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cc:
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WENDY PETERS &
SUSAN SRIGLEY

THOUGHTS ON DEMOCRACY, POETRY AND BEING A NUFA PRESIDENT

GYLLIE PHILLIPS

Here is one thing I have learned being NUFA's 5th President: democracy is not an entity that exists outside each of us. It may be described as a system or a principle that holds us together, but in fact, in operation, it is nothing more than the action of individuals, coming together into communities. Democracy is therefore always at risk because it only exists in my action (and yours). I am claiming the privilege of my home discipline (English Studies) to say that democracy is a kind of poetry.

contd. on pg. 2

*For poetry makes nothing happen: it survives
In the valley of its making where executives
Would never want to tamper, flows on south
From ranches of isolation and the busy griefs,
Raw towns that we believe and die in; it survives,
A way of happening, a mouth.*

W.H. Auden "In Memory of W. B. Yeats"

Congratulations

Dr. HILARY EARL!!

*Winner of the 2012-13
OCUFA Status of Women
Award of Distinction*

"As Chief Negotiators, each of these women has provided strong leadership and sensitive appreciation of the need for better protection of minorities in their associations, through the bargaining process. Each has provided an individual example for, and as a group, a positive influence on other women academics, who may be considering a leadership role in their association"

*~Jennifer Evans, Equity Chair,
Carleton University Academic Staff Association*



Dr. Hilary Earl

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DEMOCRACY, POETRY AND BEING A NUFA PRESIDENT, CONTD.

In 1939, W. H. Auden wrote some desperate elegies to democracy, or the fledgling spirit of democracy, which seemed about to fall to the “dogs of Europe.” In these he makes a perhaps grandiose claim that whatever it is that poetry stirs in the human heart is also the thing that makes communities flourish, makes people care for one another, not only themselves. Poetry and democracy are “ways of saying”—they can only be “mouths”, not institutions, ideals, abstract complacencies. Being President of NUFA has brought this home to me in very practical ways. An example that springs to mind is that amazing circus called bargaining. At the end of it, we have a document, which is the law, as fair and responsible as we can make it,

binding us to our work and to each other at Nipissing. But it only comes into being when it is inhabited by us, specifically. Although we tend to relax into the idea that the “Collective Agreement” rules the land, in fact it only exists because we (you as well as me) protect it through grievance, serve on the Collective Bargaining Committee or the Strike Preparedness Committee, respond to bargaining surveys, come to Membership meetings to debate its implications, agree to defend it by going on strike, and of course vote to ratify it. Personally, I think back to the anxiety (mine) of those membership meetings, especially the ones focused on the strike vote, when I had no idea what would or could be expected from this assortment of colleagues. I’m coming to the end of

two years as President, so I can say without too much embarrassment that there is something stirring and mysterious, yes even poetic, about a roomful of very different individuals working their way to a collective decision.



News from CAUT & OCUFA....

CAUT has new guidelines for the use of Copyrighted Material.... http://www.caut.ca/uploads/Copyright_guidelines_2013_en.pdf

OCUFA has launched a cool "We Teach Ontario" campaign... <http://weteachontario.ca/>



Contested Terrain

2012 CAUT LIBRARIAN CONFERENCE

Paula Cardozo

In October I attended the CAUT librarian conference in Ottawa on behalf of NUFA. The topic of the conference was “Contested Terrain: Shaping the Future of Academic Librarianship.” We were there to discuss the threats to our profession and develop strategies to push back.

The conference opened with welcoming statements from President Wayne Peters and Executive Director James Turk. From their public support of the striking Western Librarians and Archivists to their campaign to restore funding cuts to Libraries and Archives Canada, CAUT has demonstrated a strong commitment to libraries and the people who make them work.

