

THE

VOICE

MAGAZINE

Volume 16 Issue 24

June 13, 2008

Like Us Only Different

Chronicles of Cruiscin Lan

Cultural Mosaic

Zoroastrianism

A Need-to-Know Basis

And we don't

Plus:

The Mindful Bard,

From Where I Sit,

Milk-Crate Bandit, and much more...



CONTENTS

WELCOME TO THE VOICE PDF

The Voice interactive Table of Contents allows you to click a story title to jump to an article. Clicking the bottom-right corner of any page returns you here. Some ads and graphics are also links.

Features

Editorial 3

Articles

Cultural Mosaic: Zoroastrianism 4

Columns

Chronicles of Cruiscin Lan 6

Milk-Crate Bandit..... 7

The Mindful Bard 9

From Where I Sit 11

AUSU This Month 12

News and Events

Did You Know?: AUSU Bulletin Board..... 5

International News Desk 14

Click of the Wrist 15

Education News..... 16

From the Readers

Letters to the Editor..... 2

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We love to hear from you! Send your questions and comments to voice@ausu.org, and please indicate if we may publish your letter.



EDITORIAL

Sandra Livingston



Enough Said

As far as most rational people are concerned, the world has seen and heard more than enough of murderer Paul Bernardo. Along with the horrific news accounts of his crimes, there have been books, movies, and reams of armchair analysis and comments.

Except for practitioners and students of law, psychology, and perhaps sociology, there's no need to give this individual more airtime. Yet an Ontario Superior Court Justice, David McCombs, has decided to do just that.

On June 7, 2007, Bernardo was interviewed in a Kingston jail. He was asked about his involvement in the disappearance of Elizabeth Bain, a University of Toronto student who went missing in 1990. Bernardo has long been suspected of involvement, and in spite of opposition from the Crown, McCombs recently gave permission to media outlets to broadcast that interview on television and the Internet.

As the [CBC](#) reports, part of McCombs's decision hinged on the fact that "open justice and public scrutiny are core values in our justice system . . . unless the press has access to court information and exhibits they are unable to provide the information to the public."

But why, exactly, does the public need to know? The implication is that public access creates an environment where justice is both done and *seen* to be done, and that this public scrutiny helps make for a justice system that is accountable and equitable. In the larger picture, this contributes to the public good.

Yet in this case, releasing the interview for general consumption not only fails to provide public merit, it does the public, and our justice system, more harm than good.

First, Bernardo is not on trial for this crime. It's not a situation where providing detailed transcripts will ensure a fair trial for an accused—or the release of someone falsely convicted. Although the interview may have helped win the recent acquittal of Robert Baltovich, Bain's former boyfriend who was convicted of second-degree murder in her death, publicly airing it would not (and should not) have affected that decision by the courts.

Neither would airing the video protect the public's safety. If a suspected criminal is still at large, releasing photos or video of pertinent details allows the public to take precautions; to be aware of enough details to avoid a known danger. But Bernardo has been declared a dangerous offender, meaning he will serve the rest of his life in prison.

And the most worrisome aspect of releasing the video is the contribution it makes to the voyeuristic interest in crime—and the accompanying sense that the pain of victims, their families, and society at large is reduced to nothing more than the diversion of an Internet clip.

Would the tape of such an interview be useful for those studying criminal psychology or law? Definitely. But when it comes to gawking at the ramblings of convicted serial killers for no useful purpose—well, enough said.

CULTURAL MOSAIC

Behdin Nowrouzi



Introduction to Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrianism is the religion founded by the prophet Zarathushtra (*Zarhosht* in Persian) in ancient Persia or modern-day Iran. The religion predates Christianity and Islam.

Some scholars and historians assert the religion has influenced those faiths and Judaism with its doctrines of one God, a dualistic viewpoint of good and evil, and a final day of judgment.

There is dispute amongst experts as to when the religion was founded. Some Zoroastrians assign a date of 6000 Before Common Era (BCE) to the founding of their religion. Conversely, scholars and researchers place its beginnings between 1500 and 1000 BCE based on archeological evidence, including written texts.

According to legend, in a vision, Zarathustra was ordered by a spirit named "Good Thought" to start preaching against the sacrifices of the traditional Persian faiths and to help those less fortunate. Folklore says that his birth was anticipated and that attempts were made by the forces of evil to kill him as an infant.

The prophet began to understand that "Good Thought" had been sent by the almighty god Ahuramazda (Wise Lord). Zoroastrianism believes in one god, and scholars believe Zoroastrianism to be one of the earliest monotheist religions, although this is debated.

Zoroaster's teachings state the Zoroastrian creed *Humata, Hukhta, Hvarshta* which means "good thoughts, good words, good deeds."

