997, in the non-agricultural workforce union membership declined from 34.6% to 30.3%; and less than 40% of Canadians are able to identify which major federal party is "more to the right". This contrasts starkly with

European countries. In Austria, Germany, Norway, and Sweden, recent voter turnout has been above 75%. In Sweden, 72% of workers were unionized in 2007. Twice as many Finns as Canadians (67 vs. 33%) can identify a cabinet minister, and more Finns can identify permanent UN Security Council members. In Norway, 81% of youth aged 13-19 report daily newspaper readership compared to 45% of Canadians aged 18-24. Canadians' lack of political literacy may be due to a number of factors, including education. The extent to which teachers can promote political literacy and civic engagement may be connected to their own engagement in these areas. By conducting a study of civic literacy promotion in teacher training and recruitment, we can arrive at recommendations to promote civic engagement through the education system. It is in the long-term interest of teachers to help build a politically literate citizenry that can make informed decisions resulting in the advancement of public education.

Resolution #2: Voting Advice Application

That the BCTF Executive Committee seek civil society partners (such as labour unions and alternative media) and a software developer to sponsor and create a Voter Advice Application (VAA) that provides voters with individualized comparisons between their

own policy preferences and those of candidates or parties in provincial and national elections by having both complete the same questionnaires; and that the BCTF Executive Committee report back, to the 2012 BCTF AGM, with a Recommendation for implementation.

Supporting Statement

Voter Advice Applications (VAAs) help voters make decisions that reflect their values. In Canada, voters may be uninspired or unable to match their values with candidates and parties. Less than 40% of Canadians are able to identify which major federal party is "more to the right" and around 30% are unable to name a cabinet minister. This may explain why, in the 2008 federal election, voter turnout was at a record low – less than 60%. This is far less than in countries such as Austria, Germany, Norway, and Sweden, where recent turnout has been above 75%. Development of a VAA may help engage Canadian voters by helping them understand connections between their interests and public policy. Increasing civic literacy is clearly the mandate of teachers, and in the interest of public education, which informed voters support. VAAs are in operation in a number of European countries, and designers of Smartvote, a Swiss VAA, have worked with a textbook publisher, teachers' associations, and youth organizations, and provided training for teachers to use Smartvote in the classroom. 🐦

**Less than 40% of Canadians are
able to identify which major federal
party is 'more to the right'.**

News Shorts

Wikileaks Founder Fears Arrest

Ian Traynor, in *The Guardian*, reports: “Julian Assange, a renowned Australian hacker who founded the electronic whistleblowers’ platform WikiLeaks, vanished when a young US intelligence analyst in Baghdad was arrested... The analyst, Bradley Manning... is being held incommunicado by the US military in Kuwait after ‘confessing’ to a Californian hacker on a chatline, declaring he wanted ‘people to see the truth’”. For more, go to: <http://tinyurl.com/2boptpw>

Canada: Israel’s Best Friend

Yves Engler, in *The Georgia Straight*, reports: “Beyond making Canada the world’s most pro-Israel country, the Harper government has strongly backed Israel’s onslaught against the 1.5 million people living in Gaza. Canada has refused to criticize the blockade. For example, Canada was the only country at the UN Human Rights Council to vote against a January 2008 resolution that called for ‘urgent international action to put an immediate end to the siege of the occupied Gaza Strip’”. For more, go to: <http://tinyurl.com/2wx769c>

Car Culture vs. Cyclists’ Right to Life

Lamenting the deaths of three cyclists in Quebec, Laura Robinson, in *The Vancouver Sun*, writes: “Watching a body on a bicycle is a beautiful thing, and this alone should make car drivers slow down to appreciate what a miracle it is when human beings balance on two skinny wheels. But it is even more beautiful to be inside that body; paced by a heart, breathing oxygen that allows the body to move forward, spinning and intuitively understanding how to balance: a picture of symmetry... Yet we are so vulnerable when up against speeding metal and glass. I always wonder if all of those people who hop in their cars

to do errands, or decide they want to take in nature, either in an automobile or by ATV (as if that is even possible), have asked themselves if this is the only way on Earth they can get from A to B. Is whatever it is they have to do via the combustion engine worth risking the lives of cyclists?” For more, go to: <http://tinyurl.com/326svqk>

Refugee Board Bullies Anti-Fascist

Tiffany Crawford, in *The Vancouver Sun*, reports that Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board official Otto Nupponen has ordered Jose Figueroa to leave Canada: “because of his membership 20 years ago in the organization FMLN, a leftist resistance group in El Salvador that came to power last year in a democratic elec-

Freedom of Speech: More Reprehensible than Mass Slaughter

In an unfriendly interview with Anna Maria Tremonti on CBC’s *The Current*, artist and 1999 WTO protest organizer David Solnit kept his cool and made sure Tremonti (the one being unfriendly) was aware of some basic facts leading up to the G20 summit in Toronto. Solnit pointed out that “the government is afraid of its people and organizing a massive repressive response” and that we could expect “a disinformation campaign ... through the media ... to scare people from going out to protest both through the threat of violence”. The Canadian government, he continued, is “spending millions of dollars preparing to do bat-

It’s a bit outrageous the amount of focus you’ll see on a few skirmishes of people defending themselves from police, while we’re looking at governments that are doing mass slaughter of civilian populations in places like Afghanistan and destroying entire ecosystems in places like tar sands.

– David Solnit on *The Current*

tion... Immigration lawyers say there is a problem in that individual government officials have the power to interpret the definition of terrorism... ‘This is an example of the poorest judgment ever used,’ said immigration lawyer Phil Rankin, who called the decision ‘unjust and petty’ ... ‘You would hope people wouldn’t be so literal. You might use [the law] for a militant, but are you going to use it for some villain who gave 10 cents a weeks to the person who collected money for that group?’” For more, go to:

<http://tinyurl.com/35wexs2>

tle with your own citizens who have been locked out” of democratic processes. Asked if a pattern of clashes of police was of concern to him, Solnit said he was “grateful for the people who will be in the street standing up for our rights and standing up for the future of the next generation... the pattern I think is on the part of the government in that they’ve become increasingly more paranoid and scared and the response is almost military at this point”. Pressing further, Tremonti asked if violence is “an integral part of

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News Shorts

the modern protest movement". Solnit answered, "I don't think you're going to see demonstrators carrying weapons. I think the weapons are being carried by the police. And it's also a bit outrageous the amount of focus you'll see in the media on a few skirmishes of people often defending themselves from police, while we're looking at governments that are doing mass slaughter of civilian populations in places like Afghanistan. It just seems ridiculously out of proportion destroying entire ecosystems in places like tar sands and then to complain about people without weapons poten-

tially defending themselves or taking the streets that actually belong to them". Tremonti also seemed to blame protesters for a billion-dollar security expense, which, incidentally, French president Nicolas Sarkozy remarked would be "ten times less" when the G20 meets in France next year. This massive expenditure seems to have been the main achievement of Toronto's G20 summit, alongside the largest mass arrest in Canadian history: 900 were arrested, including, apparently, tourists and joggers who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Strangely, despite the

huge clampdown, a few police cars managed to catch fire. More than one commentator has called this suspicious. 🐦

To hear the full interview with David Solnit, go to:

<http://tinyurl.com/2g79g15>

To read *The Guardian's* John Hilary's take on the G20 security fiasco, go to:

<http://tinyurl.com/27srt5a>

And I said: OK. Who is this really? And the voice said:

This is the hand, the hand that takes...

Here come the planes.

They're American planes. Made in America.

Smoking or non-smoking?

**And the voice said: Neither snow nor rain nor gloom
of night shall stay these couriers from the swift
completion of their appointed rounds.**

'Cause when love is gone, there's always justice.

