

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

NOVEMBER 2006

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WEBSITE
www.tsuoecta.org



Kathleen Gardiner
President

The school board elections on November 13 produced no change in the faces around the horseshoe of the TCDSB. One positive aspect to this is, there will be no need for a period of adjustment; the trustees can resume, immediately, the job of governance.

The major challenge facing them is, of course, the budget shortfall of \$34 million+ this year. The Special Assistance Team, assigned by the Minister of Education, is scheduled to present a report to the board by the end of this month. It is everyone's expectation that the report will contain recommendations to cut staff, services and programs.

At its meeting of November 15, the Board approved a plan of consultation with the ratepayers during the month of December; with what purpose? Is it to receive the blessing of all, for cuts to balance the budget or is it to galvanize the community into a common front to demand that the provincial government step in and rectify the problem?

At the same meeting, Sid Ryan, national president of CUPE, addressed the Board on the need for representation to the government to fix the funding formula. He spoke of the significant reduction of jobs, which had already occurred since the mid-90s, particularly among caretaking and maintenance employees,

whose numbers have plummeted from 1400 to around 600 presently; how much more can they sustain? And he asked the Board to work with CUPE in ensuring that they were on the same page in the briefs, which they are each, presenting to the government.

While every school board around the province is appealing for a funding formula, which is realistic in the face of their financial responsibilities, amendments to next year's grants will not fix the shortfalls being faced by both Toronto school boards and the Dufferin-Peel Catholic Board right now. And while the Minister of Education appears to recognize that the formula is flawed, having requested reports from school boards on improving the funding formula, she is guarded in what she says and very cautious about making promises, which she may not be able to keep.

In an address to the OECTA Council of Presidents, on November 2, Minister Wynne spoke of the government's efforts to address the flaws; just as Rome could not be built in a day, adjustments had to be made over several years. She made no commitment of infusion of funds to solve the problems of the two Catholic boards and while hinting about possibilities in the release of next year's general legislative grants, she added a cautious note about what the government made be facing in the overall economic situation of the province, next spring.

Clearly, the Liberals are sitting on a giant pressure cooker. Things are simmering in Toronto and its environs and may reach boiling point very soon. Will the lid fly off at the worst possible

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time for them, in the run up to the next provincial election? If there is no solution by next Spring, when many more boards will face budget shortfalls, having used up all their reserves by then, will the Liberals be facing an outcry from the education com-

munity? This, the government, which claimed it wanted to be known as an education government; what political hay, the opposition will make of that!

No one can deny that the McGuinty government has made huge ef-

orts in three years to repair the damage done in the previous eight. With its agenda of "success for all students", it has poured thousands of dollars into resources and programs for students at risk; it fixed the board/employee labour relations for four years (even if we didn't agree with its methods) and it seems to have

restored confidence in the publicly funded education system.

But the mind of the electorate can be fickle and its memory, sometimes, short. Will three years of good work be remembered if there is turmoil, when we go to the polls? And if not, what will be the outcome? Throw out the Liberals and replace them with whom? The Tories, whose education platform hasn't changed since we tossed them in 2003? The NDP, which was unable to capitalize on the damage wrought between 1995 and 2003; will one by-election win in Parkdale-HighPark translate into a majority in one-year's time? A minority government, as in Ottawa?

Yes, the education community must hold the feet of the Liberals to the coals, but we must also be clear as to who and what will be damaged, if the fire gets out of control.

Kathleen Gardiner



We congratulate all the trustees on their election; their task is not an easy one.

re-

AT YOUR SERVICE



Frank Bruno, Second Vice-President, has taken up residence at TSU.

TSU Executive 2006-2007, left to right: Kathy Gower, Executive Assistant; Frank Bruno, Second Vice-President; Teresa Placha, Councillor; Jim Barnes, Recording Secretary; Claire Bonk, Treasurer; Rene Jansen in de Wal, Councillor; Kathleen Gardiner, President; John Cafferky, Councillor; Mark Sherlock, Third Vice-President; George Kolos, First Vice-President



A GOOD PLACE TO BE



*George Kolos,
1st Vice-President,
Grievance Officer*

At the beginning of each school year we reevaluate our relationship with the employer. As one indicator of that relationship, we count our grievances.

