

# After School

Volume 13 Issue 2, Spring, 2011



## Watching Medicare disappear into the sunset

Paul Rook outlines the threat to Canada's public healthcare programs. The threat is not seniors' medical needs, but the forces trying to privatize the crown jewel of Canadian citizenship

Editorial page	2
Thank you Swing for Kids donors	3
Harper a majority?	4-5
2011 Stratford Trip	5
Medicare	6-8
Calendar details	8

Presidential Perspective	9
The Retired Bard	10-11
Considered - Book Review	12-13
Steve Fuller's Toronto	14-15
In It To Win It	15
EFG	16
Spring Golf Tournament	16

## Calendar

**Bowling** Anyone interested in joining ARM bowling league, please register by phoning Rosemarie Mohring at 416 425-6677.

**Wed, April 20 Luncheon Meeting – Slides of Europe, the Holocaust.** 10:30 am. 60 Mobile Drive. Phone Jim Loftus, 416 447-0811

**April 28 – Retirement Workshop.** 4:30 pm. District 12 Office, 1482 Bathurst St.

**May 12 – Visit to High Park.** Contact Karma Naike, 416 783-6591 See p. 8 for details.

**May 25 – Spring Golf Tournament.** Rolling Hills Golf Club. See p. 16 for details.

**May 26 – Stratford Festival Theatre.** The offerings for the Stratford trip are *Jesus Christ Superstar*, and *The Merry*

*Wives of Windsor*. Prices range depending on A or B seating in the Orchestra, in the vicinity of \$80 to \$90.00 and include bus fare. More details inside the newsletter, but it is important to have numbers to confirm our order. Please phone Rosemarie Mohring at 416 425-6677 to let us know your intent. After April 9, please call Karma Naike at 416 783-6591. See p.5 for details.

**June 8 – Annual General Meeting.** 2:30 pm. Guest speaker Jim Stanford, Chief Economist, Canadian Autoworkers Union. Latvian Centre, 4 Credit Union Drive. Dinner \$20. Confirm attendance with Karma Naike, 416 783-6591.

**September 21 - Fall Golf Tournament**

**October 13 – Trent River Cruise.** See p. 8 for details.

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## Editorial Chatter

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### Rob Ford and *After School*

Who would ever expect *After School* to arouse the ire of OSSTF or the labour movement? That is exactly what happened when we printed two articles about Rob Ford in our Fall 2010 issue.

One story was very clearly against Rob Ford for a number of reasons. The other spoke favorably of Ford for his willingness to return telephone calls to deal with a tenant issue. This second story was not in keeping with the policy of District 12 OSSTF. The decision to publish both stories in the interests of balance was authorized by the ARM C12 Executive.

Beginning with this issue, *After School* will publish in each issue a disclaimer stating that the opinions expressed in *After School* are not necessarily those of ARM Chapter 12 or of OSSTF. As *After School* is a publication that is part of the overall communications of an organization that adopts policies regarding political issues, such a disclaimer is important to protect the accurate promulgation of Federation policies.

### To curmudge or not, part II

Once again, we are missing Curmudgeon's Corner but gaining a feature article by Paul Rook on our public healthcare system and the importance of protecting it.

### Poetry from life

Larry French is looking for your creative work for The Retired Bard. We need your best efforts for the Summer

and Fall issues. If you submit colour photographs, we will run them in colour. This time, Sue Buller celebrates life, and Jim Head writes an elegy on the death of a friend.

### Harper's Canada

Manfred Netzel offers some thoughts on Stephen Harper and his government. (Did you know that Harper was changing Government of Canada to Harper Government on official communications?)

### Stephen Fuller's Toronto

In this issue, Stephen Fuller offers two recipes of North African interest, Morocco in particular. Steve would be happy to welcome readers to the kitchen to work on any of the *After School* recipes.

### Consider conspiracies

Ian Cameron reviews *Voodoo Histories*, a look at the prevalence and possible causes of conspiracy theories throughout history. No matter what the evidence, many of us still construct elaborate explanations that defy what passes for common sense.