And when justice is gone, there's always force.

And when force is gone, there's always Mom. Hi Mom!

**– Laurie Anderson
(song: "O Superman")**

The Problem of Political Dropouts

Henry Milner

The following is adapted from “Political Attentiveness, Non-material Redistribution, and the Problem of Political Dropouts”, presented at the European Consortium for Political Research joint sessions, Muenster Germany, March 22-27, 2010 at the workshop on the dilemma of political sophistication and political equality. To receive a PDF file of the complete paper, which includes all the references here omitted, email <pageditr@telus.net>.

Introduction

Citizens lacking the minimum levels of political knowledge needed to make sense of the political world are termed political dropouts, a term which draws attention to their inattentiveness to the political world. I define a society with a relatively high proportion of political dropouts as being low in civic literacy. Given the worrisome implications of such a state of affairs for democracy and political equality, the question becomes: is low civic literacy a state of affairs that can be avoided or reversed. The answer hinges ultimately on the prospects of potential political dropouts

and choices of young people and downplay their lack of attentiveness to public affairs. I am not persuaded. The evidence points to the fact that only for a small percentage of young people can political abstention be understood as a conscious, informed effort to transcend the limitations of traditional forms of politics: for the vast majority, non-participation reflects a simple lack of attentiveness. For example, few who assert that the politicians don’t care about the environment are able to distinguish among the parties’ programs or record in government on the issue.

The Absence of Political Dropouts in Surveys

If we want to measure political attentiveness, political knowledge questions provide an objective measure impervious to norms and institutionalized incentives. Unfortunately, it is rare for those who stress unconventional forms of political participation to pose the question – let alone pose questions – of political knowledge. Studies of political participation that exclude the information dimension – as many still do – can suppose that abstention from

of respondents reported an interest in politics, this figure dropped to 57.4 percent when respondents to the survey were first asked political knowledge questions.

In sum, only by incorporating the knowledge dimension into our surveys, can we identify and begin to analyze the political dropouts. Though some may express positive attitudes toward citizenship when invited to, and even assert a willingness to vote when asked about it, political dropouts lack the knowledge and skills to do so in any meaningful way. Since there is good reason to believe that this is a large and growing, even if mostly invisible, segment of society, potential political dropouts must be the prime target of policy initiatives to address low political knowledge – to develop habits of political attentiveness. Paying attention to politics is in good part a matter of habit acquired early; hence such efforts are most likely to be effective if addressed at those whose habits are not yet formed. Rather than downplaying the challenge through a methodological sleight of hand, we need to look at those countries that appear to be addressing it with some success.

Generational and Cross-national Differences in Political Knowledge

In high civic-literacy countries, the great majority of citizens have the minimum knowledge required to make a meaningful choice in an election. This is achieved primarily through policies I have termed “nonmaterial redistribution”, ones that reduce disparities in not only material but also intellectual resources. (These include newspaper subsidies, public broadcasting initiatives, and a range of programs via schools, life-long-learning associations, libraries, and other networks concerned with disseminating knowledge, and targeting adults at the margins of literacy and numeracy.) An indirect indicator of differences

Few who assert that the politicians don’t care about the environment are able to distinguish among the parties’ programs or record in government on the issue.

in the emerging, Internet generation. Does this generation’s apparently low level of political attentiveness foretell a decline in civic literacy? And, if so, can we expect even the high civic-literacy countries to meet this challenge?

Not all observers share this concern with potential political dropouts. Some call for a redefinition of the very notion of political participation so as to incorporate certain attitudes and consump-

participation in traditional politics is a form of protest, and that young nonvoters must be practicing a different kind of politics. Does it mean anything at all to claim to be interested in something that one pays no attention to? The problem is well illustrated by a simple American experiment that varied the order in which the political interest and political knowledge questions were presented. It found that while 75.9 percent

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The Problem of Political Dropouts

between high and low civic literacy countries can be found in the table below, which shows great cross national

Self-reported daily newspaper readership

Country	Youth (%)	Age of youth	Adults (%)
Norway	81.0	13-19	86.0
Sweden	77.0	15-24	88.0
Denmark	76.6	16-24	79.7
Finland	72.0	15-24	87.0
Austria	69.5	14-29	75.2
Switzerland	68.1	16-24	74.8
Netherlands	58.0	15-24	71.4
Germany	53.6	14-19	76.2
Greece	52.0	18-24	54.6
Belgium	50.7	15-24	47.4
Hungary	49.2	15-24	52.6
Canada	44.9	18-24	54.1
Spain	41.7	16-24	39.7
Italy	40.2	18-24	39.3
USA	40.0	18-24	54.0
France	36.3	14-19	45.3
UK	35.7	15-24	32.8

variation among all adults and young citizens in newspaper reading levels.

The high civic-literacy countries also tend to be the ones where public policy is less skewed in favour of the better off. Countries high in civic literacy in Northern Europe and, especially, Scandinavia are, generally speaking, better able to bring the needs and interests of those who are elsewhere excluded from the democratic political process to the attention of policymakers and into policy outcomes. Bringing those on the lower rungs of society to higher levels of knowledge augments their economic opportunities, and it enhances their capacity to exercise political influence through informed political participation.

The comparative civic-literacy data is far from complete, however, due to the absence of good cross-national surveys of political knowledge related to domestic politics and institutions. It has not been possible, so far, to include political knowledge questions in the major European cross-national surveys concerned with political participation,

the European Social Survey. Comparisons are thus based on partial data. For example, the table, "Political Knowledge Questions", sets out differences in responses to similar questions of political knowledge relevant to casting an informed vote that were added to the first round of the ESS in high civic-literacy Finland, and included in a 2006

education-based dispersion of political knowledge allowed for a Comparison of the relatively low-civic-literacy English-speaking democracies (the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and New Zealand) with the high-civic-literacy Northern European democracies (Sweden, Norway, Germany, and the Netherlands). The lowest educa-

Political Knowledge Questions (Percent of correct answers)	Finland	Canada
Name Minister of Finance (Finland) or one cabinet minister (Canada)	67	33
Name second largest party*	52	57
Understands Income tax progressivity	52	40
Permanent UN Security Council members	52	43
Who is entitled to vote	73	56
Average	60	46

* There are 3 large parties in Finland, making it harder to identify the second largest party than it is in Canada.

survey cited below in low civic-literacy Canada.

The widest cross-national such survey, the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), obliges national election survey teams to include three or more political knowledge questions of their choice, but does not specify their content. Because of the absence of common political knowledge questions, the overall means of correct answers varies widely (from 31 percent correct

tional groups in the Anglo-Saxon countries averaged 13.3 percentage points below their countries' combined average score, while the gap was only 5.8 percentage points for the Northern European nations.

On eight similar political knowledge questions asked in the 1964 and 2000 U.S. National Election Studies, the political knowledge gap between young and old, controlling for education, has risen steadily from 6 percentage points in the

High civic-literacy countries also tend to be the ones where public policy is less skewed in favour of the better off.

in Israel to 64 percent in the United Kingdom). Kimmo Grönlund and I calculated the dispersion of political knowledge, comparing variations from the national mean for each of three groups of respondents: those who had not finished secondary school; those who had finished secondary school but not college; and those who had finished college. The resulting indicator of the

1960s to 28 percentage points in the 2000s. A somewhat similar exercise carried out in Canada compared responses to questions testing knowledge about political leaders in the 2000 Canadian Election Study to two Gallop polls from 1956, concluding that: "Not only are the young less informed about politics today than they were forty-five

The Problem of Political Dropouts

years ago, they are also more likely to allow this condition to influence the decision to vote or not to vote.”