The Zoroastrian *Avesta* is a collection of multilingual religious books and sacred texts similar to the Bible. This includes the original words of Zarathushtra retained in five hymns called *Gathas*. The *Gathas* are revered poetry, enhancing and directing followers toward the worship of Ahuramazda.

Furthermore, they serve to ameliorate the understanding of Good Thoughts, promote social justice and equity, and facilitate individual choice between good and evil forces. In the Zoroastrian faith, the *Gathas* have a general and even universal vision.

The Faravahar is a symbolic representation of the soul before birth. Zoroastrians are reminded of their purpose in life on this earth, which is to live peacefully and attain harmony with Ahuramazda. The Faravahar's face resembles the face of a human being and demonstrates its connection to humanity, while the feathers represent the three Zoroastrian creeds. This symbol represents human spirit and encompasses the two opposing indicators of good and bad.



At one time, Zoroastrians dominated an area stretching from what is now Rome and Greece to Russia and India.

According to Zoroastrian expert and Professor Mary Boyce, "Zoroastrianism is the oldest of the revealed world-religions, and it has probably had more influence on mankind, directly and indirectly, than any other single faith." It has significant importance because of its relationships to both Western and Eastern faiths.

As stated in historical documents, during its prime, Zoroastrianism was the religion of the Persian Empire.

The religion's influence is evident as Persian kings did not impose mandatory conversion. Furthermore, they even respected the belief systems of others, exemplified in the Cyrus cylinder, which is hailed as the first charter of human rights. It recounts the humane treatment of King Cyrus the Great upon his conquest of the Babylonians. From this [document](#), he declared:

"I announce that I will respect the traditions, customs and religions of the nations of my empire and never let any of my governors and subordinates look down on or insult them until I am alive. From now on, till (Ahura) Mazda grants me the kingdom favor, I will impose my monarchy on no nation."

When Muslim Arabs invaded Persia in the 7th century, Islam displaced Zoroastrianism as the state religion. Zoroastrians fled to South Asia (India, Pakistan), where most are concentrated today. Those who remained in Persia have endured and survived many hundreds of years of violence, proselytization, and persecution. During its peak, Zoroastrianism spanned the ancient world from Central Asia to Southern Europe.

Currently, according to a 2004 *Fezana Journal* survey, published quarterly by the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America, there are some 6,000 Zoroastrians in Canada, 11,000 in the United States, and 2,200 in Persian Gulf nations.

From followers that once numbered as many as 50 million, the global population of Zoroastrians today is estimated to be between 125,000 to 150,000.

DID YOU KNOW?

AUSU Bulletin Board



Have something to sell? Looking for a new job, or maybe a volunteer opportunity? Want to connect with a Study Buddy for that new course you just enrolled in? Then why not check out the [AUSU Bulletin Board](#)?

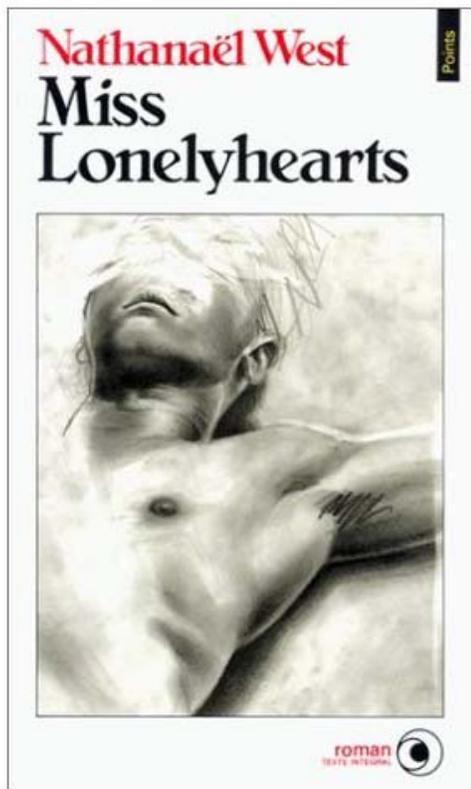
If you're an AU student, and have a valid login and username for the AUSU site, you can access all the latest postings on the bulletin board. The Study Buddy section is a great place to find other students taking the same courses as you, and just about every subject area is covered: Psychology, Math, English, Communications Studies, Philosophy, Astronomy, and more.

You can also search job listings for that perfect summer job or volunteer opportunity, while other sections have items for sale or wanted. The more students that use the bulletin board, the better it works for everyone, so why not check it out today?

The Chronicles of Cruiscin Lan

by
Wanda
Waterman
St. Louis





Punched Out by Literacy

In the last year, a friend of mine got what is likely the cleverest tattoo imaginable; each of his hands, when made into fists, now read respectively “read” and “more” so that should need ever be that he give you a pair of black eyes, at least the experience would be educational.

