

Ontario Is Quietly Privatizing Hospital Services ... 4



Ontario Health Coalition Executive Director Natalie Mehra told ARM Chapter 12 that we must fight to keep public healthcare

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Editorial Chatter

Once again, we are happy to feature dates of ARM events outside Toronto. Any Active Retired Member may attend any ARM chapter's events.

Public healthcare is the crown jewel of Canadian citizenship but is under the constant threat of privatization. Natalie Mehra, Executive Director of the Ontario Health Coalition, told ARM that the government is quietly privatizing hospital services. Cyndie Jacobs gives us a report on Mehra's presentation on pages four and five.

Paul Rook returns to these pages to give us his inimitable Curmudgeon's Corner. This issue, Rook takes on our fascination with electronic technology and finds us losing some of our humanity.

OSSTF faces several problems as we change and grow to incorporate all kinds of educational workers into the federation. President Manfred Netzel outlines the concerns that faced

delegates at this year's Annual Meeting of the Provincial Assembly.

ARM is always present at AMPA with a booth and, in non-election years, a Friday night hospitality suite. Chapter 12 once again staffed the booth. Check out the pictures and story on page 14

On pages 10 and 11, David Schreiber considers Laura Bates's book *Shakespeare Saved my Life: Ten Years in Solitary with the Bard*. All educators will find inspiration in her story. Learn about *Hypatia of Alexandria* on pages 12 and 13.

Charlie Hawkes updates us on the Teachers' Pensions Plan and also tells us about healthy student lunches in France on page 15.

Make a point of attending the Chapter 12 Annual General Meeting on Wednesday, June 4. After the meeting, members may enjoy a pleasant buffet dinner featuring music and good times with colleagues and friends.

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After School Volume 16, Issue 2, May 2014

After School is the official publication of Active Retired Members of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Chapter 12 Toronto (ARM C12)

Opinions expressed in *After School* are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the policies of ARM Chapter 12 or of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation.

Submissions are always welcome but will not be returned. All submissions are subject to editing for length and style while respecting the author's intentions.

Editorial Team: Larry French, Stephen Fuller, Cyndie Jacobs, John Jansen, Manfred Netzel, Ed Preston, Paul Rook, Neil Walker

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Calendar

Wednesday, May 21, 2014, ARM's "SWING FOR KIDS" Annual Spring Golf Tournament. 9:30 Registration; 10:00 Shotgun Tee-Off. Shotgun start means all golfers tee-off at the same time and finish together at 1:00 to 1:30 pm for lunch. The course we will be playing is the Challenge Course. The cost remains at \$70, course fee, or \$25 for lunch only. The course fee includes 18 holes of golf, power cart for two, BBQ lunch with choice of meats, salads, vegetable platter, dessert, coffee or tea, taxes, gratuities and prizes. Registration may be made through armchapter12@gmail.com and/or to Jim Loftus at 416 447-0811; or to loftaire@gmail.com. When registering please include team members' names, phone numbers and email where possible. Cancellations no later than 6:00 pm Monday, May 19, 2014. Cheques for \$70 entry fee may be sent to Jim Loftus, 7 Roanoke Road, Apt 301, Toronto, M3A 1E3. Make cheques payable to ARM C12 SPRING GOLF TOURNAMENT c/o Jim Loftus. Mail cheques by May 14, 2014.

Wednesday, June 4, 2014. 15th Annual General Meeting, ARM Chapter 12. 60 Mobile Drive. Registration 2:30 pm. Meeting begins at 3:00 pm. Guest speaker is Toronto Star columnist Royson James.

Friday, June 27, 2014. ARM C12's 10th Annual Theatre Trip to Stratford takes place. The two dynamic performance choices are *Man of La Mancha* and *King John*.

Man of La Mancha – Poet and playwright Miguel de Cervantes is attacked by fellow inmates who seize the manuscript of his masterpiece, *Don Quixote*. His response inspires the choral singing of his tale that narrates Quixote's obsession to attain the impossible

dream.

King John – When the King of France demands that John relinquish his crown in favour of his nephew, Prince Arthur, war happens. The conflict breeds excommunication, rebellion, and attempted atrocity that create such personal and political turmoil that it finds devastating expression in an anguished mother's grief for her son.

Cost \$100 per person including coach transportation. Registration by May 15, 2014. Lunch on your own. Make cheque payable to ARM C12, mail to Karma Naike, 980 Briar Hill Ave, Toronto M6B 1M3. Transportation Pickup 1. Agincourt Mall in front of Walmart – 8:15 am. 2. Yonge/York Mills NE corner 8:45 am. 3. Walmart's Parking Lot, 2245 Islington Ave. 9.15am. Questions? Please call 416 783-6591. Early registration will ensure better seating. Also, there are many restaurants in Stratford such as Bentley's that accommodate theatre patrons at lunchtime, if you're not up to a picnic in the park.