While there were many excellent presentations, I’ve chosen to highlight the sessions that continue to resonate months later. Mitch Freedman, former president of the American Library Association, presented a spirited discussion on the role of national library associations. A theme that arose throughout the conference was dissatisfaction among many academic librarians in attendance with the Canadian Library Association (CLA). Many felt the CLA had missed a number of important opportunities to advocate more strongly for its working members. In response, shortly after the conference, the Canadian Association of Professional Academic Librarians (CAPAL) was founded and held its inaugural meeting in Toronto in early February.

An emotional presentation by librarians from McGill and McMaster on the anti-librarian actions encountered at their respective institutions made for a sobering session that reinforced the need for librarians to unite and fight back. McMaster’s Laura Banfield discussed the destabilizing effects of external consultations, constant reorganizations, and the departure of 15 out of 27 librarians in a few short years.

On the other hand, a thoroughly inspiring session was presented by Maureen O’Reily, President of the Toronto Public Library Workers Union. Dubbed “Mad Mo” by the Toronto Sun, she discussed a successful public relations campaign that engaged patrons to speak out to protect a valued public institution. Some did so in creative ways (check out “Charlie Chaplin and the Quest for the Holy Gravy” on YouTube)!

On the first day, we broke into groups to discuss common challenges. Recurrent themes included chronic funding shortfalls, collections budgets and subject librarians stretched too thin, deprofessionalization, reduction in research leaves, fear of speaking out, nepotism, and management removing librarians from bargaining units. Moving beyond a simple airing of grievances, we met again the second day to strategize. How do we push back in order to fulfill our responsibility to support research, teaching, and learning at our institutions? The conference ended with all delegates reconvening and one representative from each group presenting the ideas.

Although many suggestions centred around the collective work we must continue to do, I really enjoyed discussing the responsibility that individual librarians have to raise the profile of the profession. I used to think the problem was that the general public doesn’t know what we do. I’m now convinced that the real problem is that they think they do. Too many people are under the impression that libraries are irrelevant, their workers are interchangeable, everything is available for free on the internet, and that young people are so tech savvy that their information literacy skills are innate. I admit that I get discouraged at times, but I also see so many opportunities to explain what we do and why it is important.

I am so grateful to NUFA for sending me to the CAUT conference as it has had a lasting impact on this “early career” librarian! The chance to meet colleagues from all over the country, in a venue with no corporate presence, to focus solely on professional issues was invaluable. While the topics we discussed at the conference were very serious, delegates were reinvigorated after discussing our ideas for the future and it is my hope that the subsequent formation of CAPAL will help protect and promote the profession.

Paula Cardozo is the Reference and Information Services Librarian for the Canadore College and Nipissing University Libraries



A NEW DEMOCRACY?

LARRY PATRIQUIN

That democracy in Canada is not as healthy as it could be is a perception held by many people across the political spectrum. What is more controversial are answers to the questions “why is this the case?” and “which way forward?”

My answer to the “why” question is: “What *else* would we expect?” If we look back over the last 7,000 or so years to the origins of “the political,” we discover one of the rare universals of history, namely that states only make an appearance in class-divided (that is, non-egalitarian or non-rank) societies, where a small group has managed to gain control of a disproportionate amount of resources (typically land). There is no example of a class-divided society that lacks a state. We can point as well to another near-universal: the role of the state is to assist, in some way or other, that group that has managed to set itself off from the rest of the community, and states do not hesitate to use the most violent means necessary in order to provide this assistance. In short, the role of the state is to enforce and reproduce existing class divisions.

This situation has not changed with the rise and eventual global dominance of capitalism, nor has the core role of the state been seriously altered by the slow and painful evolution of representative democracy. Indeed, no society – with the possible exception of ancient Athens in the period c.507-323 B.C. – can make a case to be democratic, in the original Athenian sense of democracy as rule, not just by the majority, but by the *poor* (who also happened to be a majority). The Athenians had direct democracy for adult males who were not slaves. On the one hand, ancient Athens had deficiencies in comparison to our own society, where gender equality is an objective (though not yet practiced in many areas of life) and slavery has been abolished. On the other hand, Athenian men who were citizens played an active

part in governing their *polis*, be it as members of the Assembly, one of the 500 individuals who sat on the Council (which formulated the agenda for the Assembly), or one of the 6,000 men who sat on the juries each year. This direct democracy was further enhanced by a general economic equality, with broad ownership of land and divisions of wealth that appear tiny compared to our world of Bill Gates and other gazillionaires.