In a time when 85 per cent of the Afghani police force is illiterate, and most of your children think that “ha ha” is spelled “lol,” I personally couldn’t agree with the sentiment more. Pow! Take that, video games.

Miss Lonelyhearts

by Nathanael West

One of the least recognized and most formative writers of the post-war era, Nathanael West became famous for his writing posthumously. Sales of *The Day of the Locust*, *Miss Lonelyhearts*, *The Dream Life of Balso Snell*, and *A Cool Million* were disappointing at best while he was alive, though most of his stories are now films and still strike a remarkably resonant chord today.

This tale of an agony columnist from New York with problems of his own echoes Bukowski, Burgess, and Burroughs in a way that’s both surprising and yet not at all, and is (in my opinion) one of the best short stories ever written.

I Am Legend

by Richard Matheson

Richard Matheson is a hugely influential writer, responsible for inspiring such over-lauded word machines as Ann Rice and Stephen King, and this, his most famous novel, has been made into three separate films, starring Vincent Price (*The Last Man on Earth*), Charlton Heston (*The Omega Man*), and Will Smith (*I Am Legend*), but the original book tells the story with such detail and style as to make it a completely distinct tale.

Brilliantly haunting and nauseatingly realistic, this is the horror story of vampirism as a bacterial infection, the narrator being the only human left alive who is immune to the plague.

Insane from night-time cabin fever and wholesale daylight slaughter of the sleeping undead, he paces in an ever-tightening spiral of fear and misery beyond respite, while desperately seeking a cure for the infection.

It’s no wonder that this apocalyptic tale of inward frustration and outward terror has been so influential for so many years.

The Beekeeper's Apprentice

by Laurie R. King

This is an adorable and easy to read retelling of a later period of Sherlock Holmes's life, through the eyes of a pubescent, petulant, and brilliant young lady that the master detective takes on as an apprentice.

While it's not exactly great literature, *The Beekeeper's Apprentice* is still a very fun, well-written novel that doesn't take itself too seriously: it opens with a disclaimer that the text was found on a doorstep amongst other oddities like some rope and chunks of foreign rocks, immediately placing the reader on guard for both mysteries and clues.

Worth reading, but not necessarily keeping for a second go-round, this is a good summer choice to grab at your local library or garage sale to occupy some time sun tanning or sitting in a park.

The Resurrection

by John Gardner

An aging university professor is diagnosed with leukemia in the midst of struggling with the greatest paper of his career, the one that will put his name in the history books, and so he and his family move to his childhood home where he goes through a touching and sympathy-laden, if wordy, reawakening and comes to grips with his disease.

This is a page-turner without any real development until the last few chapters, and you'll find yourself looking up from it saying "Why am I reading this?" However, once the climax hits, you'll thank yourself for sticking it out, because the ending not only explains all of the superfluous, seeming nonsense from the rest of the book, but also blows you away with the simple elegance of its message: the true beauty of life is in how it is lived.

Timequake

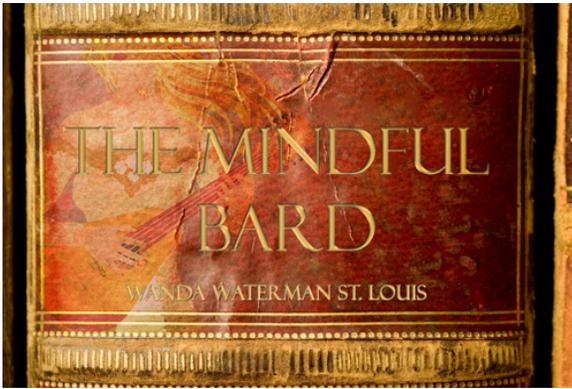
by Kurt Vonnegut

Kurt Vonnegut is the sort of author that separates the world into two distinct categories: those who read his books, and the brain-dead masses fighting for survival in an intellectual winter, huddled around the warm glow of their cell phones and personal digital assistants.

The idea behind *Timequake* is a simple one: the universe is constantly expanding, and with it, time. But what would happen if time were to hiccup for an instant, to the tune of approximately 10 years?

Those 10 years would repeat themselves exactly as before, and those creatures sentient enough to be aware of it would be stuck on autopilot until the repeat finished and everything started up again where it had left off—and the impact of suddenly being in control of your own body, thoughts, and movements again would be devastatingly jarring.

This is Vonnegut at his wackily serious, philo-sci-fi best.



Books, Music, and Film to Wake Up Your Muse and Help You Change the World

Forgetfulness, in Recent Memory

. . . Playing

Lear would force him to inhabit his fear,
fathom the future he had almost reached
already. Why, just last week, running here
and there to find lost keys, a friend's name leached
from memory. Gone. No, nor could he bring

himself to speak the plain and awful line
that shows the man within the shattered king:
I fear I am not in my perfect mind.