Wednesday, October 1, 2014. Lady Muskoka Cruise. Situated in picturesque Bracebridge, the Lady Muskoka cruise offers an incredible 2 ¾ hour luncheon cruise you are sure to enjoy. You will also visit Maple Orchard Farms for free time at the gift shop. Cost: \$96 per person including motorcoach transportation with washroom. Register by September 5. Make cheques payable to ARM Chapter 12. Please write Muskoka Cruise on the memo line of your cheque. Mail to Rosemarie Mohring, 272 Laird Drive, Toronto M4G 3X4. When registering, include your phone number. Cancellation no later than 6 pm, September 22. Phone Rosemarie for information on transportation pickup and times at 416 425-6677.

Out of Town ARM Chapters' Events

Chapter 9 (Windsor-Essex)

June 6- First Friday Breakfast @ The Lumberjack Restaurant on Tecumseh Rd. E in Windsor. Contact: Judy Tenzer [\(519\) 979-8135](tel:519-979-8135)

Chapter 18 / 21 (Hamilton-Wentworth)

May 20- Chapter Luncheon 12 noon @ The Anchor

Bar on King St. W in downtown Hamilton. This will be followed by a tour of the Hamilton Art Gallery across the street This year is the 100th anniversary of Ontario's third-largest public art collection. Contact the Chapter 21 Office [\(905\) 574- 8285](tel:905-574-8285) or log in with the Chapter's Facebook page.

Continued on page 7

Saving Public Healthcare

Stop privatizing hospital services

BY CYNDIE JACOBS



Ontario Health Coalition's Natalie Mehra lines up ARM volunteers in two rows to demonstrate the effects of two tiered healthcare. Left to right: Eileen Markwick, Ludo Talens, Manfred Netzel, Allan Hux, Ed Preston, Marion Evans and Natalie Mehra

At the February meeting of ARM Chapter 12, Natalie Mehra, Executive Director of the Ontario Health Coalition, provided members with an update on the continuing erosion of the healthcare system in Ontario and a request for support from ARM members and concerned citizens across the province to stop the privatization of health care and the dismantling of the local community hospitals.

Canadian pride in the national medicare system is long standing and quite justified. For many years, Canada was considered the envy of many other industrialized nations for that reason alone. In recent years, however, the solid reputation has been faltering, partly from

a relentless campaign to convince Canadians that health care is unsustainable, and, even more so, from cuts to public healthcare services and a push to privatize and create a two-tiered system.

As we know, the provincial government is responsible for the healthcare system in Ontario. Unlike with education, there is a federal mandate under the Canada Health Act to ensure equal and free access to health care no matter where you live. Healthcare is administered publicly, with public funding, belongs in the public and is not for private interests. The system of public medicare was designed to eradicate the need to pay for medical care out of pocket. We are also well aware that

the transfer of funds to the provinces for health care is an enormous cost item in the budget.

Ontario currently funds all public services - education, social assistance, libraries, parks and recreation, etc. Sadly, as of 2012, Ontario funds these services on a per capita basis lower than any other province. In health care, specifically, Ontario is last in Canada. This has resulted in the deepest cuts to hospital beds of any province in Canada and very significant privatization of formerly public and non-profit services. A prime example of this is the growth of nursing homes that are owned by investment groups.

The current health minister has a proposal to cut services from local public hospitals and contract them out to private clinics. With staffing shortages in hospitals across the province, there is a concern that the private clinics would siphon scarce staff from local hospitals, thereby worsening shortages. The private clinics also take the simple procedures and lightest care patients, leaving the heavy and complex care patients behind in local hospitals with fewer resources and staff to treat them. The evidence from the UK and British Columbia where the provincial government has gone this route, is that the private clinics also cost more, sometimes thousands of dollars more per surgery.

In addition to these problems, the Ontario Health Coalition is concerned that the private clinics threaten single-tier Medicare. The Coalition called all the existing private clinics in Canada and found that the vast majority of them bill OHIP (or their province's equivalent) and they also charge patients extra fees. This is especially prevalent in cataract surgery clinics where patients may go in for cataract surgery which is covered under the Canada Health Act, but while they are there, the patients are sold extra measurements and medically unnecessary procedures that amount to hundreds or even thousands of dollars. This privatization, according to the Coalition, hurts patients who should not be subject to extra charges for services that should be public and for which we have paid in our taxes.

The OHC met with the premier and others within the government. What has been determined is that

the plan for health care in Ontario is all about taking apart community hospitals. In addition to dismantling the unionized staff, the transfer of the high-volume and profitable procedures out of hospitals to private clinics would totally destabilize the budgets of the local hospitals, because only the difficult and costly procedures would be done there.

In essence, this plan for private clinics is contrary to the notion of a community hospital where patients are able to receive quality health care. The more that is removed from a hospital, the more that individuals will have to pay for on their own. This is how the two-tiered system would operate and treatment would be based on ability to pay rather than need. Private clinics would be established that are not within the Public Hospitals Act and therefore would be excluded from the protections against privatization laid out in the Public Hospitals Act.

Currently, there are too few anesthesiologists, operating room nurses, radiologists, and other medical specialists and health professionals in hospitals, both community and regional. These high-volume, high-profit clinics will likely attract the already scarce specialists away from the local hospitals for the promise of easier cases and healthier, wealthier patients.

Lastly, there is the issue of safety and quality of care in the existing private clinics. Without the high standards of quality control that exist and govern the public healthcare system in Ontario, there is more potential for an increase in disease, infections, incomplete medical tests, undetected cancers and other problems associated with poor standards of care.