So far this calendar year we have filed 17 grievances, which is about the average for the four previous years.

We have at the moment 35 outstanding grievances compared to 31 in the previous year. About three quarters of these grievances are of a personal nature (basically the way people are treated by their managers). Only six grievances are really policy issues.

Some will argue that this is too many for the size of the workforce, while some have said that we should be attacking the Board for every managerial transgression. We have, in consultation with senior staff at OECTA provincial, sought assistance in changing the way issues are handled.

One neighbour to the west (same size, fewer schools) also files about 20 grievances a year. However, they have eight outstanding grievances at this point. At one point in the late nineties they claim that there were over 200 grievances outstanding. Looks like a turnaround is possible.

We receive a number of complaints about the Board's local administrators. We compile the complaints, keep note of the patterns and when there is merit, we will put forward a good case.

Unfortunately, some people rightfully complain that the process in place at TCDSB is extremely slow.

There are a number of people, including lawyers and arbitrators involved from both the Board and TSU who need to get their timing right. As we build our case we must ensure that the process is done correctly from the very beginning.

The TSU release officers have worked with some principals to try and resolve problems at the school level before those problems escalate. We have attempted to get the superintendents involved before we go to the lawyers and arbitration. In fact, many more issues could be settled at the local school level. Yet many issues are put off, and eventually end up in arbitration.

Principals need to see themselves as problem solvers. Structurally and systematically our schools are more difficult to manage simply because they are smaller, and have unique problems. This means that there is a need to manage differently.

Some of the new blood coming in have actually taken management courses and know the benefits of bringing people on side. Why not allow departments to decide teacher assignments for themselves? Why not save a principal the stress and agony involved in interpersonal disagreements?

The TSU office is asked to represent those members that seem to be taken advantage of. It is no secret that our teachers are being asked to do more with fewer resources. Not all teachers are at the same stage in their careers or family lives. Some people cannot give more of their time for extra-curriculars and when they refuse or do not volunteer they should not be punished. Our health is not always what we want it to be, and our personal responsibilities change.

We are asked to speak for teachers who feel intimidated when

dealing with school administrators and sometimes with the superintendents. What we want to see in the workplace are professional adult relationships based on respect and understanding. We've defended the rights of a number of teachers over the years who have felt overburdened with a more difficult workload than other members of their departments. This includes such things as the number of preps and new preps.

When we grieve we don't always get a financial settlement, sometimes we achieve recognition that a situation needs to be improved. Other times the fairness is achieved through a change in our collective agreement. It's at this time of year we need to review the assignments, class sizes and workloads that people have, using the Collective Agreement (C.A.) as the base.

We have our Local School Staffing Advisory Committee (LSSAC) whose responsibility is to "give input to the Principal before the Principal's decision is made." (C.A. Article 5.05) It cannot be emphasized enough that the duties of the LSSAC are extremely important to the smooth functioning of a school. It is here that teacher representatives play a role in the staffing of the school. Both teachers and administrators should make every effort to understand and use this tool.

The intelligent Principal, with the input and support of the LSSAC, will make sure that teachers are consulted and listened to. This would truly make work a good place to be.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "George". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

WORKER-TO-WORKER CANADA-CUBA SOLIDARITY

✎ *by members of your TSU Labour Liaison Committee*

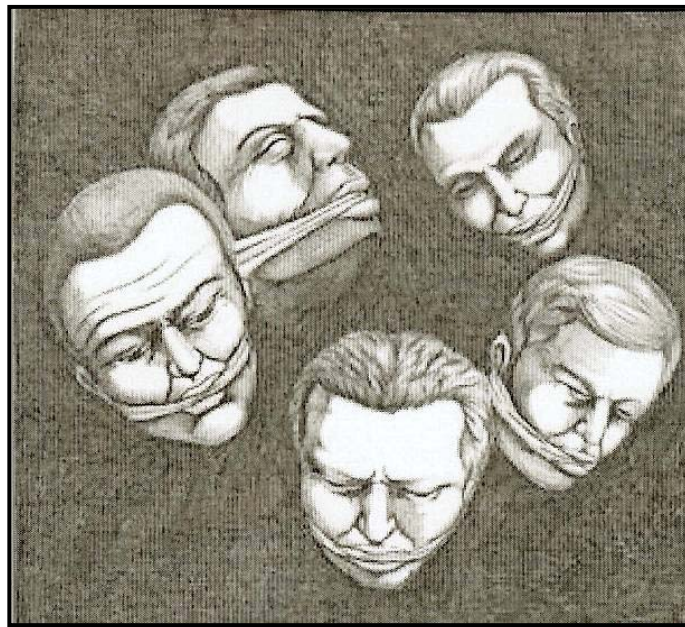
The Canada-Cuba Labour Solidarity Network Conference was sponsored by the OFL and various affiliated unions. TSU participated in this solidarity event for the first time. Canadian civil society groups and unions together with counterparts from Cuba, Venezuela and Bolivia shared updates on worker-related and social issues.