From "The Role of a Lifetime," in Selected Poems: 1970-2005 by Floyd Skloot, 2007, Tupelo Press, Vermont

My father was visiting a Massachusetts seminary in the '70s when he came upon a group of young people he knew singing "We Shall Overcome" along with some religious choruses. When he pointed out to them that this was an anthem of the civil rights movement they were incredulous. What? No! It was a gospel song and that was all there was to it. Only a handful of years had passed since the Freedom Ride.

Many of my young friends don't know who Tolstoy is. They don't know how unions came to be, or that the industrialized world they deem *normal* is really, relative to world history, a complete anomaly. They know nothing of the historical warp and woof that brought us to where we are today.

Those who came of age in the '60s were conscious and deliberate in throwing out the past in favour of the brave new world they were supposed to be creating with nothing but peace and love and the chords C, F, and G7. I don't hear this from today's youth. It's not that they have another agenda supplanting the wisdom of the ages. They simply don't know.

I'm not the only one who's noticed. The last year witnessed the appearance of a number of works in film and literature disclosing a fear that our culture is losing its bearings, cutting itself off from its roots, and careening down some dark highway whose name we no longer recall.

A few recent publications have sought remedy. In *Cultural Amnesia*, Clive James makes the argument that *not* knowing what led to the devastating events of the 20th century dooms us to repeat them, as many of the conditions preceding the Holocaust, for example, still exist or are now re-emerging.

Atlantic Monthly's series "Books That Changed the World" brings us the biographies (both the history of the writing of them and the stories of their cultural impact) of books that shaped who we are today and that still offer rich resources with which to respond to current problems. Hollywood has been digging into legend, myth, and history for inspiration; hence we have *Troy*, *300*, and *Sweeney Todd*.

When the Rolling Stones performed that disastrous concert at Altamont where four people died and many more were injured, American youth, not entirely fairly, removed Mick Jagger from his pedestal of youthful innocence, instead seeing him and his ilk as dark lords of destruction. Many quickly turned to American roots music.

The song “American Pie” was an attempt to recount the tragedy that transpired when rock’s humble American roots were discarded in favour of a lucrative and exploitative old-world decadence. I see this sort of thing happening now, perhaps in reaction to the ubiquitous starmaker machinery of the *Idol* series and its spinoffs. The last couple of decades have witnessed the rise of the alternative country movement and numerous bands and labels swimming in musical history and the rethinking of traditional forms. They’re not the only ones making good music these days, but they represent a new aesthetic that is culturally significant.

Tied up closely with the fear of cultural amnesia is a preoccupation with diverse failures of mental function. Culture makers have been sensitive to a general anxiety regarding the delicacy, vulnerability, and fallibility of our most complex organ. The movie *Away from Her* chronicles the despair experienced by a man who feels he is losing his wife to Alzheimer’s, and Sebastian Faulks’s *Engleby* is a novel about a young man who experiences lapses of memory only to later discover that during these lapses he has done things he dare not remember.

Mile Zero witnesses the unravelling of a man in a world for whom his past has not prepared him. David Lynch’s films often have the effect of disrupting the last shred of sanity we feel we may possess. And *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* says it all.

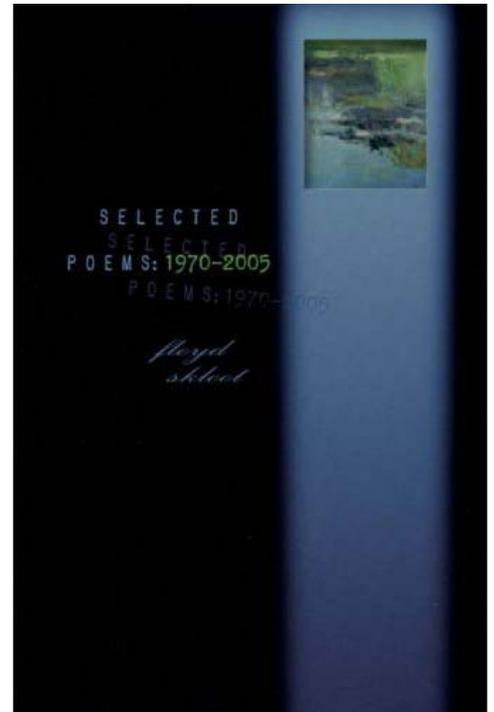
A case might be made that themes of mental imbalance or memory failure tend to emerge during periods of cultural upheaval. “Rip Van Winkle” and *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* came in the wake of the French Revolution, the smallpox epidemic, the Irish Rebellion, and the dawn of the struggle between Britain and Russia for the central Asian countries. *Diary of a Mad Housewife* and Sylvia Plath’s *The Bell Jar* both came out in the 1960s.