An insight into young people in North America’s knowledge of politics is provided in two surveys conducted in 2006, comparing the political knowledge of young Americans and Canadians. The first of these, the Civic and

Council – in other words, they did not even know that the United States was a permanent member – compared to only 30 percent in Canada.

But there is no shortage of political ignorance on domestic matters. Fifty-four percent of young Americans are unable to identify citizens as the category of people eligible to vote (com-

for example, the “low” political knowledge bemoaned by Swedish political scientists since of their countrymen and women surveyed, only 48 percent were able to state the number (four) of parties in the governing coalition in an open-ended question, with by far the most common wrong answer was seven – i.e., the respondents mistook presence in Parliament for membership in the government.

The lowest educational groups in Anglo-Saxon countries averaged 13.3 percentage points below their countries’ combined average political knowledge score, while the gap is only 5.8 percentage points for Northern European nations.

Political Health Telephone Survey, was undertaken by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) with a representative sample of 1,765, of whom 1,209 were aged 15 to 25. The Canadian survey was conducted by this author with 877 respondents aged fifteen to twenty-five and 477 aged twenty-six and older. CIRCLE’s earlier U.S. survey posed three political knowledge questions. Out of a possible score of seven, the means for correct answers are 2.12 for young Americans and 2.89 for those twenty-six or older. Canadian scores are a little better, at 2.57 and 2.93.

A useful way to visualize these results is by the number of questions correctly answered. The difference lies not at the top but at the bottom, with 18.2 percent of young Americans able to give none of the seven answers compared to 11.3 percent of young Canadians. Adding those who could only answer one question, the proportion for the United States is 42.4 percent, while for Canada it is 31.7 percent. When we break the results down by question, the most glaring contrast is on international matters: 55 percent of young Americans are unable to name one permanent member country of the U.N. Security

pared to 41 percent of young Canadians). Equally unsettling is a similar inability of young Americans to name even one cabinet secretary (55 percent could not do so) and to identify the party that is more conservative (60 percent were unable to do so). This latter figure is especially revealing, since no term is used more frequently and consistently to characterize the Republican Party. These numbers correspond to the 57 percent of Americans aged fifteen to twenty-five who could give two or fewer of the seven correct answers. In other words, somewhere between 55 and 60 percent of Americans between fifteen and twenty-five are effectively off the political map. These figures paint a stark portrait. Over 55 percent of Americans born since 1991 were, in 2006 – before Obama – potential political dropouts.

Combining the above with the comparison of Finland and Canada in the table “Political Knowledge Questions”, it seems clear that differences between high and low civic-literacy countries persist, that there is nothing in the former comparable to the failure of half of Americans to be able to make the simplest distinction between the (two) existing parties – something different from,

The Effects of the Internet

It is in the context of the relevant institutional arrangements and policy commitments that the effects of the Internet and digitalization-based ICT (information and communications technology) revolution need to be placed. A precursor of this development was the choice presented by cable (and the remote control device), which fundamentally altered the effect of TV watching on political knowledge and participation. Data show the political knowledge of respondents without access to cable or Internet to be unrelated to their degree of preference for entertainment, while for those with access to cable television moving from low preference for entertainment to a high one corresponds to a drop of 20 percentage points in political knowledge.

Entertainment seekers could now easily avoid exposure to information, while, before this, many television watchers had been exposed to coverage of political news and events because they simply did not wish to switch the channel; now viewers, with minimal or no effort, could avoid political news. The consequence was a deeper political knowledge gap between those who pursue news and those who avoid it, a gap that could only grow with the arrival of a far more powerful range of avoidance devices in the form of ICT, i.e., the digitalization of content and the integration of personal and media communication via the home computer and high-speed Internet. The fundamental shift in information dissemination has been from an externally imposed order

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The Problem of Political Dropouts

(within which, in a democratic society, the individual can exercise choice) to one in which the content is internally selected, ordered, and, potentially, created continues. The former is characteristic of the linear logic of the newspaper, but also of traditional radio and television, especially where, as has been the case in the high civic-literacy countries, public media play an important role. The shift has been accelerated by the digitalization of content and the integration of personal and media communication via the home computer

come to rival television as the leading source. As access to the high-speed Internet approaches levels of access to multichannel television, the digital divide is increasingly based on skills. More than watching the news on television, effectively using the Internet as a source of public affairs information requires a certain level of skill. One STUDY FOUND that many Internet users cannot complete simple online tasks, such as locating a political candidate's website.

With increasing dependence on dig-

environment, even with Internet access, to be in a position to adequately make use of them.

A priority on my current research agenda is thus to identify and assess cases of concrete efforts to meet this challenge through Internet-based, non-partisan, non-commercial instruments of political information and political participation that target potential political dropouts in the schools and beyond. Consider first the online vote selectors, Voter Advice Applications (VAAs), found in many European countries. VAAs provide the voter with an objective individualized comparison between her or his own policy preferences and those of candidates or parties in upcoming elections, by having both complete the same questionnaires. Some operate independently of government, e.g. *Smartvote* in Switzerland, as opposed to others, e.g. *Wahlomat* in Germany, which is operated by the BPB (*Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*), the federal agency responsible for civic education materials. Understandably, thus, though intended for the entire electorate, young voters are a particular target of the *Wahlomat*. In the most recent (2009) election, in cooperation with local educational authorities, the BPB organized public question-and-answer assemblies in a score of upper-secondary schools in two provinces (Saarland and Rhineland-Palatinate).

Smartvote too has sought to reach out to the young, with a shorter, more simply worded version known as *Myvote*. To spread the word, its designers collaborated with a textbook publisher, teachers' associations, and youth organizations, and provided a training course to give teachers an overview and explain how the site could be used for civic education. To reach first-time voters who did not attend an educational institution offering civic education, *Myvote* joined forces with *20 Minuten*, Switzerland's most widely read free daily newspaper, and owner of the largest Swiss online information platform targeted at those under thirty-five.

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30 percent of young Canadians are unable to name even one permanent member country of the U.N. Security Council.

and high-speed Internet.

Our knowledge of the effect of growing up in this world on informed political participation is still spotty. For every observer who is persuaded that the unlimited information available through the Internet will boost political communication and political knowledge, and, therefore, political participation, there is another who fears that its effect will be to reinforce the participation gap between the politically engaged and the dropouts. One can readily imagine that both sides are right, and there will be an increase both in political communication and knowledge and in the gap between the engaged and the dropouts. Any overall verdict on the Internet will have to await the return of a jury that has barely begun to deliberate.

One thing is certain: the Internet is here to stay. In the comparative U.S.-Canada survey, only 8 percent of the young American respondents and 10 percent of the young Canadians reported never using the Internet. And we recently learned that by the end of the 2008 US election campaign, the Internet had not only displaced newspapers as the second source – after television – for national and international news, but, among young people, had

ital information and tools, citizens are expected to exercise independent, informed judgment to make use of the information and tools, but the skills involved in those judgments are unequally distributed. This unequal distribution reflects class differences, as is the case with regard to newspaper reading and television news watching.