In a concerted effort to protect local hospital services, the Coalition has launched a campaign across Ontario leading into the provincial election. They are asking for our help to spread the word about the continued dismantling of health care in Ontario and the threat of privatization.

Further information: Ontario Health Coalition, 15 Gervais Drive, Suite 305, Toronto, Ont. M3C 1Y8. 416-441-2502. ohc@sympatico.ca. www.ontariohealthcoalition.ca

AMPA 2014: Some Observations about the Challenges Facing OSSTF

Budget, membership base, and external pressures dominated delegates' concerns

BY MANFRED NETZEL

About a month ago, I spent the first part of my March Break with about 500 of my closest (and not so close) friends and colleagues, attending the 95th Annual Meeting of the Provincial Assembly of OSSTF. For most of us, the event is more commonly called AMPA, and this occasion marked my 30th appearance. In fact, another District 12 delegate and Chapter 12 ARM member, Art Turner, and I were the last two standing from the Toronto ranks, as the Assembly Chair counted up the years of each delegate's total attendance. This has been the custom for many years. Artie, who was my last vice-president in the former District 14 (City of York), outlasted me by another 4 AMPAs and was only to be outdone by a person in the back observer section who had amassed an amazing 40 years. This shows you can't keep a good person down.

I have tried to attend AMPA since retirement in the off-election years because there is more attention given to policy and important housekeeping issues, and because ARM since 2012 has doubled its exposure at the event due to the running of a hospitality suite for opening night as well as the long-standing display booth over two days.

The latter has become the responsibility of Chapter 12 going back to the days of Ian Cameron, who organized and staffed it ably with volunteers from the Chapter Executive. Since Ian's passing two years ago, we have kept the tradition going with new volunteers whom I wish to sincerely thank for their efforts.

In my view, this AMPA exposed and defined the many serious challenges and concerns facing OSSTF in the years ahead. Briefly, I would like to focus on three specific areas that all OSSTF members (including us retirees) should be aware of and think about. They are: Finances/Budget, Internal Structure/Membership, and External Issues. At the same time, let me say that both at the local and provincial levels of our Federation we have very committed and talented individuals. I think they can likely face these challenges and develop policies and procedures to deal with them in the best interests of the organization and the membership.

Firstly, the 2014-15 OSSTF budget reflects the estimated fees income generated by the current fee of 1.9 per cent for all active members, and the fees from many other sources including over 3,000 ARM members across Ontario. This coming year it is expected to be over \$46 million. In addition, Federation revenues in 2013-14 saw increases in portfolios dealing both with investments and property holdings, whose audited valuations were \$57 million and \$8.6 million, respectively. Furthermore, a request by ARM Council to have the provincial per capita membership rebate to ARM Chapters increased to \$20 to cover increased mailing costs was approved and included in the new budget. That's the good news.

Of concern, however, is the projection about future revenue streams and the fact that this year was already the second consecutive year that expenses outweighed income, resulting in a budgetary deficit of almost \$1 million. The reasons are many, such as reduced ministry grants to boards, retirements of higher fee-paying members, uncertainties in post-secondary funding of institutions where we also have OSSTF members, and increasing legal costs due to member cases with employers, the College of Teachers (OCT) and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB). In dealings with the latter two agencies alone, 48 new OCT cases were generated this past year in addition to 40 active cases from the previous year, while the WSIB generated 148 active claims by OSSTF members filed by their local districts and bargaining units. The OSSTF auditors raised concerns that were identified and addressed by Treasurer Earl Burt and the finance committee.

Secondly, the internal structure and membership base of OSSTF has continued to change rapidly and most dramatically from the time many of us were in the classroom. Currently, the Federation's membership is under 52,000 (not the 60,000 we had become accustomed to), largely due to the removal of principals and vice-principals over 15 years ago, the elimination of Grade 13/OAC over 10 years ago and declining student

enrolment resulting in staffing cuts. Thus, OSSTF members are made up of just over 35,000 contract, con-ed and occasional teachers, while almost 10,000 are educational support staff (for example, clerical and custodial staff and school bus drivers), 2,400 are college/university employees and another 2,000 are professional student services personnel members with high-level professional qualifications offering student support services.

I would be remiss if I did not mention that organizing efforts in certain regions of Ontario have also seen OSSTF gain some 2,600 Francophone members who work for public and Catholic French boards mostly in Eastern Ontario. Consequently, all OSSTF publications are now bilingual and AMPA has provided simultaneous French/English translation services for several years. Many of these new members sometimes have different interests and priorities in bargaining contracts, such as pay equity and health & safety protocols rather than curriculum, professional development or class size concerns. Also, they are very costly to organize and provide services for, yet do not generate the same levels of membership fees which will be problematic in the budgetary climate ahead. For example, 52 arbitration files were processed over the past year on behalf of French-language bargaining units alone. Surely, future organizing activities by OSSTF must evaluate both the benefits and disadvantages of continuing in this direction.