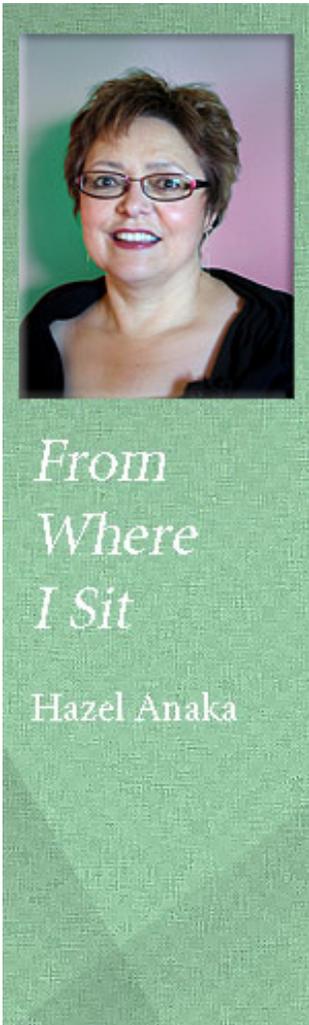
But that’s a job for the scholars. Without question we are witnessing a recoil of horror from current events, a reaction that throws us back to the past for answers and grounding. Our fear is not just of what is taking place now; it is also a dread of what the gaping maw of the future represents to us, both culturally and personally: loss of something precious and irreplaceable, and nothing with which to replace it.

Is this justified? Should we rather be thinking, as is so often said, *If I can’t remember it, it can’t be that important*, or *What we don’t know can’t hurt us*, or the dismissive and utterly inaccurate *That’s all in the past?*

In *Selected Poems: 1970-2005*, Floyd Skloot, a poet struck by a virus that impaired his memory and his ability to engage in abstract thought, makes a compelling point by simply producing this body of poems written over the last 35 years. In these poems he discusses the experience of loss of mental capacity interwoven with sensitive tributes to great artists of the past. For Skloot the former existence of these figures is among a series of constants in his life, which also includes the love of his wife and his own continuing ability to make poetry in spite of feeling confused and forgetful.

When memory and reason are stripped away, what endures? Apparently, according to Skloot, poetry endures. So do relationships. And so, somehow, in spite of us, does the past.





I Don't Get It

I like to think I've led a reasonably well-informed life. I read newspapers, watch the news, and ask a lot of questions of virtually any and everyone. But there are some things I just don't get. Am I alone in this?

I don't get the whole *Sex and the City* phenomenon. We never had satellite TV when it first appeared and I don't think I've ever watched a whole episode. By osmosis I know Manolo Blahniks figured heavily in the series. As did sex and clothes.

So was it social commentary on the new woman or just an updated version of *Golden Girls* and *Designing Women*? Don't know and can't say I care.

I don't get the growing trend, at least in some circles, to do an out-of-country shower party. I remember when family and the bridal party rented a room in a small hall for a Sunday afternoon shower party. It was marked by a cross-section of guests from young women to seniors, a group gift (like a vacuum cleaner), and several dumb games.

Today, a trip to Las Vegas for the bridesmaids is not unheard of. Stag parties lasting two or three days and involving camping, fishing, golfing, and a few cool beverages are also becoming popular. Aren't a few hours at a peeler bar enough anymore? Is there a correlation between the cost and extravagance of the pre-nuptials and the longevity of the marriage?

I don't get how spraying a substance, albeit with a really lovely, natural-sounding name, made in a factory can possibly make our air, soft furnishings, and carpeting smell fresh and clean and be good for us. Oust, Glade, Febreze and their ilk bombard us with another layer of pollution.

Don't we all know someone who suffers, or perhaps suffer ourselves, from environmental allergies and sensitivity to perfumes, deodorizers, and air fresheners? How about throwing open a window and letting Mother Nature do her job?

I don't get that some drivers are so clueless they think they can pull out in front of a loaded semi-trailer traveling highway speeds. A minimum eighty thousand pounds of steel and freight needs far longer to come to a stop and can be a deadly force if it hits your dumb ass. As someone married to a truck driver, I understand the respect these guys deserve. How about letting the next big rig merge? Or waiting to enter the highway after they've passed by? Or letting a guy back across three lanes of traffic to unload the freight that makes your life possible?

I don't get people who ride motorcycles in sandals, cut-offs, muscle shirts, and shorty helmets. Even with all the protective gear, an error in judgment or plain bad luck could mean a body bag. Why, why, why tempt fate and challenge emergency room docs?

Either I need some explanations or I need to chill out cuz I don't get it, from where I sit.