Some Innovative Alternatives

How or even whether this challenge is to be met is an open question for which we have no systematic information. But anecdotal information suggests that, as in the case of Internet access, the high-civic literacy countries are leading the way in developing innovative means of using the new technology to enhance informed political participation by potential political dropouts. Such initiatives constitute a small subset of the many efforts by public agencies around the world to use Web-based techniques in the form of e-voting, e-consultation, e-petitioning, e-discussion forums, etc. Most of these, however, address those already involved rather than those on the sidelines, both among citizens and citizens to be. As a rule, we cannot expect those lacking an information-rich family or community

The Problem of Political Dropouts

Turning more directly to the schools, we find, for example, in Norway a promising case of using such instruments in civic education. The curriculum of civic education for the last two years of compulsory school is structured in such a way as to facilitate teachers incorporating into the coursework the issues and events of campaigns for elections that always take place in mid-Sep-

ties are fictitious, but their positions and names are based on those of existing parties. The party groups vary in size to reflect the composition of the actual legislature. Once assigned their committee, the students go to their parties' caucus rooms, where they work out a position on the issue under consideration. They are guided in their deliberations by instructions they receive on a

Most 15-16 year old Norwegians are able to participate in the *Minitinget*, which is not quite the case in Sweden where use of the Democracy Workshop is concentrated among students in the Stockholm region.

Given that young Scandinavians vote in far greater numbers this is a model our provincial legislatures in the United States would do well to explore.

Whereas television watchers were exposed to coverage of political news and events simply because they did not wish to switch the channel, internet entertainment seekers can now easily avoid exposure to information.

tember. Even more interesting is the *Minitinget*, which uses multimedia technology and hands-on participation to simulate Norwegian parliamentary committee decision-making.

I recently had the opportunity to visit the *Minitinget* next to the Parliament in Oslo – something very hard for outsiders to do since the center is fully booked by high school civic education classes. Earlier I visited the Democracy Workshop, in Stockholm, similar, except that it does not have a room for press conferences in which students defend their positions in response to questions from real journalists.

In both, trained animators, who also work as parliamentary information officers, guide the students through the process. Each student is given a card with the first name of an individual legislator and his or her party, and placed on a committee responsible for dealing with one of two issues. During my visit to the Democracy Workshop in 2008, one committee was considering whether the punishment for graffiti should be made harsher, and another whether boxing should be outlawed. Both matters had come up in Parliament.

The card gives information about the legislator's party affiliation, age, gender, professional background, etc. The par-

computer screen in the booth, with access to relevant newspaper articles and excerpts from TV and radio coverage. Their deliberations are interrupted by telephone calls and computer screen messages from lobbyists, constituents, and party leaders.

They then go to committee meetings where they try to form alliances or compromises in order to win majority support. When the bills come to the plenary floor, in a mock session of Parliament, there are speeches for and against each measure, and a vote is taken. Finally, the students are asked to vote again, this time based on their own views on the issue, and to reflect on whether and how their positions changed during the simulation.

In this way, through role-playing the students come to appreciate that politicians are subject to conflicting influences and constraints, arriving at compromises through a long, but nevertheless comprehensible, legislative process. Moreover, unlike model parliaments, which are used as teaching tools in many high schools, the simulations are not targeted at the already politically aware but to all students in the age group – even the potential political dropouts – and in their own digitally-mediated language.

Henry Milner is a political scientist at the University of Montreal in Canada and Umea University in Sweden. His latest book, The Internet Generation, has just been published by University Press of New England, and is distributed in Canada by UBC Press. On October 22, Dr. Milner will participate, along with Chris Shaw and Özlem Sensoy, in PAGE's Critical Thinking and Civic Engagement panel at The Future Lives Here conference. See back cover for details.



**Our lives begin to
end the day we
become silent
about things that
matter.**

**– Dr. Martin Luther
King Jr.**

Turning Canada into USA North without the Checks and Balances

Errol Mendes

Does the Harper government understand the fundamentals of Canada's constitutional democracy? There are worrying signs that either they do not understand them or are trying to rewrite them in order to design a form of American presidential republican democracy without the safeguards of a true separation of power and the requisite checks and balances. This is a recipe for a new form of authoritarian order that Canadians should rightly recoil from.

As any constitutional expert would attest, Canada's constitutional democ-

Prime Minister. The recent statement by the Prime Minister that there can't be a government of "losers" reinforces this republican perspective. This statement is particularly ironic given his strong support of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who was a "loser" to Tzipi Livni and the Kadima party who won more seats, but did not form the government. The President of Israel, Shimon Peres, had correctly concluded that the right wing parties, although "losers" in Harper's view, had a better chance to establish a more stable government.

screened by three eminent jurists acting as arbiters who would decide what could be disclosed to the MPs and the public. The Speaker's ruling and the subsequent agreement was one of the first victories by the opposition parties against the desire of the Harper government to institute a Presidential system of government in Canada without the critical checks and balances.

Other assaults include the creation of manuals to undermine Parliamentary committees, undermining vital Officers of Parliaments like the Chief Electoral Officer, the Access to Information Commissioner and the Parliamentary Budget Officer. Less analysed assaults include diminishing the most vital role of Parliament to supervise the spending of monies by announcing economic and budgetary statements outside Parliament. In one case this occurred in a plane over the Pacific Ocean!

However, the most worrying sign that there seems to be every intention by the Harper government to continue to march to an authoritarian form of republican government is the recent insistence that political staffers will not be allowed to appear before Parliamentary committees even if they have been issued summons to do so. This time the paradoxical defence is that of ministerial responsibility. This doctrine requires ministers in the executive to take responsibility for actions within their departments and where necessary offer their resignations, in part, to fulfill their duties to the notion of responsible government. Responsible government and the supremacy of Parliament is the reason for the existence of the concept of ministerial responsibility. The tail of ministerial responsibility can't wag the dog of responsible government.

Responsible government could well be endangered from the logic that the Harper government is using. If staffers are justified in not appearing before Parliamentary Committees due to the prin-

Harper seems intent to slowly transform the constitutional order of Canada into an authoritarian republican form of government.

rary is based on the principle of responsible government. This means that the while Canada's executive derives its authority from powers derived from a unique form of constitutional monarchy, it can only remain in power if it maintains the confidence of the elected House of Commons and is accountable to Parliament. The supremacy of Parliament is entrenched by its powers to call for papers, records and persons and its ability to curtail the prerogative powers of the executive.

The Harper government seems to be launching an assault on Canada's constitutional democracy on several fronts. The most well known examples of this are the two anti-democratic prorogations in 2008 and 2009, with the most egregious being the earlier one manipulated to avoid a vote of confidence. The demonization by the Prime Minister of any form of coalition government between parties that can maintain the confidence of the House of Commons is also part of the desire to install a presidential system in Canada despite the fact that Canadians elect MPs not the

More recent assaults by the Harper government have included refusal to allow the Afghan Committee to see the uncensored documents on transferred detainees until the Speaker's ruling that has forced them to do so. The Speaker ruled that the ability of the House of Commons to see the documents went to the heart of the principle of Responsible Government that was the foundation of the Canadian constitutional democracy and that the government could not be the sole arbiter of what could be seen by the elected representatives. However, he also urged that all parties come to an agreement that would allow the MPs to see the documents while still respecting the vital national security interests of Canada. Three of the parties did come to such an agreement in the dying days of the Parliamentary session. The NDP, however, alleged that the Speaker's ruling was still not being followed as the government insisted that documents relating to cabinet confidences and legal documents that are covered by solicitor-client privilege had to be first

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Turning Canada into USA North without the Checks and Balances

ciple of Ministerial Responsibility, the same would apply any public servants as they too fall under the principle of Ministerial Responsibility. Therefore, if Ministers can refuse to appear before the same committees, then everybody

in the Privy Council Office and staffers in the PMO, like Dimitri Soudas, the most unlikely wallflower and communication director in the PMO who is the subject of a summons, given that the Prime Minister is unlikely to be a fre-

the Prime Minister and the opposition over contempt of Parliament.