NAFTA

Much of the three-day session concentrated on Latin-American alternatives to NAFTA, the most popular of these known as the 'Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas' (ALBA). Signatories include Cuba, Bolivia, and Venezuela. Currently, while Caribbean, and Central and South American nations now have an alternative, several of these nations continue to support NAFTA. In fact Trinidad-and-Tobago is one of the nations bidding for NAFTA's regional head office.

Nevertheless, it is interesting to understand the motive for alternatives to NAFTA. The WTO and IMF are acronyms not very well favoured by Cuba, Venezuela and Bolivia, given the manner in which some nations, currently 'third-world' in nature, have become further indebted to these bodies. It was pointed out that so far, the big loser in NAFTA is Mexico, who has seen national assets fall under the

control of US-based companies. This has resulted in spiralling foreign ownership, job losses, and increasing cutbacks which has now resulted in a full-fledged civil revolt in Oaxaca, leading to repressive measures **now** being used by the Mexican armed forces. Canadian panellists demonstrated how



NAFTA has not lived up to its promises for this country as well.

Education in Cuba

Friday evening witnessed guest panellists emphasizing the importance of free universal education in Cuba. Despite being a developing nation, Cuba has a literacy rate on par with Canada, the USA and other first world nations. Although a US-imposed embargo on Cuba has caused much economic hardship, not one school has been closed down on the island. This contrasts with the threats of school closings here in Ontario.

Afterward, the organizers and Cuban delegates expressed their pleasure in seeing our TSU delegation at the meeting. We were in fact interested to hear that in Cuba, their regular PTRs were 20:1 at the elementary level and 15:1 at secondary! We discussed ways we could further develop stronger links and build greater solidarity, such as through the OECTA provincial educational aid fund and solidarity grants from the teachers' federations, to assist Cuba with further ongoing development of their education system. OECTA could also sponsor visits for members of the Cuban teachers' union to attend our provincial AGM.

Cuban Five

The forum ended with a presentation on the 'Cuban-Five', Cuban nationals being held in US prisons on what appear to be false charges of espionage. As noted by the website www.fightingbacknews.org/2005/03/cuba5.htm, 'Although no evidence of espionage was introduced at a Miami trial, the Cuban Five were given sentences ranging from 15 years to two life terms, for defending their country from terrorist acts by right-wing groups of Cubans based in the United States.'

On appeal, their convictions were overturned but they still remain incarcerated.

INTERESTING WEBSITES FOR EDUCATORS

Ontario Federation of Labour: <http://www.ofl.ca>

They have a variety of fact sheets on issues such as: Competitive Bidding in Home Care - A Model That Doesn't Work; Transparency and Accountability In Public-Private Partnerships; Hamilton-Wentworth Water: Back in Public Hands; and Polling on P3s/Privatization to name a few. There's also great information about the Women and Work project.

Maquila Solidarity Network: <http://www.maquilasolidarity.org>

The October 2006 Newsletter is currently posted there. You will also find a September 2006 report entitled, "Is Fair Trade a Good Fit for the Garment Industry?" There is also an online petition to support the Philippine workers who make clothes for Wal-Mart.

Ontario Health Coalition: <http://www.web.ca/ohc>

There is current information on that website regarding the fight against the privatization of our health care system. On November 2, they posted information on the cost of the first two privatized hospitals in Ontario - the Royal Ottawa and the Brampton hospitals.

KAIROS: <http://www.kairoscanada.org/e/index.asp>

Great ongoing resources on a variety of human rights issues such as poverty, ecology, economic justice, etc., the latest of which is a November 3rd letter to the president of Mexico, Vicente Fox, on the situation in Oaxaca.