### Education for sale

Treasurer Eric Dempster sent us this URL to an article that points out the failings of contracting out schools to private, for-profit corporations.

<http://www.propublica.org/article/charter-schools-outsource-education-to-management-firms-with-mixed-results>

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## Active Retired Members Chapter 12 (Toronto) Executive

President:	Karma Naike	416 783-6591
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Treasurer:	Eric Dempster	
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	Boris Mischenko	
	Rosemarie Mohring	
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## After School Volume 13, Issue 1, January 2011

*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: Ian Cameron, Larry French, Paul Rook, Stephen Fuller, Sally Pengelley, Neil Walker

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## Swing For Kids

# ARM Chapter 12 says thank-you

Individuals, associations and businesses contribute to fundraising success

By Jim Loftus

ARM'S 2010 ANNUAL "SWING FOR KIDS" Spring and Fall Golf Tournaments were highly successful as great sporting and social activities and friends and as excellent fundraisers for ARM's children's charities/quality education initiatives. Unlike the 2009 season, the weather contributed magnificently, with no fear of rain on either day.

The May 26 and September 15 tournaments at Rolling Hills Golf Club in Gormley, were sponsored by Ontario Teacher's Insurance Plan (OTIP/RAEO) and Teacher's Life respectively. Without their support ARM could not have continued to offer and maintain the very reasonable tournament and luncheon fees enjoyed by ARM members and friends over the past 10 years.

ARM's children's charities/quality education fund also continued to benefit significantly through individual financial contributions, share-the-wealth raffles and silent auctions.

In that regard, ARM appreciates the \$500 financial contribution to the children's charities fund by the Sheet Metal Worker's International Association, Local 30, Toronto, which has contributed over \$2500 to the children's charities initiatives since the inception of the fund six years ago. We are also grateful to our friends at Educators Financial Group for their \$100 donation and to EFG's Bryan Nunn who participated in the Spring event and returned \$100 of his "share the wealth" prize to the children's fund.

ARM is similarly deeply appreciative of the \$100 individual sponsorship of holes by:

A-1 Fast Lube, Warden Ave., City Buick, Chevrolet, Cadillac, Victoria Park Ave; Collins Auto Parts, Nugget Ave; Integrated Business, Technologies, Don Mills; Jorchid Document & Business Solutions, Underhill Dr; K.C. Home Inspections, Wayne Ave; L2L, Licensed To Learn, Chiswell Crescent; Parkway Honda, Eglinton Ave East; Ridgeway Electric, Rutherford Road; La Rosa's No Frills, Lawrence Ave East and Valu Mart, Underhill Dr.

Through the financial contributions, the share-the-wealth raffles and the silent auctions of the many services, products and gift certificates so generously donated by our numerous donors, as named above or listed below, ARM's children's charities/quality education segregated account has grown by approximately \$4600.

On April 23, 2010, eleven children's charities each received an average of \$650 for their excellent service in providing some of the daily living needs and quality education programs for the children and/or youth served by each particular charity. Since September 2008 ARM has donated \$11,250 to thirteen children's charities. Without the support of our donors, ARM could not continue to provide financial assistance to those charities we choose to support. Thus, we appeal to our members and friends to support our donors:

Armstrong & Quaille, Leslie St.  
Mark's Work Wearhouse, Eglinton Ave.  
Best Western Couchiching Inn, Orillia  
Mark's Work Wearhouse, Sheppard Ave East.  
Caynes, Doncaster Ave.  
Mark's Work Wearhouse, Lawrence Ave, East  
Club-Link, Rolling Hills, Gormley  
McEwan's, Don Mills Plaza  
Cresthaven Golf Club, Markham Road  
Mandarin Golf Club, Markham.  
David's Shoes on Bay Street.  
Metro, Don Mills Plaza  
Delta Toronto East Hotel, Kennedy Road  
Oakridge Golf Club, Port Perry.  
Discount Pool & Spa, Ellesmere Road  
Optic Zone, Jarvis Street  
Foot Care on Bay Street  
Pacific Wellness, Bloor Street  
Food Basics, York Mills Road  
Rand Pool & Spa, Pickering  
Home Depot, Wicksteed Avenue  
Rockway Glen Golf Course, St.Catherines.  
Home Hardware, Parkway Mall  
The Source Menswear, Bayview Avenue  
Healthtime Living Specialies, Danforth Avenue  
The Tierney Family, Brooklin  
High Street Fish&Chips, Underhill Drive  
Tuckers Restaurant, Warden Avenue  
Highland's Golf Club, Brantford  
Star Thai Restaurant, Leslie Street  
Jerusalem Restaurant, Leslie Street  
Watt's Restaurant, Eglinton Square  
Labatt's Breweries, Toronto  
Longo's York Mills Road

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Is **Stephen Harper** really **Here** For Canada?

Is a Conservative **majority** good for Canada?

**Contempt** of Parliament is just the latest in a long list of Harper's **ham-handed** approaches to government

By Manfred Netzel

NOW THAT WE CANADIANS ARE FACING our fourth federal election in seven years, we are once again looking at the prospect of a Conservative majority government led by Stephen Harper. In fact, this somewhat frightening scenario has never been more real, since a mere dozen seats separate Harper from his ultimate goal.

This would be the worst of all outcomes, not only for retirees but for all decent, caring Canadians. The reasons are many. Perhaps these current political trends would have the greatest impact on the greatest number of people and the nation as a whole:

- the continued downward spiral in the quality of life and dignity of seniors and poor people due to inadequate pensions, health services and affordable housing;
- a shrinking income tax and revenue base for better public infrastructure and services (while raising consumption taxes like the HST) due to ongoing tax cuts for wealthy corporations and individuals;
- a trend to less public accountability by elected representatives for the public agencies or institutions

they control, including both Parliament and the CBC;

- a defence and foreign policy that is changing the role and image of Canada both domestically and internationally from conciliatory peace-keeper and traditional compassionate refuge to an aggressive military interventionist and warrior state.

The scuttling of last December's initiative to enhance CPP/OAS/GIS benefits for all retirees by Finance Minister Jim Flaherty, assisted by both Alberta and Quebec, was the most obvious example of the Conservative strategy to sacrifice the dignity of most seniors and the poor to protect the interests of employers and the wealthy. They claimed increased contributions would have an adverse impact on growth, job creation and foreign investment. (The defeated budget DID find some extra money for GIS gains!)

The continuing reduction of corporate and personal taxes will cut the ability of all levels of government to maintain or improve necessary public services and infrastructure. Conversely, increasing consumption-based taxes and user fees (such as the HST and

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recreational fees) will actually decrease consumer spending, quality of life and health, and environmental protection.

Everyone should remember that the current election was not precipitated by the Harper budget, but by an unprecedented motion of non-confidence in the Government due to a ruling of contempt of Parliament by the House of Commons Speaker.

Our collective Canadian political vocabulary had already been enhanced by words like *prorogation* and *filibustering of committee work*. These terms date back to earlier actions by the Harper Conservatives to interfere with the business of Parliament over the past five years.

Harper's well-known loathing of the press, especially the CBC, has also manifested itself in several ways including continued cuts to both the CBC's operating and total grants from 2006, and the remarks of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Heritage Minister earlier this year that the federal government

should maybe get out of the "broadcasting business." All this, despite the fact that 81 per cent of Canadians polled believe that the CBC is one of our national icons that distinguishes Canada from the US.

The last trend has been a growing concern for many Canadian academics and diplomats, as well as general travelers who find themselves having to justify the policies and actions of our Government in the areas of military intervention, global warming, foreign aid and diplomacy.