This Prime Minister, his cabinet and political staffers seem intent to slowly transform the constitutional order of Canada into an authoritarian republican form of government. Given the lack of even the most rudimentary checks and balances if we go down that path, this failure to respect the fundamentals of our constitutional democracy should be a central issue in the next federal election.

The most worrying sign of the march to authoritarian republicanism is the insistence that political staffers not be allowed to appear before Parliamentary committees even if summoned to do so.

Errol Mendes is a professor in the Faculty of Law at the University of Ottawa and a Former Senior Advisor of the Privy Council of Canada.

in the executive would be perfectly justified in refusing to appear before these committees due to the principle of Ministerial Responsibility! This could well happen in the case of public servants

quent witness before Parliamentary committees. Mr. Soudas has now officially ignored a subpoena from the Ethics Committee triggering potentially another showdown between his boss,



TSE Delists Copper Mesa

Louise Gonsalvez

In the new documentary *Under Rich Earth*, by Malcolm Rogge, a group of Ecuadorian villagers protect their lands and communities from being overtaken by the Canadian mining corporation, Ascendant Copper (Copper Mesa). The documentary follows the resistance movement conducted by local residents in the mountainous Intag region. Families single-handedly prevent paramilitary groups, hired by the mining company, from occupying lands recently acquired by Ascendant Copper.

impact studies, and to ultimately claim the rights of Ecuadorians to manage their own resources. The project was halted by the Ecuadorian government until further environmental studies could be conducted.

has stunned the multinational corporate world. Carlos Zorrilla must also be given great credit. In the last four years he has sent several complaint letters to the British Columbia Security Commission, which is the regulatory body over-

The delisting of Copper Mesa has stunned the multinational corporate world.

Left stranded without government protection or intervention community members confronted the occupation by disarming the troopers and housing them in a local church until such time as a settlement could be found. The group sought to stall the project by demanding further environmental

On February 19, 2010, the Toronto Stock Exchange delisted Copper Mesa. This is a landmark victory for the villagers of Ecuador. All the reasons for the delisting have not been determined, but ultimately the courageous acts of three rural communities in Ecuador have contributed to a global victory that

seeing the Copper Mesa listing, criticizing how the corporation mislead regulatory authorities and their shareholders.

MEC: the Co-op That Acts Like a Corporation

Patrik Parkes

If it talks like a corporation, walks like a corporation, and acts like a corporation, then it must be a corporation. On June 12, Mountain Equipment Co-op (MEC) held a “Bikefest” with a “free barbecue, entertainment and dance performances by... [a] bike-based dance troupe, clowns, some music and information.” You can bet the “information” had nothing to do with cycling, and everything to do with promoting their new line of bicycles. (And shame on the performers for joining this shameless corporate promo event.)

MEC has for some years now aimed to be nothing but big. It dominates the market for hiking and camping gear, and now aims to dominate the bicycle business as well. MEC is a master of greenwash, with little to show in terms of walking the walk. In other words, it’s about as green as Chevron, “Mother Nature’s Gas Station”. MEC sees no contradiction between its purported green, ethical mandate, and shipping products halfway around the world in smoke-belching freighters and employing factories in human rights deficient locations like China and Israel.

MEC’s co-op credentials are further eroded by its moves to restrict members’ decision making input. So-called ordinary resolutions can no longer be made

from the floor of MEC’s annual general meeting, and must be vetted first by Directors. Earlier this year, when I enquired about these changes, Sara Golling, Director and Chair of MEC’s Elections and Member Communications Committee, was unable to be clear on

than those at other comparable businesses. She seemed to think it was good enough simply that they were higher. Apparently it was of no concern they were inadequate in Canada’s high-rent cities. Perhaps this is because Golling has never had to survive on retail wages,

MEC is about as green as “Mother Nature’s Gas Station”, and now makes the un-coolest bike on the Canadian market. Don’t buy one.

why vetting was necessary. When I asked if it might have something to do with an Israeli boycott resolution that was moved in 2009, she replied, “I doubt very much that had this year’s change in process been applied last year that the board would have acted any differently. We did not flinch from the vehemence of that debate, nor would we on any other debate where strongly held opinions are expressed regarding MEC’s business. That is simply not our history or culture.” Then why the change?

This was not my first encounter with Golling. Some years ago, she replied to a concern I had about MEC retail employees’ wages being not much higher

or work in a Chinese factory making athletic wear. Upon a perfunctory look at their resumes, the same seems true of MEC’s other Directors. This might explain why human rights – and environmentalism – is for them simply a marketing tool. MEC no longer lives up to the expectations we have of co-ops, and should do the right thing and register as a corporation. In short, MEC now makes the un-coolest bike on the Canadian market. Don’t buy one. 🐦

The nationalist not only does not disapprove of atrocities committed by his own side, he has a remarkable capacity for not even hearing about them.

– George Orwell

Book Review: The Family

Jonathan Dyck

I am a fundamentalist Christian. Granted, as my faith matures and my outlook on life widens, I may not be as comfortable with easy answers as I used to be, but I certainly did grow up fully immersed in the world of evangelical Christianity. When I was offered the chance to read and review Jeff Sharlet's recent book, *The Family*, I was immediately intrigued – the book is subtitled “The Secret Fundamentalism at the Heart of American Power,” and while I had never heard of the “Family,” the book did speak to my growing desire to challenge the consumer-driven imperialist outlook so pervasive in North American society –

power to piety”. Sharlet outlines some of the precursors to this elite fundamentalism (e.g. the revivalists of the nineteenth century), but the Fellowship has its roots in the labour unrest of the 1930s. Vereide joined forces with the “captains of industry” to preserve the growing capitalist enterprise, “[rejecting] the ‘Social Gospel’ of good works for the poor” and presenting in its place “a laissez-faire Jesus” – in other words, a prosperity gospel. This religion of free-market economics had growing military implications as well, as many prominent figures associated with the Fellowship and/or American industry expressed fascination with, even admiration for, fas-

ently had a change of heart and helped found the Lebanese Front out of a growing intolerance for those not partial to his (Christian) views. The list goes on, but the key insight of Sharlet's research is that this confluence of American political/business interests and fundamentalist Christian aims was no coincidence: the Fellowship made full use of its diplomatic and business connections to spread God's kingdom – which seems to be synonymous with war and capitalism.

The elite fundamentalism of the Fellowship is not the only theocratic thread in American history, however – populist evangelicals like Billy Graham and Bill Bright (who founded Campus Crusade for Christ) promoted similar values among the American masses, even as “elite fundamentalism's belief that international capitalism is at the heart of the Gospel . . . migrated from Abram's cells into the seminaries and sermons of populist fundamentalism.” As Sharlet describes, these two strands have merged, in figures such as Charles W. ‘Chuck’ Colson, who was an important aide to Nixon – he went to prison for his part in Watergate and experienced a “conversion” of sorts, going on to found Prison Fellowship, an international prison ministry. Where “Bright organized the masses, Coe cultivated the elite. And Coe's most successful protégé [Colson] would soon do both . . . [He] had learned through fundamentalism to pursue pure power, not partisanship”. This approach of reaching out to both the larger population and powerfully placed leaders, regardless of political affiliation, has ensured the pervasive influence of American fundamentalism, as even key democrats such as Hillary Clinton are not immune to the allure of the Family. As the brand of Christianity sold by fundamentalists prospers, democracy suffers – and this is Sharlet's main concern: “Where once there was a critique of what some might call god-

Frank Buchman, the leader of a Moral Re-Armament, longed for a God-controlled Fascist dictatorship.

especially among Christians! Sharlet offers a well-researched history of the intersection of politics and faith in the United States; though he may paint in broad strokes at times, he deftly traces the confluence of two strands of fundamentalism – elite and populist – that have combined to undermine the democratic process and any concerted effort to work for peace and social justice, both in the USA and globally.