*“The Fires that Burn”
The Life and Work of
Sister Elaine MacInnes*

Wine & Cheese Reception

Wednesday, December 6th
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

The Newman Centre

89 St. George (Parking available)

Please RSVP gowerk@tsuoecta.org

Or call: (416) 633-5502



YOUNG AUTHORS AWARDS

All entries must not exceed 3,000 words.

The competition is offered separately in both English and French.

There are three levels of competition: School, Unit and Provincial. First place winners at each level advance to the next level.

The Unit Awards consist of \$50 first place, \$25 second place, and \$25 honourable mention in each category.

Each individual entry must be accompanied by an Entry Form, available from your OECTA School Association Representative, completed and stapled to the front cover of the entry. An authorizing classroom teacher must sign the Entry Form. Teachers must submit their classes' entries to the OECTA School Association Representative by March 2, 2007.

Each school can submit one entry per category and division to the Unit Level of competition. Winning school entries must be signed and submitted by the authorizing OECTA School Association Representative to the local Unit office by March 9, 2007.

Grades 9–10	Short Story
	Poem
	Play
	Nonfiction (essay, article or report)
Grades 11–12	Short Story
	Play
	Poem
	Nonfiction (essay, article or report)

Toronto Secondary Unit Invites All Members

**TO A SOCIAL AT THE
CROOKED CUE
3056 BLOOR ST. WEST
1 BLOCK WEST OF
ROYAL YORK ROAD**

Date: Thursday December 7, 2006

Time: 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM



Beginning Teachers Social Free Food, Drink, Door Prize

**Useful classroom
resources: bring
some/ get some**



**Date: November 30,
2006 (Thur.)**

**Time: 3:30pm
Mix & Mingle,
4:00 – 6:30 pm Program**

**Place: Frog and Firkin Pub,
4854 Yonge St
(NW corner of Sheppard)**

**RSVP: jacqueline.ferreira@tcdsb.org
by Nov 28**

THE AISLE SEAT: REVIEW – BORAT

✎ By: Alan Orino (St. Mary's Secondary)

There will always be comedians and movies that will challenge the bounds of comedy and continually push the envelope from generation to generation. On the surface, they are crude and raunchy. For the most part, they reveal and comment about a harsh truth about our society. It is because of this that some of these films deserve to be seen beyond face value. **Team America: World Police** poked fun and satirized less-than-stellar actors-cum-superheroes and contemporary world leaders through masterful puppetry, taking audiences to scenes most unimaginable. In **The Aristocrats**, audiences were treated to endless versions of what has become “the comedian’s secret handshake”, an old joke that is interpreted from comedian to comedian, thus exploring the creative process in the world of stand-up comedy. Based on a character created by British (and, apparently, devoutly Jewish) comedian Sacha Baron Cohen, **Borat (Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan)** will certainly be in this league of comedies.

Borat is a local television personality from an “imagined” country that happens to have the same name of an Eastern European country. His octogenarian-looking mother is said to be 43 and he keeps a cow inside his house. In his eyes, his community, his neighbours, and his family are normal. His local government has commis-

sioned him to travel to the States to explore and document their culture on film in the hopes of improving the community. Starting off in New York City,

Borat attempts to befriend the Americans with his “neighbourly love”, but they are either startled or repulsed. Upon seeing Pamela Anderson on television, decides to change course and travel to California in the hopes of making her an honest woman. They travel through America’s heartland, observing and learning more of America’s customs, culture, and eccentricities.

Undoubtedly, Borat’s character is racist. Yet, the racism in this film is not motivated by malice or spite. Rather, it is a product of Borat’s own ignorance since he comes from a culture that views things very differently than in America. For example, his character claims to be anti-Jewish, yet he has absolutely no idea on how to even identify them. At a local Bed and Breakfast, Borat fails to notice that the proprietor who opens the door to welcome them is wearing a beanie. Furthermore, he misinterprets the owners’ genuine hospitality for attempts at annihilation. To make the situation even more outrageous, he thinks that the owners have transformed from humans to insects. In another instance, Borat claims to be homophobic, but when he unwittingly takes part in a Pride Parade in Washington, he hasn’t the faintest idea that the people he befriends and encounters are from the gay community. At least, he doesn’t find out until later after what seemed to be an innocent friendly party in his hotel room...