Our recent rejection for a seat on the UN Security Council, which Canadians such as John Humphrey and Lester Pearson helped create some 65 years ago, was one of several recent slaps in the collective face of Canadians. Remember Canada being repeatedly labelled as an environmental "dinosaur" at recent UN-sponsored climate conferences? Or our unconditional support for Israeli policies and actions against the Palestinian people? These trends will surely be sustained under a Harper majority.

**Harper's well-known loathing of the press, especially the CBC, has also manifested itself in several ways**

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***Merry Wives and Jesus Christ Superstar***

**ARM C12 2011 Stratford trip**  
**Thursday, May 26, 2011**

This year we have two selections to offer:

1. *Jesus Christ Superstar*, Avon Theatre, 32 seats
2. *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Festival Theatre, 16 seats

Seats available for *Jesus Christ Superstar* – 2 @ \$80.00, 16 @ \$86.00; 13 @ \$96.00

Seats for the *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, - 2 @ \$80.00, 13 @ \$85.00

All seats are in the orchestra section.

**Bus pickup schedule:**

8:00 am– Agincourt Mall, outside Walmart;  
8:20 am - Yonge & York Mills, NE corner;  
9:00 am –Mississauga Square One -151 City Centre Dr., outside Tim Horton's

Extra – a short trip to St. Jacob's market

Leave St. Jacob's at 11:10 am, arrive at Stratford at 12:10 pm

Lunch on your own.

1:20 pm – Pickup to go to the theatres.

Please indicate your intention by March 1<sup>st</sup> and send your cheque payable to ARM 12 OSSTF to Karma Naik, by April 6<sup>th</sup>. Two special access seats are available.

It is important to get your seat request in as soon as possible—  
phone Karma at 416-783-6591.

**Hope to hear from you soon.**

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# Medicare disappears -- Canadians shocked

## This headline could appear

in our newspapers as early as **2014**. Canadians would be shocked both by the disappearance of the system of public health care that has worked for five decades but also by having to go back to

**the bad old days**

**By Paul Rook**

THE DAYS WHEN YOU HAD TO HAVE THE MONEY before you were permitted into hospitals. The days when many avoided costly visits to the doctor or hospital until their conditions were very severe and less treatable or even no longer treatable.

What would be equally shocking is that Canada's universal public health care system would disappear in spite of strong support from Canadians. For example, a 2009 poll by Nanos Research for Policy Options revealed that 79.9% of Canadians strongly support Medicare and another 10% somewhat support it. Nevertheless, it is in danger because of political ideologies, deliberate campaigns to discredit it and increasing tax reductions, especially for the wealthy, that are depriving it of necessary funding.

The most serious threat is from politicians and economists who don't support Medicare, because they don't believe that governments should provide any public services for people. They want a private system. The first problem with this viewpoint is that in a private system the primary goal is to make money not care for patients. Secondly, those who have the most money get the best care and others get lesser care and many can't afford any care. The third problem relates to overall costs. Our Medicare system is administered by the governments of the provinces not by a series of competing insurance companies, who would waste valuable resources on advertising, different, costly administrative systems, executive bonuses and other overhead. Thus we use less of our GDP for health

**Medicare refers to publicly funded health care under the Canada Health Act. This Act covers funding for hospitals, doctors and administration of the system. Other aspects of health care such as pharmaceuticals, chronic care and dental care are not part of Medicare.**

**The Canada Health Act enunciates five principles:**

**public administration  
comprehensiveness**

**universality**

**portability**

**accessibility**

care than the Americans (11% vs. 16%). Of course the insurance companies want control because there is a lot of money to be made.

Many of these enemies of Medicare now have the power to end Medicare. Stephen Harper, for example, has been opposed to Medicare throughout his career. He was Vice-President and President of the National Citizen's Coalition, which was formed to end Medicare. In 1997, as Vice-president he said, "It's past time that the feds scrapped the Canada Health Act." (In Their Own Words internet site). He has never come out in favour of our Medicare and when asked about the above quote waffles by saying things like "My views have evolved." But even if Harper said he supported Medicare could we believe him? After all, this is the man who was opposed to our Senate because it is not democratically elected. This was before the Conservatives had a majority in the Senate. Then he started to use the Senate to get around the democratically elected House of Commons.