The Family is a non-partisan network of “believers” (as opposed to “Christians”) among the business and political elite. For instance, they organize the annual National Prayer Breakfast and meet together in “prayer cells” across the USA and indeed worldwide. From the outset, the focus has been on grooming those in positions of power for God's purposes – the founder of this “Fellowship” (as it's also known), a Norwegian immigrant named Abram Vereide, was “an exponent of a religion for the elite – the ‘up and out,’ as he called them”, and the current leader, Doug Coe, believes that Jesus “prefers

cism. Frank Buchman, for instance, the leader of a “Moral Re-Armament,” longed for a “God-controlled democracy or . . . theocracy,” or even “a God-controlled Fascist dictatorship”. Elite fundamentalism displays a rather flexible theology – the particulars of someone's faith are not as important as the power the individual holds, since God can use those who are powerful more effectively. This became especially clear after World War II, when God's goals and American interests were seen to coincide, and the Cold War was recast as a spiritual war: Vereide advocated “no mercy for those who disobeyed God – a sentiment his followers in developing nations would later make real by murdering hundreds of thousands of leftists. “[His] fundamentalism . . . thrived on violence and raised up those most capable of it.” Examples include the Haitian dictator “Papa Doc” Duvalier (whom the fellowship supported because of “his spirituality”) and Charles Malik, who helped write the Universal Declaration of Human Rights but appar-

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Book Review: The Family

lessness and others might call capitalism, there is a vacuum. And in that empty space the status quo remains unthreatened". For democracy to thrive and peace to be possible, the prevailing

of these deceptions are so widespread that Sharlet's message is so vital, for the United States in particular but also for those of us living in the shadow of this empire.

passionate prose. He is an evangelist, too, but not with all the answers: "The better story we—believers and unbelievers alike, all of us who love our neighbours more than we love power or empire or even the solace of certainty – must tell is not simply a different answer, secular myths opposed to fundamentalism's, but a question". And isn't that our job as teachers, to raise questions and model for our students both the love of learning and the willingness to tolerate uncertainty, to resist the temptation to preach our doctrines, be they secular or fundamentalist? 🐦

As the brand of Christianity sold by fundamentalists prospers, democracy suffers.

assumptions and attitudes need to be challenged, and Sharlet reminds us that ridiculing the extremes of fundamentalism or pretending it's a fringe movement is dangerous – "Our refusal to recognize the theocratic strand running throughout American history is as self-deceiving as fundamentalism's insistence that the United States was created a Christian nation". It is precisely because both

I for one was certainly struck by Sharlet's message – not only because I am still connected to the evangelical world and had to reconsider a lot of my assumptions, but also because I am passionate about democracy, peace, and social justice. The war-mongering, commodifying Jesus is one I cannot believe in, which made me a receptive audience for Sharlet's investigative journalism and

It is only in folk tales, children's stories, and the journals of intellectual opinion that power is used wisely and well to destroy evil. The real world teaches very different lessons, and it takes willful and dedicated ignorance to fail to perceive them.

– Noam Chomsky

(The World After September 11th)

Book Review: Restoring the flow: Confronting the World's Water Woes

Louise Gonsalvez

Robert Sandford, author of *Restoring the Flow: Confronting the World's Water Woes* and chair of the United Nations International Decade "Water for Life" Partnership in Canada states, "According to a *Times* report, "Barcelona was so short of water that it had been forced to charter ten tanker ships for a period of six months to deliver 92 cubic meters of water a month from other parts of Spain and from France ... The bill for the six-month supply was expected to be in the order of US \$68 million, or about \$12.36 for each of the 5.5 million men, women and children that currently rely

beyond our technological capacity to address". For those thirsty to learn what the future may hold, Sandford paints a picture of our water-troubled blue planet and offers suggestions and how to manage our waters. We need to be doing the right things – and we should be doing those things right.

Sandford reveals how bizarre water regulations and the quest to commodify and privatize water are intruding upon a water ethic that honours the aqueous substance as a life-giving gift of nature. In a joking sense but a serious manner, Sandford states, "You can tell that the global water crisis is real because James Bond knows about it. In

billion gallons a day, which is enough to supply the average family for more than 80000 years ... Current agricultural practices can be characterized not as irrigation but as 'chemigation'. The nostalgic farmer is being replaced by agribusinesses that are capturing water at an alarming and questionable rate. In California, the "first in time, first in right" (FITFIR) guides the development of water resources as it did when the California gold rush was taking place. This is how Los Angeles obtained an urban right to water – it bought lands upstream and started using the water to establish first appropriation rights to upstream waters. Sandford goes on to mention the vast amounts of water that companies have access to in the tar sands and international agreements that can trump local rights: our water rights can be waltzed away. Remember those commercials – It's ten o'clock do you know where your children are? Well, it's 2010 and do you know where your water is, where it is going, and who may be tempting your politicians to strike a deal? Sandford will have you questioning the security and future of your water, and without fear-mongering or proselytizing, he will have you wanting to be informed and engaged in your water governance.

Sandford identifies how climate change and other factors are contributing to a water future that will alter our geographical, economic and social landscapes. He states, "In 2003, consultants for the British Columbia Ministry of Sustainable Resource Development produced a report called 'Water Quality Monitoring in British Columbia: A Business Review of the BC Hydrometric Programs. The report concluded that the cost/benefit ratio for typical hydrometric monitoring was very high. In British Columbia alone the benefits were measured at \$80 million, while total costs were between \$4 million and \$5 million, indicating a benefit to-cost

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Bizarre water regulations and the quest to commodify and privatize water are intruding upon a water ethic that honours the aqueous substance as a life-giving gift of nature.

on Barcelona's water supply". The bottom line is there are going to be winners and losers in the race to the bottom of a competitive water ethic that seeks to focus on finding the 'right solutions' to the world's water woes, rather than focusing on 'doing what is right' to address an ensuing global water crisis. Sandford examines several water-conflicted areas to expose the complexities of water governance: scarcity, overuse, conflicting interests, regulatory idiosyncrasies, bullying tactics and morally bankrupt motivations. He urges Canadians to recognize that they are not immune to the many water woes that are plaguing the planet. Sandford states, "What Canada needs is a new water ethic that harmonizes federal and provincial water resource management. Without policy reform we could very well reach a point where remediation of the damage we are doing to our own surface water and groundwater will be more expensive than we can afford or

the most recent Bond movie, *Quantum of Solace*, the bad guys aren't after gold or diamonds. They are after the control of water markets". Unfortunately, the ensuing privatization of water utilities is not as transparent, as the crystal clear waters that corporations are seeking to control and prosper from. Water can be sold out or tapped out from under the earth where millions or a few may live. Texas water management is based on the Rule of Capture, which essentially means as long as you have the equipment to siphon water from under your neighbour's soil – A Texan Straw – you have the right to access and use that water. This is why some Texans have resorted to carrying water as the result of neighbouring golf courses tapping into the resource. Mother Nature and the plants and soils that purify her water are being denied ample time to restore their reservoirs – aquifers and streams. The Ogallala Aquifer in Texas is being pumped at a "net deficit of 12

Book Review: Restoring the flow: Confronting the World's Water Woes

ratio of close to 20 to 1". Sandford helps us recognize that we need to be a complacent, self-satisfied people who don't care about the impacts our pros-

encourages people to become informed about water governance and to become politically involved in the management of our waters – the life-sustaining gift that rules all life, today and in the future.