In turn, Borat, inadvertently, exposes the ignorance of many Americans around him. For example, at a rodeo, before singing the national anthem, he addresses the crowd in support of the war on terror, to which the audience warms up. However, he rouses the audience even more by “hoping the president drinks the blood of his victims”, which gets a surprising (and disturbing) huge round of ap-

plause. At this point, the audience is pumped, admiring Borat for such patriotism. All of a sudden, he proudly sings his country’s national anthem, using his lyrics to the tune of the American anthem. Realizing the sacrilege behind this, the people are outraged and turn on him immediately, after such an inspiring introduction.

One other thing worth noting: Borat may be an ignorant person, but it doesn’t necessarily make him a hateful, malicious character – far from that. The film, with great subtlety, points out a few vulnerable spots that make him a little bit more human. When he brings an unsavoury guest to a formal dinner party, the participants are quick to judge her. Later in the evening, when they go to a bar, Borat actually enjoys her company and treats her with some dignity. Most importantly, when he takes her home, he’s quite bashful and surprisingly reserved, save for a certain comment about seeing her later for a night cap.

Borat is not a film for everyone. Directed by Larry Charles (a longtime collaborator with Jerry Seinfeld on his TV sitcom), it’s the kind of comedy that is extremely over-the-top, crass, subversive and outrageous that will certainly make fans laugh hysterically from beginning to end. While reports are circulating that people who appeared in this film were duped, not realizing it was an out-an-out comedy, the truth remains to be seen. In spite of its political incorrectness, the film reminds us of the kind of ignorance that continues to be out there in contemporary society. If concerns are raised in the so-called “new lows” of comedy, remember what I said in the beginning of this article. Every generation has comedians who will constantly push the envelope. Look no further back to George Carlin, Richard Pryor and even Mel Brooks...



Ontario English Catholic
Teachers Association
TORONTO SECONDARY UNIT

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Highlights is published monthly by the Toronto Secondary Unit of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association and is the result of the collaborative efforts of the members of the communications committee. Anyone interested in volunteering for the Highlights should contact the TSU Office.

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*Editorial Policy: In accordance with the TSU by-laws, Highlights publishes opinions and other items of interest to our members as Catholic teachers from a variety of viewpoints. The Editorial Board must approve articles prior to publication. The editor may edit articles for reasons of length. The opinions expressed are those of the authors, not of OECTA-TSU as a whole. Anonymous material will not be published, although names may be withheld on request. Submissions are welcome. Please send to the TSU office, Attention: Communications Committee or email to:
highlights@tsuoecta.org*

IMPORTANT DATES

Collective Agreement Deadlines

Last day to hand in Category Upgrading form to Human Resources Department in order to be entitled to the appropriate adjustments in salary retro-active to September 1st for courses taken in the previous summer or spring. (3.04) November 30th

Last day to give notice to resign from the Board effective December 31 Or January 31 (8.05(a)) November 30th

Seniority lists to be posted in each school/work place (8.04) Soon after November 30th

Applications Invited for Collective Bargaining Research Committee

Notice of intent to negotiate agreement will be filed with the employer in January 2008. Prior to that, there is much work to be done in the preparation of the Unit's Initial Proposal.

All TSU members interested in participating in this preparatory work are invited to apply for the **Collective Bargaining Research Committee.**

- ◆ The work of the committee will commence early in 2007
- ◆ Members should be prepared to commit to one evening meeting (2 to 4 hours) per week at the TSU office
- ◆ Deadline for applications: Monday, January 15, 2007

Applications are available from your staff rep.

Summer Writing Workshops

Fiction Writing Workshop in Florence:
July 13-22/07

Memoir Writing Workshop in Barcelona:
July 21-30/07

Taught by Award Winning Author
Patricia Foster

Pricing

Fiction Writing Workshop in Florence: from \$1750 including Tuition and 9 nights accommodation

Memoir Writing Workshop in Barcelona: from \$1850 including Tuition and 9 nights accommodation

Special offer limited time \$100 off early registration till January 15/07

For more information:

<http://www.exploringcreativity.net/writing>

1 866 217 1890 (Toll Free)

1 212 922 1555

contact@exploringcreativity.net