Thirdly, external pressures from school boards, Queen's Park and the tax-paying electorate pose ongoing challenges to this Federation. With the looming Ontario election campaign this spring, and overt extreme campaign promises from the Hudak-led Official

Opposition, the need for a strong political action plan and appropriate resources is crucial. Thus, the Annual Action Plan that was presented at AMPA was seen as insufficient by many of the delegates. The allocation of monies for surveying member participation to promote equity and inclusion in Federation activities, promoting local labour history, or funding local environmental activities and starting the planning for OSSTF's 100th Anniversary Celebration in 2019 all seemed to ignore the pressing need for active member engagement in both the likely provincial campaign and the fixed municipal election date in late October. It was up to the addresses by both the premier and ONDP leader Andrea Horwath to refocus both the anger and energies of OSSTF members on the issues that matter in 2014. Of course, the lingering upset with the previous Liberal government around Bill 115 was somewhat muted by the conciliatory approach of the current premier, but the recently passed Bill 122 will require a major change in the approach and execution of contract negotiations by OSSTF and the other affiliates. Will local issues, concerns and practices be consumed by central negotiating teams sitting at large-sector bargaining tables as CUPE, OPSEU and many private-sector unions have done for many years? Even the more popular ONDP leader made it clear that some issues such as the OSSTF-promoted policy of one publicly funded school system was a non-starter for her party. Will there be sufficient common ground between OSSTF and the ONDP to form an agenda for educational change? These are some of the questions that the AMPA delegates left with as they began their March Break in 2014. The answers may not be clear in the foreseeable future.

Continued from page 3

Chapter 22 (Niagara)

May 7 - Annual General Meeting starting @ 10 am @ the OSSTF District Office located at 1877 Merrittville Hwy. in Fonthill. Contact: Ray Marshall, RayMars23@cogeco.ca

May 14 - Chapter Breakfast starting @ 9:30 @ the Backety Back Diner located at 1025 Gorham Rd. in Fort Erie.

June 18th - Chapter Breakfast starting at 9:30 @ Butterballs Restaurant located at 2980 King St. (Regional Road 81 in Vineland/Jordan Hollow (aka. Hwy 8 "The Wine Route")

Chapter 25 (Ottawa-Carleton)

May 8- Chapter Breakfast / Guest Speaker@ the Local Heroes Restaurant (Bleeker Mall) in Ottawa. The invited guest will be the lawyer Mr. I. Farber, who will be speaking about topical legal issues of concern to seniors. Contact: Terry Taller, President (chap2516@gmail.com)

June 12- Annual Chapter Charity Golf Tournament @ Marshes Golf & Country Club on Terry Fox Drive in Kanata. Proceeds will be in support the Ottawa Hospice. Contact: Terry Taller

The Unthinking Citizen

A Luddite discusses modern technology

BY PAUL ROOK

Recently I was referred to as a Luddite because of my concerns about the impact of modern technology and social media. It was meant as an insult. However, I took it as a compliment because I know what the Luddites were concerned about when they attacked the new technology at the beginning of the Industrial Age. They feared its impact on their jobs, families, especially children, and society.

Maybe we should look more at the impact of our modern technology in these areas. Instead what do we do? We innocently embrace each piece of new technology, like children opening Christmas gifts. And like lemmings we rush to the stores and line up when a new version of a smartphone comes out, without questioning whether we need its small upgrades.

I witnessed a perfect example of the impact on jobs at my bank. They have had the tellers go through the line of customers and invite each person to go to the instant bank so they can show them how to use the machine. Don't the tellers doing this realize that they are taking steps to eliminate their own jobs? In reality they probably have no choice. That is the problem: we never have any choice or say when new technology comes in and replaces workers. Oh well, at least they haven't yet created robots that flip burgers, so people can always move to a lower paying job. And people wonder why the

middle class is disappearing.

The impact on our behavior and society is just as serious. People now define a friend as someone on Facebook. They even brag about how many Facebook friends they have and those with the most are treated like celebrities. Yet these are not real friends. They are just contacts that provide the illusion of friendship. Real friendship takes time to develop. It requires meaningful back and forth dialogue, which can take place only when people are talking face to face. Tweeting in messages of 140 characters is not a substitute. Real friends are there for you when you need them. I saw a cartoon depicting a widow speaking to a funeral director, in a room with only three people attending the funeral, and saying that she thought more people would be there because her husband had so many friends on Facebook.

We are even becoming isolated when we are together. How many times have you witnessed people getting together for a meal at a restaurant and, instead of talking to each other, taking out their iPads and smart phones and checking messages or texting. It is even worse for young people who sit for hours at home playing video games. They should be playing outside and interacting with others so they can develop normally. Indeed, if we encouraged this perhaps there would be fewer obese youngsters.

We have access to more

knowledge but are becoming less knowledgeable. A perfect example is newspapers. In a recent article in the Toronto Star (April 3, 2014), Sachin Maharaj pointed out that people who read print newspapers read for an average of 25 minutes. Those who get their news on line read for an average of 70 seconds. Perhaps that is because when you search for news online you look for a specific item. When you have a newspaper in front of you, you look through it and as you do so, items that you were not aware of or looking for catch your eye and you may read them. When people search online they seek items that are within their already existing knowledge framework.