You can tell that the global water crisis is real because James Bond knows about it.



carefully monitor, govern, and fairly distribute our water. Sandford states, "At present we are viewed widely abroad as perous lifestyles have on our environments or on the commons we share with [the] rest of the world". This book

Three Films for the Classroom: The Trotsky, The Age of Stupid, and H2Oil

Patrik Parkes

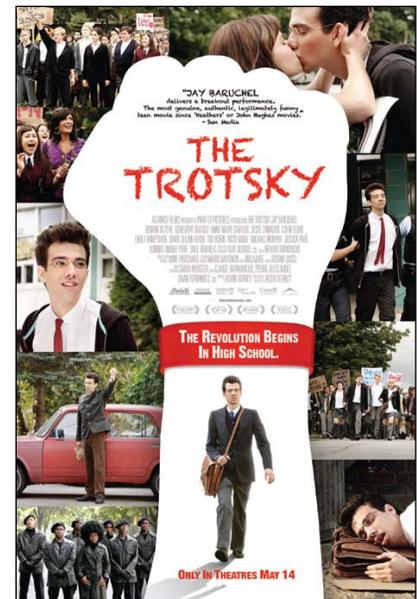
In the past year I've come across a number of awareness-raising films, a few of which I've thought everyone in the world should see, or every young person in Canada should see, or something along those lines.

H2Oil is an expose of the environmental damage done by Alberta's oil sands development. The documentary includes interviews with Dr. John O'Connor, who was accused by Health Canada of professional misconduct for causing "undue alarm" by publicizing unusually high rates of cancer in Fort Chipewyan, downstream from the development. On the other side, an Alberta government spokesperson claims the development is not spreading toxic substances, but rather cleaning the earth of them! *H2Oil* is a thorough and sometimes slow documentary, but a good introduction to Canada's worst environmental catastrophe, well known to the rest of the world, but under-examined at home. Rating: most people in Canada should see this. www.h2oildoc.com

The Age of Stupid is a science fiction documentary, which asks a very good question: "Why didn't we save ourselves when we had the chance?" The science fiction part of this film is its framing device: an archivist in the future

looks back at video footage from 2008. This footage comprises the documentary aspect of the film: people from all parts of the world address issues of war, exploitation, overconsumption, complacency, and environmental destruction. It seems most of the interviewees know what's around the corner, but live in societies unmotivated to act. *The Age of Stupid* is something like *A Short History of Progress* for people too busy (or lazy) to read. Rating: everyone should see this except, perhaps, the clinically depressed. www.ageofstupid.net

The Trotsky is a comedy with a message, and an original (if absurd) premise: Leon, a teenager in Montreal, believes he's the reincarnation of Leon Trotsky, and attempts to start a revolution at his high school. This intelligent, witty film has appeal for viewers across generations, knowledge levels, and interests. There are lots of jokes to 'get' – inside jokes for the social activist crowd, relationship jokes, visual gags, and generally excellent comedic timing by an excellent cast. *The Trotsky* also serves as a light introduction to 20th century social movements, and its dissection of apathy ends on an inspirational note. *The Trotsky* invites young people to question the structures imposed on them, and as a film from the 'left', it's self-critical enough not to be conde-



scending: pay close attention to how the school board chair dismisses Leon's local concerns, self-righteously proclaiming the importance of her overseas charity work for the Stephen Lewis Foundation. Rating: every Canadian should see this; in fact, *please* see this and share it with your students. www.thetrotskymovie.com



Book Review: I Am an Emotional Creature: The Secret Life of Girls around the World

Betty Gilgoff

Eve Ensler's *I Am an Emotional Creature* is not a book about teaching but rather a book for and about girls. It is about girls stepping up, being smashed down, standing up, and demanding to be noticed. It is a tragic, funny, thought provoking and heartwarming book that belongs first off, in the hands of every teenage girl. By offering up stories of girls from around the world it invites teenage girls to share their own stories as way of forming connections and gathering strength. The power of this book, like the power of Ensler's earlier *Vagina Monologues*, is really in opening the

tion and demand. Probably better performed rather than read, the book, as a whole or in small sections, could provide a vehicle for groups of girls to talk with each other or to invite boys, parents, or others to involve themselves in conversations about issues and change. As I read the book, often with my 16-year-old daughter in the room nearby, I wondered what emotions it would stir in her. I wondered how reading it might prompt her to think differently about herself or whether or not it would incline her more towards political action. I wondered how the provocative or terrifying insights in the book might seem to her. I wondered which

bie", the voice of a very young Chinese factory worker producing Barbie doll heads, to "A Teenage Girl's Guide to Surviving Sex Slavery", a story from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and "Let Me In" from an American suburb, the stories are grounded in the "Girl Facts", sprinkled throughout. The stories and poems offer a wide range of issues and topics as a starting point for further investigation. The poetry in the book is deserving of further study as poetry and could easily serve as a style worth emulating as teenagers, both boys and girls experiment with finding their own voice with regard to their own burning questions. Even Ensler's own closing in the uplifting, empowering "Epilogue: Manifesta to Young Women and Girls", stands on its own as an argument for why this book deserves to be worked into any curriculum whether to address social justice issues head on, or as a way of more subtly using powerful content to challenge and shift our ways of thinking:

Always fight back
 Ask for it
 Say you want it
 Cherish your solitude
 Take trains by yourself to places
 you have never been
 Sleep out alone under the stars
 Learn how to drive a stick shift
 Go so far away that you stop being
 afraid of
 not coming back
 Say no when you don't want to do
 something
 Say yes if your instincts are strong
 even if everyone around you disagrees
 Decide whether you want to be liked or
 admired
 Decide if fitting in is more important
 than finding out
 what you're doing here 🐦

The power of this book
 is in opening the conversations
 that need to be had.

conversations that need to be had.

This is also a book for teachers, for parents, for women, for men and for teenage boys. It is a book for anyone who really cares about the girls in our world because it is about the adoration, the abuse, the demands, and the confusion that wrap too many of our girls here and everywhere, in a shroud of silence, poverty, sickness or terror. Ensler does a beautiful job through poetry, fiction, fact, and journaling of inviting girls to unleash a kind of emotional power that is already changing how girls will be free to be in this world. "Dear Emotional Creature," Ensler starts off. "I believe in your authenticity, your uniqueness, your intensity, your worldliness. I love the way you dye your hair purple, or hike up your short skirt, or blare your music while you lip-sync every single memorized lyric. I love your restlessness and your hunger. You are one of our greatest natural resources". As a teacher, I can see using this book to inspire teenage girls and give them permission to dream, ques-

stories would resonate with her; which stories would seem out of place or worse perhaps, too commonplace. About midway through a chapter called *The Joke About my Nose* I found a connection for my daughter who often laments that she has her dad's bigger, funnier nose rather than my own. So I passed the book over to her. "Here read this," I offered.

"Can I read the book when you're done, mom?" she asked as she handed it back, Ensler having worked her charm in drawing my daughter in to read more. Ensler does indeed speak to girls, thousands of whom she has interviewed and worked with while touring to raise money for V-Day, a global movement against violence to women and girls. The book is a fictionalized compilation of the stories girls have shared. From "Five Cows and a Calf", the story of a Kenyan girl who at 14 gathers the courage to flee from home, avoiding genital mutilation as a part of the bargain which would sell her as a wife to an old man, to "Free Bar-

Teachers may also be interested in
 Eve Ensler's talk on *The Girl Cell*
 at: <http://bit.ly/bzam10>

Media: the First Curriculum

Dan Blake

Media Literacy has been described as the 'first curriculum'. Although the media do not constitute a prescribed set of learning outcomes in the formal sense, the media nevertheless present us with a vast range of experiences that is more comprehensive than any conventional curriculum. The media can also be fairly described as the 'first curriculum' because children are exposed to media messages from the moment they are born. Yet very little attention is given to helping children manage the

A significant concern for many parents and teachers is the issue of violence in the media. In Canada the media are left to control themselves. The major TV companies have an advisory board that monitors complaints. It also has quite explicit criteria around issues of gratuitous violence and the portrayal of women. But complaints are invariably after the fact. When it comes to movie and video game rentals the situation is more challenging. The age level rating system for levels of violence is problematic. But even more serious is the lax attitude of video game rental stores in

itary used video games, much like the ones commercially available in stores, to desensitize soldiers in preparation for combat.