The Athenian experiment has never been replicated, not even in a modified form. Those of us who live in self-described democracies today live under *representative* governments, where we give up much of our power to other people. This form of democracy was, for the most part, an English invention. In the late medieval era, kings called meetings, generally of substantial landholders, to both seek their advice on matters and hear petitions from subjects. Eventually, these meetings evolved into a permanent fixture – Parliament, with its House of Commons and House of Lords. Not surprisingly, institutions designed to reduce tensions between a monarch and his aristocrats – institutions that tell us much about the powers of *lordship* but little about *democracy* – are particularly ill-suited for developing “people power,” especially in twenty-first century capitalism, where massive amounts of economic power are concentrated in the “private sector,” safely out of reach of democracy.

My problem with representative democracy is that it has brought few benefits to ordinary people.¹ No “advanced” nation, for instance, has yet to eliminate poverty, something that should be easily accomplished given available wealth. I would even argue against the standard view that the welfare state itself is a “child of democracy.” The origins of government-run social welfare are in England, the world’s first capitalist society, where poor

relief – paid for by obligatory taxes on the wealthy and well-off – was put in place from the mid-sixteenth century onward. By the early eighteenth century, the “poor rate” was universal in England, and the country had developed a burgeoning welfare state, despite the fact that it was also thoroughly undemocratic, with only a small percentage of males entitled to vote and hold public offices. We can only imagine what a deep democracy, perhaps some variant of the Athenian model, could do for the working class majority.

In moving forward, then, if we are to enhance the quality of life for all, we must do more than tinker with our system, whether that’s implementing proportional representation, recalling delinquent MPs, and so on. While these reforms would be improvements on the status quo, creating a vibrant, effective democracy will require the establishment of new institutions, such as permanent citizens’ assemblies, that will, for the first time in 2,500 years, put power in the hands of everyday people and enable them to “intrude,” to some extent, into the state.² The creation of these institutions throughout Canada, whatever form they take, must become the top priority of every progressive organization from sea to sea to sea.

¹ I have developed this argument in “More Democracy, Less Poverty,” *New Politics*, no. 51 (2011): 79-89. Available at <http://newpol.org/content/more-democracy-less-poverty>.

² For some preliminary thoughts on this matter, see my article “The Class Ceiling of Social Rights,” *Journal of Progressive Human Services* 24 (2013): 66-80.

Spotlight on Research:

CREATIVE PROJECTS BY LAURIE KRUK AND ADAM ADLER

Near North Voices' 2012-2013 Concert Season

Near North Voices -- North Bay's University-Community Choir continued our program of artistic outreach on March 2, 2013 when we hosted **SINGING OUT - Toronto's LGBTQ Community Chorus** in partnership with St. Andrew's United Church. Since 1992, this 50-member mixed voice choir has entertained Toronto audiences with their broad repertoire of pop, showtunes, classical, folk, and jazz, delivered with great polish as well as occasional humour and skilled choreography. This was the first time that an LGBTQ choir has visited North Bay. Near North Voices and the St. Andrew's Choir performed an opening set, followed by a performance by Singing Out. A choral finale combined all three choirs to a total of 90 singers and was truly impressive.

On April 6, 2013, Near North Voices will welcome guest soloists and instrumentalists from across Ontario along with members of the North Bay Symphony for the Northern Ontario premiere of *The Armed Man: A Mass For Peace* by contemporary Welsh composer Karl Jenkins. Dedicated to the people of Kosovo, this groundbreaking work weaves texts from the traditional Latin mass with the Muslim Call to Prayer and rich secular poetry, to tell the story of the unfortunate move out of peace through conflict and into war, from the diverse perspectives of local inhabitants, soldiers, and survivors. This concert will also feature *Serenade to Music*, composed originally by Ralph Vaughan Williams for performance by the top sixteen British classical singers of the early 20th century.