AUSU This Month



Meet Your New Council

The AUSU Council and staff have added and updated their bio pages. If you're curious about who these nine people are, you can go to our [council page](#) to find out more, or meet our Councillors in the AUSU chat room at the times announced on the front page of the AUSU website.

Also, on May 26, at 6:00 p.m. MST, the new AUSU Council will be having their first council meeting open to public attendance. See the people you elected in action. Contact ausu@ausu.org or phone 1-800-788-9041, ext 3413 for details on how you can attend.

New Addition to Council Family

The VP Finance and Administration, Sarah Kertcher, was not able to participate in the most recent AUSU executive meeting, but her absence was understandable. The night before, Sarah had a baby boy by the name of Nathan Ross Kertcher. Nathan came into this world at 7 lbs. and 13 oz. AUSU sends its congratulations out to Nathan and his parents, and looks forward to the day when he's an Active Member.

AUSU Merchandise for Sale

Due to a high demand for AUSU merchandise, and delays in setting up our online store, we have put together a quick catalogue with a few items we have in stock now.

You can download the catalogue in PDF from the link on our home page, or go to <http://www.ausu.org/services/store.php> to see the catalogue online. Shipping costs will be calculated per order and we'll let you know by phone or email.

We are only accepting credit card orders at this time, unless you are able to visit our Edmonton office. We are in the process of selecting more product of good quality and use for our members, and some of these should start to be available soon. Suggestions as to other products are welcome.

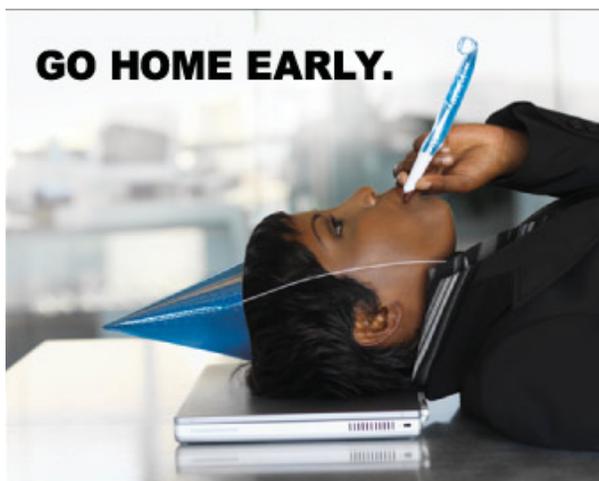
AUSU Lock Loan Program

If you take exams at the Calgary or Edmonton campus, you can participate in our Lock Loan Program. Under this program, you can borrow a lock to secure your stuff while you take your exam, then return it at no cost and with no deposit. If you're not in Calgary or Edmonton, or would like to purchase a lock to keep, we are keeping the price close to our cost in the spirit of this program. However, to do this means we rely on you to return the borrowed locks, and to make sure the combination is reset to 0-0-0 when you do.



Employment Site Nearly Ready

Big news! AUSU has nearly completed the final testing of the new employment site developed in coordination with the Personnel Department. This site will be available to all of our members and their family or friends, and will help them to find employers looking for their skills.



Create professional-looking flowcharts, timelines, graphs, and more, in minutes, all by yourself. Then go spend some quality time with your family.

Free for AUSU members. Visit www.ausu.org



 **SmartDraw**

Smart Draw – Benefit for AUSU members

AUSU has purchased a licence agreement to supply the award-winning SmartDraw software to all AUSU members (current undergraduate students). To access this deal and find out more, visit the front page of our website.

SmartDraw allows you to create a wide range of graphics for your assignments and submit them electronically in a Word file. You can also place your graphics in Excel or PowerPoint files, or export them as TIF, GIF, or JPEG files to make a web graphic or even a logo. Just a few of the graphics you can make include Venn diagrams, genetics charts, graphs, organizational and flow charts, and Gantt charts.

For any course that requires charts that cannot be easily created in Word or Excel, this should be a real time saver and make it easier to submit all portions of an assignment by email. Remember, though, that you should always check with your tutor to find out if there is a specific format he or she prefers. Your tutor does not have to have SmartDraw to view these graphics, however.

Installations under this program are good for one year. The package includes both the Standard and Health Care editions of SmartDraw.

AUSU Handbook/Planner 2008 in stock!

The 2008 AUSU planner is still in stock. We've added a few enhancements this year, including cheat sheets for common citation styles, a clip-in page-marker ruler, and a funky fridge magnet to remind you to get your weekly dose of *The Voice*.

As always, we're excited to know what you think of the planner.

It's Here! (really!)