The issue of violence in the media presents a special challenge for proponents of media education. While they all abhor the gratuitous violence that seems to be the basis of the more popular video games they are reluctant to get drawn into the debate around censorship. The goal of media education is to teach children to think critically. Media educators would prefer to help children understand how violent video games are successful in exploiting people's desire for excitement and action-oriented entertainment.

Media messages are so pervasive that few people bother to reflect on how such messages may be influencing their children, or themselves.

On Friday, October 22, as part of the PAGE conference in Surrey, Liz Schulze, Education Manager at Pacific Cinematheque, will present a workshop on this vitally important topic. I urge as many teachers as possible to attend.

Dan Blake is President of the BC Association for Media Education.



**Only when the last
tree is cut; only
when the last river
is polluted; only
when the last fish
is caught; only
then will they real-
ize that you cannot
eat money.**

– Cree Proverb

largely undifferentiated barrage of information that they experience on a daily basis. Studies with very young children have shown that babies as young as six months respond to both aural and video messages on TV. In many homes the TV functions as a babysitter, particularly on weekends, when exhausted parents try to grab a few hours of extra sleep.

Media messages are so pervasive that few people bother to reflect on how such messages may be influencing their children, or themselves, for that matter. One commentator has used the analogy of a fish swimming in the water to describe how we experience the media in our daily lives. Some parents attempt to restrict their children's TV watching, and a few have gone so far as to get rid of their TV. As teachers we know that children can be infinitely resourceful and quickly find ways to circumvent their parents' efforts by watching TV at their friends' homes. A better solution is to prepare children to be more thoughtful consumers of TV, and media messages in general.

making decisions about who they will rent their product to. Even when video stores exercise due diligence there are no guarantees as to who will get to play the video game when it gets home.

Several years ago a coalition of organizations, including the BCTF, the VPD and the School of Communications at SFU, was successful in lobbying the NPD government to introduce tougher legislation around children's access to violent entertainment. The bill was passed in the final days of the government, but the new Liberal government allowed the legislation to die, by refusing to proclaim it into law.

Concern over violence in the media seems to wax and wane as new and ever more graphically violent video games come on to the market. Commentators are divided over whether violent video games actually contribute to more violent behaviour on the part of those who participate in the games. One US critic of violent video games, who was an officer in the US Army responsible for training soldiers, explained that the mil-

Get on the Rights Side: Educating Canadian Youth on their Rights in Respect to Participation in Armed Forces and Conflict

UNICEF Canada, Policy Advocacy Group

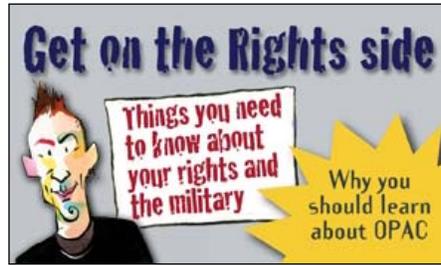
In 2000, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a human rights treaty to increase the protection of children from involvement in the military and in armed conflicts. The Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict is a binding treaty under international law that sets out the rights children under the age of 18 have relative to participation in armed forces. The Protocol reinforces the Convention's provisions that all children under 18 are entitled to special protection, and that voluntary recruitment under the age of 18 must include sufficient safeguards. For example, the Protocol establishes 18 as the minimum age for compulsory recruitment to the armed forces. It requires governments to prevent persons under the age of 18 from taking a direct part in hostilities. Governments should also progressively raise the minimum age for voluntary recruitment into the armed forces from 15 years, giving preference to older recruits. It also urges governments to protect children from recruitment by non-state groups.

The Protocol urges governments to make sure that children and their parents or guardians are made fully aware of their rights as described in the Protocol, so they can take informed decisions if and when they are considering a career in the armed forces.

By ratifying the Protocol, Canada committed to ensure that its provisions are implemented in domestic law, policy and practice. For example, the National Defence Act has been amended to regulate the entry and participation of children under 18 into the Canadian Forces (16 and 17 year olds can apply under certain conditions) and to prohibit their deployment into areas where hostilities are taking place. This is supplemented by Criminal Code provisions against trafficking and exploita-

tion of children, and Criminal Code and provincial labour codes prohibiting or restricting the employment of children in work likely to be injurious to their life, health, education or welfare.

However, when Canada reported to



the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2004 on how it was complying with the Protocol, the Committee found a number of areas where Canada needed to strengthen the protection or provision of children's rights related to the military. Among other things, they stressed that Canada must strengthen education and training on the provisions of the Protocol for all relevant professional groups, in particular military personnel. And it recommended that Canada make the Protocol widely known to the public at large and in particular to children and their parents, through school curricula in a child-friendly version.

As children progress towards making career decisions, for thousands of Canadian children and young people every year the military is considered as an option for further education or employment. To raise awareness of and progressively implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol in Canada, UNICEF Canada, the Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children and YOUCAN produced a brochure informing children of some important rights and considerations related to the military, *Get on the Rights Side*.

Get on the Rights Side distils essential information about children's rights under the Protocol in youth-

friendly language, responds to the most common questions raised by youth in Canada and suggests a guidance checklist to those considering military service so that they are aware of their duties in military service and the nature of the commitments they are making if joining the Canadian Forces. It is consistent with children's fundamental right to appropriate information regarding decisions affecting their lives, facilitates their access to information so that they make informed choices in line with their talents and interests and complements the information already provided by the Canadian Forces, promoting fully informed decisions based on children's rights. The brochure, produced in three languages (English, French and Oji-Cree syllabics), is the outcome of extensive consultation with Canadian youth across the country, the federal government and civil society organizations.

Get on the Rights Side is offered to Canadian children through secondary schools as part of their career information and guidance programmes; youth clubs and programmes; cultural centres; and other community based services and organizations. It is also being disseminated by the Recruiting Group of the Canadian Forces as part of their recruitment literature. 🐦

To discuss or order free copies of *Get on the Rights Side*, please contact Saadya Hamdani, Advocacy Specialist, UNICEF Canada. Tel: 1 416 482 4444; Toll free: 1 800 567 4483 - (extension 8850); email shamdani@unicef.ca.

More information can be obtained from www.unicef.ca/youthfriendlyopac (English) and www.unicef.ca/pfadestineauxjeunes (French).

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THE FUTURE LIVES HERE: UNITING SCHOOLS & COMMUNITITES

October 21 & 22, 2010

Sullivan Heights Secondary School, Surrey, B.C.

Thursday, October 21:

Stephen Lewis:

The World's Greatest Force for Good

7:00 - 8:30 PM

Friday, October 22

Dr. Ruby Payne:

Creating Success: Providing the Tools that Children and Families Need

8:30 - 11:30 AM

PAGE PSA Panel:

Dr. Henry Milner, Dr. Özlem Sensoy, Dr. Chris Shaw:

Critical Thinking and Civic Engagement

12:15 - 2:15 PM

Workshops:

Children, Families, Strategies for Schools, Communities and Neighbourhoods

12:15 - 2:15 PM

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