A major concern resulting from this is that we are developing a less-informed electorate. An electorate that is used to short messages and thus is susceptible to snappy slogans, such as "stop the war on the car" and not in-depth dialogue about the issues such as the future of Toronto's transit. Democracy depends upon an informed electorate that can make knowledgeable decisions, not a herd of sheep who can be manipulated by demagogic slogans.

Yes modern technology can improve our lives. However, before it is too late we should be looking at the significant negative impacts and dealing with them. Of course, it may be too late.

Teachers' Pension Plan Moves into Surplus

The ethics of investment occasionally arise

BY CHARLES HAWKES

The Teachers' Pension Plan (TPP) has finally posted a surplus after a decade of shortfalls that necessitated increased contributions from working teachers and government, and a reduction in inflation protection.

TPP recorded a 10.9 per cent return from its investments in 2013 from rising equity markets, leaving it with a 5.1 per cent surplus. It is now 103 per cent funded, a goal that

would not have been realized if contribution rates had been reduced from 13 per cent to 12 per cent, and full inflation protection reinstated.

Other pension funds have not solved their funding shortfalls. Several other Ontario pension plans are 95 per cent funded, while OMERS to which TPP is often compared, is only 88 per cent funded in 2013 on a return of 6.5 per cent.

TPP's ability to solve its funding problems comes mostly from its power to make its own investment decisions, not just from changes to contribution rates. Since 1990 when the plan was released from its commitment to follow the direction of the Ontario government, 77 per cent of its funding now comes from its investments.

Concerns about the ethics of investment in certain companies do occur from time to time. Recently a well-known Ontario educational academic criticized the fund for investing in Busy Bee, a British for profit childcare company that has utilized poorly qualified



and underpaid staff in the past. There has been no response from TPP yet on this particular investment.

A defense that might be offered is that a large investor such as TPP can use its influence to change corporate behavior.

Jim Leach, TPP's former president co-authored a book with the Globe's Jacquie McNish entitled *The Third Rail* dealing with Canada's pension problems. It's well worth reading. The third rail is the middle rail on an electrical train that electrocutes anyone who touches it. It's analogous to the pension problem for politicians; the adjustments and sacrifices to make pensions sustainable are too hot to handle. The book describes the struggles of the New Brunswick premier, a Rhode Island treasurer, and a Dutch pension supervisor to convince their pensioners to accept lower benefits to sustain their plans. It's a dramatic story that Leach uses to support the changes he argues are necessary for Canada's private and public pensions.

Considered

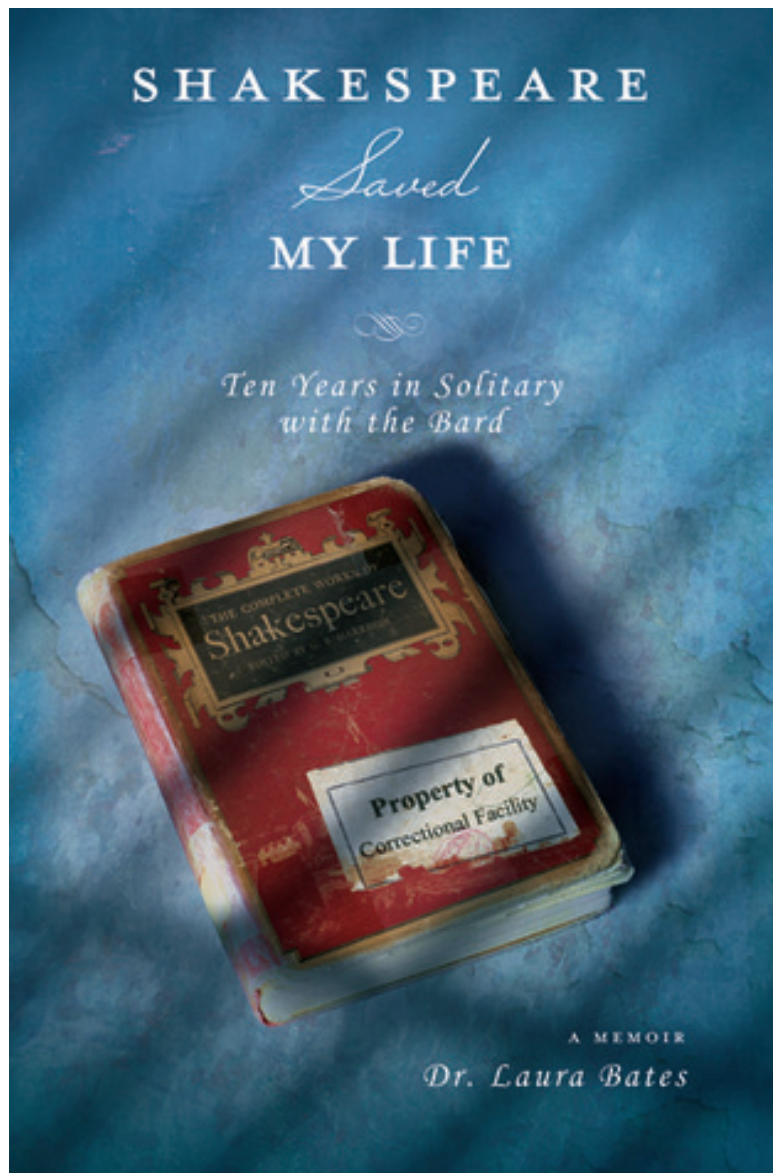
Shakespeare Saved My Life: Ten Years in Solitary with the Bard