14 month calendar
week at-a-glance
planning pages

**Click to order your 2008 Handbook/Planner
Free for all AUSU members**

INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: The fix is in for Quebec gas prices

As if Canadians haven't been hit hard enough with the recent increases at the gas pumps, several Quebec companies have recently been charged with price fixing.

So far, charges have been laid against 13 people and 11 companies, all of whom are accused of fixing the price of gas in the province.

As well, the federal Competition Bureau told reporters that it is continuing to investigate price fixing at the pumps in other parts of Canada.

The companies and individuals charged in Quebec were operating in Sherbrooke, Magog, Victoriaville and Thetford Mines.

Of the parties charged, [CBC News](#) reports that three companies and one individual have pleaded guilty "to related charges."

The companies are facing up to \$2 million in total fines. Among those companies is Ultramar Ltd.

According to the commissioner of the Competition Bureau, Sheridan Scott, the announcement of the charges at a June 12 news conference "sends a clear message that the Competition Bureau will take action to stop price fixers whenever we have evidence that they have broken the law."

The allegations by the Competition Bureau state that the gas retailers contacted each other and agreed on prices to set at the pumps. As the CBC reports, the individual operators accused ran gas stations "under the banners of Shell, Esso, Petro-Canada and Irving Oil."

One Ultramar employee, Jacques Ouellet, received a fine of \$50,000. A fine of \$1.85 million was levied against Ultramar, while a combined \$179,000 in fines was set for Les Pétroles Therrien Inc. (operating under the Petro-T banner) and Distributions Pétrolières Therrien.

In a statement released June 12, Ultramar has said it will not fight the charges. The company's motorist sales network vice-president, Christian Houle, told reporters "This is obviously a regrettable situation that we deplore."

Wiretaps, searches, and informants formed part of the Competition Bureau's "extensive investigation," which took place between 2004 and 2007 and resulted in the recent charges.

Consumer advocates have applauded the move. As a spokesman for l'Union des Consommateurs, Quebec's consumer watchdog, told reporters, the charges "give a clear signal to those who will be tempted to [create] cartels not to do it."

In Foreign News: More than one “Olympic Games” for China

When the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing finally wrap up, China’s Olympic Games will be far from over. In fact, they’ll still be getting started—in life, that is.

A popular custom in that country is to name children after events or virtues, and the Olympic Games are no different. According to the [BBC](#), over “4,000 children in China have been given the name Aoyun, meaning Olympic Games, in the past 15 years.”

The name is more popular for boys than for girls. More than 92 per cent of the 4,104 registered Aoyuns are males.

The popularity of the name was first noticed in 1992, the year China tossed its hat into the ring to host the 2000 Games. At that time, around 680 Aoyuns were registered. Another surge came in 2002 after China was chosen as the host of the 2008 Games. An additional 553 Aoyuns were named at that time.

National pride in children’s names isn’t limited to the Olympics. Other names honouring common events and popular slogans include Space Travel, Defend China, and Build the Nation.

CLICK OF THE WRIST – Plenty of Sole

Last week we looked at some of the marvels connected to the human hand. This week, it’s time to give those other hard-working appendages their due. Whether we’re walking, dancing, or winning the 100-metre Olympic dash, our feet are the oft-neglected support that carries us through life.

Bata Shoe Museum

Even if you can’t get to the Bata Shoe Museum in Toronto, their online exhibits allow you to explore the fascinating history of footwear, with a focus on some of Canada’s earliest inhabitants and the latest design competition.

Virtual Shoe Museum

This site lets you find exactly what you’re looking for. Admire the beautiful and bizarre footwork of modern designers, searching by colour, material, focus, designer, and more. There are even edible shoes!

Podiatry Channel

Everything you wanted to know about the human foot—and more. Who knew that one-quarter of the bones in the human body are in our feet?

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EDUCATION NEWS

Laura Carlson



A Mounting Slope: the Ontario tuition fee problem

With the board of governors' recent approval of the 2008/2009 budget, Ontario students will once again see the cost of tuition increase

Waterloo (CUP) -- As tuition fees across the province continue to rise, undergraduate students in Ontario are faced with the burden of personally contributing the funds necessary for post-secondary education.

Though tuition fees have been subject to slight increases in the past couple of years, it was during the 1990s that tuition

rates took a drastic jump. According to Statistics Canada, in Ontario undergraduate tuition has risen by about 220 per cent since the 1990/1991 operating year.

While a five per cent increase cap exists in Ontario, most institutions are riddled with debt and are forced to raise their tuition fees by this maximum amount to remain functional places of learning.

Increasing tuition in Ontario

Ontario remains the third most expensive province in the country from which to obtain a degree, following only Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

According to a report issued by Statistics Canada, in the 2007/2008 school year, tuition in Ontario increased 4.4 per cent from the previous year, making the average tuition paid by Ontario's undergraduate students \$5,381. This is over \$850 above the national average.