A frightening example of this is the recent referral of the 2004 Health Accord between the provinces and Federal Government to the Senate for its mandated review. The Accord was created after two days of televised meetings between the Premiers and Prime Minister Martin and put more Federal money into Medicare. The 2007 review was conducted by a House of Commons Health Care Committee, with public input. The review conducted by the Senate Committee on Science Technology and Social Affairs, is not even going to allow proponents of Medicare, such as the Canadian Health Coalition, to make presentations.

Michael McBane, National Co-ordinator of the of the Canadian Health Coalition pointed out that: "The message for Canadians is clear: the Harper Government not only holds Parliament in contempt, it also seems to hold Canadians who strongly support public health care with contempt as well."

For a man who won election by calling for more transparency, Harper is following a path far from transparent. What you should really be worried about is that the whole funding formula for Medicare is up for renewal in 2014. Unless we have leaders in place who support Medicare it would be easy for the Federal Government to withdraw its funding at that time. This would have the same effect as scrapping the Canada Health Act.

But how do you ensure that a people that supports Medicare lets it die quietly? Easy! You constantly attack it and make them doubt the system or turn on it. The

**Too many hospital beds are being occupied by chronic care patients, who should be in facilities appropriate for these patients or under homecare programs. They are not out of hospitals because we have not developed these programs and facilities, which are not the responsibility of Medicare**

elected politicians don't do this because they might lose votes. Instead, right wing think tanks, such as the Fraser Institute, put out "learnèd" but biased reports about the weaknesses of Medicare or its lack of sustainability. The media also reports the most serious individual problems because sensational news sells papers and attracts attention.

Let's look at some of the areas being attacked. The one that frightens people most is wait times in emergency. Yes, there are problems moving people out of the emergency ward and into a hospital bed. But the main source of these problems is not in emergency rooms. There is a shortage of hospital beds for acute care patients. Over the past two decades, governments have reduced funding for nurses. Fewer nurses means fewer beds that are open, even if the beds still exist in the hospital. Across Canada we lost over 64,000 hospital beds between 1988 and 2002 and in Ontario the nursing component was reduced by 6,000 under the Harris Government (Medicare.ca). Too many hospital beds are being occupied by chronic care patients, who should be in facilities appropriate for these patients or under homecare programs. They are not out of hospitals because we have not developed these programs and facilities, which are not the responsibility of Medicare. Think about it. Programs that are not mandated and funded properly don't develop to meet need. This

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situation could arise also in acute health care.

Nevertheless, hospitals are striving to reduce wait times and are being successful. Efficiencies in processing patients are being put in place and improvements are happening. I have witnessed this at The Scarborough Hospital, where I am a member of the Scarborough Hospital Community Advisory Council. But you can go only so far, if you lack nurses and beds. If you tear down hospitals, as we have done in Ontario, the problem becomes even worse.

The other attack on Medicare involves money. Critics claim it is taking up a greater portion of the provincial budgets and other programs are suffering. Therefore, they claim Medicare is unsustainable. In fact, other programs are suffering because tax cuts have reduced the money going to these programs. Between 1997 and 2004 public sector revenues (provincial and federal) dropped 170.8 billion dollars because of personal and corporate tax cuts (Medicare.ca). Since Medicare has suffered less reduction than have other areas, it is taking up a great portion of the provincial budgets. The Medicare components of health care in fact have taken a relatively consistent portion of our GDP for years at between 4% and 5 % of the GDP.

The real increases have come in areas that are not covered by the Canada Health Act such as pharmaceuticals, dental care and chronic care. They have risen from 3% of the GDP to 7%. This increase demonstrates that areas not properly managed by a public health care system are the ones with runaway spending.