Singing Out

PRIDE • MUSIC • BELONGING

Research Papers

In July Adam will be presenting two papers at the Phenomenon of Singing IX International Symposium as part of the Festival 500 International Choral Festival in St. John's Newfoundland:

Conducting Pantless: Exploring internet communication to rehearse choirs at a distance

and

The Bartered Chorus: Navigating challenges and reaping benefits of choir-community-institutional partnerships

Laurie Kruk recently published her third collection of poems:

MY MOTHER DID NOT TELL STORIES

(Demeter Press, 2012)

Readings have occurred in Toronto, Sudbury and North Bay, to date.

(The book is available at Gulliver's)



Tentative Agreement Reached at St. Francis Xavier University



Rachel Hurst (Women's and Gender Studies programme) and Ryan Billington (Music Department) get creative on the picket line

After eight months of talks, the Association of University Teachers (AUT) and administration at St. Francis Xavier University were unable to agree on the terms of a new Collective Agreement. On January 28, 2013, more than 400 professors, librarians, lab instructors and writing centre workers went on strike. A tentative agreement was reached on February 14, 2013. According to the union, "The tentative contract includes an eight per cent raise over four years as well as health and dental benefits for all members and more job security for lab instructors." A ratification vote occurred within two days and received overwhelming support from members. Classes resumed on February 18, 2013.

The AUT released the following press release on February 14, 2013:

The strike at St. Francis Xavier University may be over.

After a marathon bargaining session yesterday, negotiators for the Association of University Teachers (AUT) and University administrators have reached a tentative agreement. The full AUT Executive met this morning to carefully consider the offer, and has unanimously recommended it to the membership for a ratification vote. A meeting will be held Friday to explain the offer to members, with the vote to follow immediately afterwards and continue on Saturday. The results are expected to be released later on Saturday. "The democratic process must be respected to ensure all members have an opportunity to vote on the agreement," said Peter McInnis, AUT President. "Some members who are on sabbatical or leave, and those who are not in the area, will also need to be given an opportunity to vote." The AUT Executive believe they have achieved a settlement that takes the needs of the AUT's diverse membership into consideration. McInnis attributes the achievement of the tentative agreement to the commitment of AUT members to a successful job action, and to the perseverance of the negotiating team. Modified strike activities will continue for the rest of the week while the AUT scales down operations. Classes will resume on Monday.

Apply
for a scholarship
bursary
or award



LEARNING OPPORTUNITY AWARDS

In the second round of Learning Opportunity Awards this academic year, two students were awarded \$800 each. Master of Education student, **Amy Andrews**, will be presenting her paper "Ready, Set...Ready Yet? Teacher Readiness in Dealing with Mental Health Issues" at the Canadian Society for the Study of Education Conference being held in British Columbia in June. PhD student, **Elizabeth Campbell**, will be co-presenting two papers at the American Educational Research Association Conference in San Francisco in April with the theme "Education and Poverty: Theory, Research, Policy and Praxis." The papers are entitled "How are we creating cultures of inquiry with self-studies that transcend constraints of poverty on learning?" and "Action research transcends constraints of poverty in elementary, high school and post graduate settings."

TEXTBOOK BURSARIES

NUFA has awarded Textbook Bursaries to **100 students** in the fall round of applications. The winter round closed February 15, with another 33 applications.

To date, \$3,700 has been awarded through the NUFA LOAs with two rounds remaining. The third round closed February 15 and the last round will close April 15. Faculty are encouraged to inform students about the NUFA Learning Opportunity Awards. Details may be found at www.nufa.ca under Forms and Applications.

**Mark
Your
Calendar**

**MAY
AGM**

**Wednesday, May
8th
2:30pm**

F210