Jim Butler, vice-president of finances at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, explains that the reason behind the drastic increase in tuition fees is a result of a decline in funding from the provincial government.

"Within a decade there has been a change, simply because governments weren't really interested in putting more money into the post-secondary system," he said.

According to Butler, at the end of the 1980s government grants accounted for between 85 and 90 per cent of university revenue. Now he says it's about 50 per cent.

Laurier president Max Blouw has also seen how the cost of education in Ontario has been shifting to a "user pay system."

Being in a position where he frequently deals with both the student body and the government, through his seat on the Council of Ontario Universities (COU), Blouw is constantly exposed to the multiple perspectives that exist on this issue.

"The real question, of course, for any government, and for students and for university administrators is, 'What's a fair balance? What is an appropriate balance of costs to the public as opposed to the individual?'" said Blouw.

"I'm not sure that we really have a way to find an absolutely right answer."

Catherine Fife, former MPP candidate in the Kitchener-Waterloo riding and current vice president for the Ontario Public School Board Association, feels that "downloading" the cost of university onto students is not the right answer.

"With a looming economic downturn, this is the time to invest in post-secondary," said Fife.

"The connection between a strongly publicly funded education system and having opportunities to transfer that knowledge into the post-secondary arena is key to a healthy province," she added.

The province's undergrad tuition fee framework

After a two-year tuition freeze, in March of 2006 the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities announced a new fee framework that places limits on how institutions across the province can increase undergraduate tuition fees.

"The government put a cap on tuition over the past two years and they've come forth with a tuition fee framework recently," explained Greg Flood, a spokesperson for the Ministry.

While annual increases cannot exceed five per cent, there are further guidelines applied to particular programs and years of study.

"It equates to . . . about \$200 for about 70 per cent of university students, is what you're looking at for a five per cent increase," said Flood.

Student response

In order to address the many concerns surrounding increasing tuition rates, several lobby groups exist on both the provincial and federal levels. Two examples are the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA), which deals with post-secondary issues at the federal level, and the provincial lobby group Ontario University Student Alliance (OUSA).

Wilfrid Laurier University Students' Union (WLUSU) VP University Affairs and president of OUSA, Trevor Mayoh, explains the importance of having such groups acting on behalf of students.

"They lobby hard but what they actually do at the lobby meetings is provide solid research and recommendations," he said.

Mayoh notes that OUSA has several conferences each year where they meet with MPs, MPPs, Ministers, and other representatives from the government.

"We're actually sitting in there and coming up with real solutions, he said. "I think that's why we're being respected and that's why we're being listened to and I don't think it's a way we should break from."

Mayoh highlights some of the successes of OUSA, including the current five per cent increase cap, and the Liberals using solutions offered by OUSA in their most recent education platform.

While Mayoh feels that professional conduct is the best approach for the organization to take, other student groups, such as the Association for Solidarity Student Unions (ASSÉ) in Quebec, have used a different method in dealing with issues surrounding student fees.

When Quebec lifted the province's 13-year tuition freeze last fall, advocacy groups across the province garnered national attention as thousands of striking students took to the street to protest the increasing cost of their education.

"ASSÉ represents a big movement in Quebec and it's kind of a radical vision," explained Hubert Gendron-Blais, ASSÉ's secretary for communications.

"Radical is just to go really deeply into problems . . . it's just the way that we approach things."

Gendron-Blais feels the culture of Quebec is simply more conducive to this type of movement than that of Ontario.

"I think that the global climate makes people in Quebec more willing to mobilize themselves," said Gendron-Blais. "We know that students can obtain things for education if they mobilize."

The future

While the current five per cent cap on undergraduate tuition will remain in place until the government announces a new policy, the future of the education system in Ontario remains uncertain.

According to a 2007 report by the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations, Ontario still receives the second-lowest amount of government funding, at 25 per cent below the Canadian average.

While Blouw sees a considerable effort being made on behalf of Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty's government to invest in education, he notes that there is still a ways to go before the province gets to where it should be in terms of funding.

"The government is doing a lot recently, they've been putting a lot more money in," said Blouw. "It's a moving target though. Other provinces, other nations are investing in the post-secondary system.

"[The government has] a lot of costs and post-secondary is one of them, but it's an investment in the future and I think a strong investment is appropriate," he added.

While there seems to be a consensus that an increase in public funding is necessary to ensure that the cost of education does not continue to fall on the individual, Mayoh feels that students must also do their part to safeguard the future security of Ontario's education system.

"The quality of education and the amount of tuition is all going askew. We really need to solve this or we're going to be in a really rough, black circle," said Mayoh. "The problem is, everyone agrees . . . It's just getting them to act, is the biggest problem."

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THE VOICE

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