By Laura Bates. Sourcebooks. March 26, 2013

REVIEWED BY DAVID SCHREIBER

The teacher sits on an overturned milk crate in an empty corridor. On each side of her are two steel doors, and behind each door is a murderer serving a life sentence, escorted by two guards out of solitary confinement for a Shakespeare lesson, shackled, handcuffed, and on a leash. As the seminar begins, the inmates kneel on the concrete floor of their cells and peer out through the handcuff ports, apertures somewhat larger than a mail slot. Thus bizarrely did English professor Laura Bates of Indiana State University take Shakespeare to inmates at a maximum security prison in Indiana

Ah, a tale of high art triumphing over depravity! How inspiring, how Oprah! Yet there is dignity in *Shakespeare Saved My Life* because of a truly extraordinary central character. Larry Newton had a grade five education and began the Shakespeare program without knowing who Shakespeare was. Convicted of murder at age seventeen, sentenced to life imprisonment with no possibility of parole, categorized as extremely dangerous, locked up for over ten years in “supermax” solitary confinement, Newton immediately seized upon the 400-year-old texts with a frightening eagerness and a razor-sharp intelligence. At first he was all white-hot intellectual excitement. Scrutinizing the witches’ scene in *Macbeth*, for



example (*Fillet of a fenny snake, / In the caldron boil and bake; / Eye of newt, and toe of frog, / Wool of bat, and tongue of dog*), he strained to know whether Shakespeare could have intended a single creature comprised of all the individual

Nominations for the 2014-2015 ARM 12 Executive

The elections will take place at the Annual General Meeting on Wednesday June 4, 2014.

If you are interested in being nominated for one of the positions listed below please contact Paul Rook at prook@sympatico.ca or phone 416 292-9919. He will provide information about the roles of Executive members and about nomination forms.

The positions on the ARM Toronto Chapter 12 Executive are **president**, **two vice-presidents**, a **secretary** and a **treasurer**, a minimum of two **executive officers** and a minimum of two **members-at-large**. For executive officer and member at large there is no maximum, so everyone who is nominated for these two positions is considered elected.

Everyone running must fill in a nomination form and have one nominator.

Nominations may also be made at the meeting and forms will be available then.

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animal parts, and he agonized over the culinary question of whether boiling and baking are possible simultaneously. More important, however, the texts showed him his own life. His detailed reading of the prison soliloquy from *Richard II* uncovered tiny phrases that signalled an understanding of solitary confinement so authentic that it seemed to him preternatural, as if Shakespeare had himself lived through what Newton had lived through, and he confirmed that the mind of Macbeth the murderer did indeed meet the terrible touchstone of reality that he and his fellow murderers knew so well. For him, Macbeth's hallucination of the bloody dagger is simply an externalization of the mental rehearsing he did obsessively before his own crime, repeated until the vision eclipsed everything else and drew him almost blindly into the deed itself.

In a classroom the deep issues of Shakespeare's plays—ambition, honour, love, vengeance, violence, suicide—often appear as mere topics for discussion, themes for essays, intellectual toys. But for Newton they were living issues critical to the lives of convicts, fundamental ideas that set many of them on the path to prison. In Shakespeare he saw portrayals of the bravado of the streets, of neighbourhood turf wars, of fighting over women, and he asked the big questions that apply universally. Why did Romeo attack and kill Tybalt? Would he have done it if not for his friends? Could Othello claim to be a victim, less guilty of murdering his wife, because of Iago's trickery? Can the actions of other people ever relieve us from our own responsibility? What was honourable about Hamlet seeking vengeance for his father? What is honour, anyway?

Newton grappled with such questions so fearlessly and with such intense introspection that his own long-held views quickly came under the microscope. "I was trying to figure out what motivated Macbeth," he told Bates, "why his wife was able to make him do a deed that he said he didn't want to do. As a consequence of that, I had to ask myself what was motivating me in my deeds." And he discovered that Newton the criminal was a mask. "I came face-to-face with the realization that I was fake, that I was motivated by this need to impress those around me, that none of my choices were truly my own." Relentless questioning, sharpened by the Shakespeare texts, continued to erode his old personality, until he reached a truly astonishing conclusion. Despite life imprisonment and solitary confinement, he says, "I like being alive, I like my life, but what makes me the happiest is that I just really feel like I can go anywhere and do anything ... I have control of my life. I can be anybody I want to be. I don't have to be some fake guy that my buddies wanted me to be ... I make decisions now 'cause I want to. Just the liberty in it, the freedom in it, that's what makes me the happiest."

Larry Newton is a character you will not soon forget.

With his own demons exorcised, Newton went on to collaborate with Dr. Bates in leading seminars and writing a series of workbooks for all thirty-eight of Shakespeare's plays, tailored for inmates like himself. After several years the system decided to punish him, probably unjustly, and he was removed from the Shakespeare program. Dr. Bates, however, plans to publish his writings as *The Prisoner's Guide to the Complete Works of Shakespeare*.