There is another factor driving the push for a

privatized system and that is the growth of greed as an acceptable philosophy. Many of those who are wealthy are less willing to share the wealth through a graduated income tax system. Yet this tax system has been the foundation of creating an equitable health care system and other social services. They argue that there should be at least a private system for those who can pay. Private clinics are far more expensive as they can charge extra fees. They cherry pick patients based on the size of their wallet and the curability of their disease. Serving more easily curable patients creates impressive success statistics. They also try to take the best doctors and nurses or if doctors serve in both public and private they tend to focus on the paying private patients. With no more doctors and nurses in the system wait times won't improve for most of us, just for the rich.

An online Ipsos Reid poll taken between March 21<sup>st</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> of this year for Postmedia News and Global News revealed that 18% of Canadians felt that health care was the most compelling election issue. It ranked higher than any other issue. But it will only become an issue if Canadians insist that health care be discussed and that politicians give honest answers about their plans for Medicare.

“The fight for Medicare was a hard one. With the sole exception of Tommy Douglas’s government in Saskatchewan, political leaders did not willingly give public health care to Canadians. Rather citizens had to wrest it from reluctant politicians.” (Maude Barlow, Profit is Not the Cure, p. 7)

Now it is up to Canadians to save a Medicare system that works for all and that is part of our identity.

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## Calendar Details

### **Thursday, May 12, 2011. ARM’s Annual Walk and Talk in High Park**

Meet at the Parking Lot at the Grenadier Restaurant in High Park at 10:30 a.m.

Walk from the restaurant to Grenadier Pond and along the trail back to the restaurant.

Lunch at the Grenadier restaurant at 12 noon.

*Directions from Lakeshore Blvd.*

Drive west on The Lakeshore, north on Parkside Ave., west on High Park Blvd, follow Centre Road which will lead you to the Grenadier Restaurant in High Park.

*From High Park Subway*

Walk south on High Park Blvd. Cross to the south side of Bloor Street. Continue walking south in the park to The Grenadier Restaurant. **Note:** From the subway to the

restaurant is a 5 - 10 minute walk. Please wear comfortable walking shoes.

If you would like a ride from the High Park Subway, please contact me at 416 767 3260 or [absolutesounds@sympatico.ca](mailto:absolutesounds@sympatico.ca)

**Thursday, October 13, Trent River Cruise.** Visit Peterborough’s historic Hutchison House (built in 1836-7 and now with a book store) with ARM C12s who will take a cruise on the Trent River from there to Lakefield and back, past Trent University, with luncheon served aboard; in addition, there will be a stop on the way back from Peterborough at The Archibald Orchard & Winery, all for only \$85 including transportation. If interested, please call Rosemarie Mohring at 416-425-6677 before September 19th for a reservation.



# Why ARM?

## Finding new colleagues, friends and health benefits in retirement

### By Karma Naike, President, ARM Chapter 12

AS OSSTF MEMBERS IN OUR FORMER SALARIED LIFE, we may assume that it follows that the retiring staff would inevitably enlist membership with a parent organization for retirees, ARM OSSTF. ARM's membership of just over 3,500 is incongruent with OSSTF's active membership of over 60,000. Our membership also seems insignificant against the 65,000 members of the 43-year old institution, Retired Teachers of Ontario. However, numbers might hint that ARM is a minor organization, but provisions for its membership accommodate access to premium health plans, financial advice and services that are competitive with the best.

Notwithstanding the low membership fee and rebates to chapters to fund our programs, the benefits of a common educational background, and relative proximity render our members the possibility to get to know new "colleagues" quite well, and possibly develop respect, fondness, and often friendships that make our chapters real communities, individually and separately. It is the folks that we get to know that matter.