Considered

Hypatia of Alexandria

by Maria Dzielska. Translated by F. Lyra. 1996, Cambridge.

176 pages

REVIEWED BY DAVID SCHREIBER

A few women are known to have been scholars and philosophers in the ancient world, but none is even remotely as famous as the extraordinary Hypatia of Alexandria. Around the opening of the fifth century AD, just before barbarians overwhelmed the western part of the Roman Empire, Alexandria was a leading centre of culture and learning, the third city after Rome and Constantinople, and Hypatia was a key figure in the civic and intellectual life of Alexandria.

Her writings and lectures on Greek literature, mathematics, astronomy, and philosophy were so brilliant, and her charisma was so powerful, that bright aristocratic young men came from long distances to listen to her. Some stayed for years; most hoped to be invited to the special meetings she held in her home where students often became disciples of “the most holy and revered philosopher.”

Her renown was such that it became protocol for newly arrived imperial officials, or those merely passing through the area, to pay a courtesy call on her. Her advice was sought by officials at all levels of government. Her terrible death at the hands of religious rioters in 415, so violent and so entangled with the larger conflicts of her time, has kept her name alive through the centuries, even after all her writings were lost.

The story of Hypatia’s life and death has been told many times by major writers such as Gibbon and Voltaire, by minor novelists and poets, and recently

in the 2007 film *Agora* starring Rachel Weisz (yes, Hypatia was not only gifted but also beautiful—“the spirit of Plato in the body of Aphrodite”). Most retellings aim to score points against the Church, to serve as an object lesson in the cause of feminism, or to bemoan the loss of a great scientist. Yet, despite the various uses to which her story has been put, the original sources are scarce. The layers of special pleading added onto the scanty facts have created a need for a volume like Maria Dzielska’s *Hypatia of Alexandria*, whose aim is to separate fact from fiction. This is not another rendering of the Hypatia story; rather, it is an academic’s careful examination of the sources in order to clarify exactly what is known, what may be fairly inferred, and what is not known, about history’s most famous woman philosopher.

To understand the profound effect Hypatia had on her disciples, Dzielska examines the letters of Synesius, a Christian, later bishop of the Libyan city of Cyrene, who attended her meetings in his younger years. For Synesius, Hypatia is “a blessed lady who radiates knowledge and wisdom from divine Plato himself and his successor Plotinus.” His 159 surviving letters, addressed to Hypatia and fellow disciples after he returned to Cyrene, reveal much about the meetings Hypatia held with her closest followers. Hypatia was a philosopher solidly in the Neoplatonic tradition in which the purpose of life is the cultivation of a virtuous soul and the rigorous exercise of reason. She taught philosophy,



astronomy and mathematics. Her mathematics focused on the algebra of Diophantus, geometry from Euclid and Apollonius of Perge, and the writings of Pythagoras. Her astronomy was that of Ptolemy. In fact, it is likely that Ptolemy’s *Almagest*, his important work on mathematics and the motions of the heavenly bodies, survives today only because of Hypatia’s work as editor and publisher.

Yet it is wrong to think of her as a scholar in a university lecture hall. All the intellectual work and nurturing of one’s soul was a means to an end, mere preparation for the ultimate goal, which was to achieve a contemplative, mystical union with the divine, the One, “the most ineffable of ineffable things.” Synesius’s letters speak of experiences deeper than mere intellectual excitement. “It was granted to you and me,” he writes to a friend, “to experience marvelous things, the bare recital of which had seemed to be incredible.” However, Hypatia had no interest in divination, magic, rituals, or sacrifices, even though accusations of



Raphael, School of Athens, painted on a wall in the Vatican, possibly showing Hypatia, toward lower left between men with open books

witchcraft were later used to whip up the frenzy against her which led to her murder.

The source documents do not agree in every detail about her death in March of 415, but they all agree



St. Cyril of Alexandria

that it was hideous. In the most oft-cited version, a gang of Christian thugs, followers of Cyril, the bishop

of Alexandria, after accusing her of witchcraft, seized her, dragged her into a church, stripped her naked, tore the flesh off her bones with pottery shards, and burned the remains. No one was ever held to account for it. Cyril was later named a saint.

The significance of her death has been cast in many lights. It has been said that her death was a result of the clash of great historical forces, the final remnants of paganism submerged in the rising tide of Christianity, that her death was a Christ-like sacrifice on the altar of history enabling the ushering in of Christianity, that she was murdered out of misogyny, that her death put an end to Greek learning and marked the end of Classical antiquity, that the murder of “the most eminent woman scientist before Marie Curie” extinguished freedom of thought, freedom of inquiry, and natural reason in the West for a thousand years, that she was the innocent victim of religious fanaticism and the Church’s cruel and relentless quest for earthly dominance.

Dzielska argues that Hypatia was

murdered for a simple reason, not because she was pagan or a woman, but because she was caught up in a power struggle between two men, Bishop Cyril and the imperial governor, Orestes, who opposed Cyril’s aggressive encroachments on civil authority. To break the influence Hypatia and her powerful friends had over Orestes, Cyril unleashed his strong-arm squad of *parabolans* (Christian brothers) on her. Defenders of Cyril say he did it inadvertently, but Cyril had resorted to using his thugs before, first to defeat those he called heretics, then to expel all the Jews from Alexandria.



Possibly Hypatia, from Raphael’s School of Athens

Hypatia of Alexandria is a fascinating read, not only for what it reveals about Hypatia and her times, but also as a case study in the methods scholars use to reconstruct our knowledge of the distant past.

Incidentally, when Hypatia was murdered, her age was probably a dignified fifty or sixty, not the ravishing thirtyishness of Rachel Weisz in the otherwise quite authentic *Agora*.

Toronto ARM Staffs the Active Retired Members Booth at AMPA

OSSTF's Annual Meeting of the Provincial Assembly learns about the great opportunities ARM offers to retirees

BY MANFRED NETZEL

Provincial ARM Council has been present at the annual OSSTF AMPA during March Break for many years, and 2014 was no exception. Chapter 12 has embraced providing the volunteer staffing of the display booth and educating the delegates about ARM.

This year, Executive members were on hand including Marion Evans, Julia Harney, Jim Loftus, Virginia Maxwell, Karma Naikie and Millie Oliver. A raffle draw for merchandise prizes from the Federation Store was also held, ably assisted by OTIP representative Kerin Higgins. Since it was a non-election edition of AMPA, ARM Council organized a hospitality suite for the second time. This was a further attempt to raise the profile and understanding of ARM amongst the delegates from across Ontario in a social setting. The suite proved to be a popular venue for all the visitors, both those in the early years of their career as well as colleagues contemplating retirement. The suite was also staffed by volunteers from several ARM Chapters, led by ARM Council Chair Chester Faulknor from Hamilton-Wentworth.



Millie Oliver (left) and Karma Naikie welcomed many educators, both those starting their careers and those looking forward to retirement. The booth was rarely quiet over the three days of AMPA



The School Lunch in France

*How to eat and learn *savoir vivre**

BY CHARLES HAWKES

During a recent trip to France, I noticed that each school I passed, in each city, town, and village I visited, had posted on its front gates a weekly lunch menu outlining the meals its students would be served that week. Every school day, a meal of three or sometimes four courses was offered. A typical meal began with a starter, often a plate of vegetables, a salad, or a terrine, followed by a main course of fish, poultry, or beef. A cheese plate followed the main course, which was followed by a dessert, usually fruit, although once a week a sweet dessert was offered. Finding these similar menus throughout France, I could only conclude that the central education authorities mandated such nutritious lunches.

Further research, primarily from the work of Canadian academic Karen Le Billion, gave the details. Lunches in French schools are cooked for all students—from pre-school students to high school students—and served at a set time, with a minimum 30-minute eating time to encourage slow eating and proper digestion. No choice in meals is allowed for students below age twelve. Water is the only beverage served; French schools forbid soft drinks. Dairy requirements are met by offering cheese or yogurt at meals. Meals and desserts with over 15 per cent fat content are allowed only four times per month and the same is true of fried foods. Ketchup may appear only once per week and only with a suitable beef dish. Because youngsters often balk at vegetables but are hungry by noon hour, schools serve vegetables first, before the main course. The contrast between such nutritious meals and the lunches ingested by most Canadian students could not be more striking. The cost of these meals varies, depending upon income levels and location, but averages three dollars Canadian per meal for the approximately six million French students who are served. Meals are most often prepared within the school kitchen. Bringing lunches from home is discouraged, with some exceptions allowed for special dietary requirements. Good nutrition is not the only aim of the French lunch



program. This quotation from an educational document presents another goal: “We aim to enable children to spend joyful, convivial moments together, to learn a *savoir-vivre*, to make time for communication, social exchange, and learning about society’s rules—so that they can socialize and cultivate friendships.”

Constant public debate on every conceivable issue is a feature of life in France, and school meals are no exception. Concerns are raised about food quality, with demands for more organic foods, vegetarian options, and attention to food allergy problems. Parents worry when school districts outsource food preparation from individual school kitchens to centralized food companies. The provision of halal food is an issue as well. In spite of these concerns, France is not backing down from teaching good eating habits. French obesity rates are the lowest in Europe, with obvious long-term savings to the national health system.



Indoor Winter Golf, 2014

Ready to spread fear and awe on the golf course, ARM Chapter 12 members and friends worked hard and enjoyed improving their golf game from January to March of this year. The learning sessions happened at the Metro Golf Dome and included lunch after intensive coaching and practice.

The excellent turnout bodes well for repeat golfing lessons in 2015. Watch for an announcement in the next newsletter.

15th Annual General Meeting OSSTF Active Retired Members Chapter 12

*Please note the date change to
June 4, 2014*

2:30 pm Registration

3:00 pm Meeting Begins

60 Mobile Drive

The Erie Room

Guest Speaker Toronto Star Columnist Royson James

*Please call Vice-President Jim Loftus to confirm your attendance
at dinner following the meeting
416 447-0811*

Keep up-to-date with ARM Chapter 12 events
Check out newsletters and the calendar at
www.armchapter12.org