In my role as president for these last two years, I have gained more understanding of the function, and the roles members play in determining program delivery and development of community. Many folks have the personae of giants because of their dedication and selflessness in their care and work for causes, while others align with organizations that advocate for less fortunate seniors, the poor, for better health care provisions and accessibility for the disenfranchised. Some ally with District 12 to politicize at grassroots levels for a stronger voice of the people. Some of those focus on the community support services for youth, food banks, volunteering, tutoring, mentoring, and in personally affiliated charity groups.

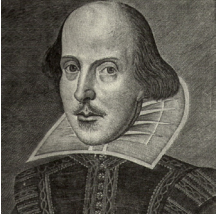
There are sports enthusiasts, musicians, artists, and art lovers whose various interests and talents help develop the chapter's programs. But our influence on programs extends beyond the local chapters as representatives connect with others at ARM's Provincial ARM, and electronic communication facilitates program exchanges. An Ottawa member has established a holiday package in Portugal which many members have accessed

with positive results. Other chapters join in out-of-town trips. ARM chapters together are a treasure trove of talents.

The benefits derived from Retirees' Support Services are generally competitive, but I would like to share a few stories that tell of quick responses to critical situations. An ARM member that I met at an AMPA booth related that he has had three good news stories about responses from the ARM/OTIP plan. He was prescribed medication after surgery and took the prescription to Shopper's where he was told he did not qualify for it. He called OTIP and the agent immediately cleared all the hurdles so that he was able to get the required costly medication in no time. In another incident, the rear window of his SUV was smashed. When he took it to Speedy, his card was honoured and service ensued without hesitation. Similarly, while in the United States visiting in Georgia, he became quite ill and was taken to a hospital where he was fully treated on the merit of his OTIP membership card. Another member had described how her family had an emergency in Florida and they received a ready response from OTIP which included travel home. What I am trying to underscore is that ARM members are ably franchised with our support systems and within our own groups or family of groups.

In our huge province, our programs for associations will vary, but in the overall context of Canada we are lucky enough to be able to reach out firstly to each other locally and very often beyond our backdoors to those in greater need. Reaching out beyond is a Canadian trait.

Joining ARM is the desirable course for new retirees as we can enlist our families, too. You can choose to join any chapter that is convenient for you. Besides, the membership fee of 50 dollars is waived the first year. It is easy to relate to new members in our area and groups because we have had common history. Retirement is not a time for scheduled routines. Now we can build new communities with new people who are not really strangers and we can build support for our caring, our interests and our fun to enjoy retirement knowing that our support systems and company for conversation and collaboration are first rate.



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The Retired Bard

# Sunrise, nighttime, farewell

Poems by Susan Buller and Jim Head

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## I Awoke at Sunrise...

by Susan Buller

I awoke at sunrise; the sky pale yellow, pale pink, and pale blue.  
I tiptoed along the path edged with crocuses and tulips and listened to the morningsong of robins.  
Tiny green buds dotted the trees, and I skipped and danced and leapt about.  
Joy and laughter filled my heart and wonder teased my mind.

Hand-in-hand, we strolled along the path, where roses and lilies bloomed.  
Under the golden sun and clear blue sky, we lay naked on soft, lush grass; the new-mown scent mingled with that of our lovemaking.  
We drank wine and laughed and lived.  
Passion and contentment filled my heart, and peace entered my soul.

The sky was high and cloudless blue as I walked alone along the path.  
Asters and chrysanthemums flowered brightly; the trees were gold and red.  
I pulled my jacket close to me as cool breezes raced about and tried to tug it from me.  
Memories and nostalgia filled my heart, ennui entered my soul.

With careful, plodding steps I make my way along the path; dried, brown leaves crunch beneath my feet.  
Fields once rich with golden grain are covered now with white.  
Bare, black branches reach up to the leaden sky.  
Wary of ice and chilled to the bone, I trudge more slowly now.  
The bitter wind grabs my heart. I close my eyes.  
I cannot feel my soul...

## I Like the Nighttime

by Susan Buller

I like the nighttime.

I like its softness, its quiet, its darkness.

Even as a child, I was never afraid of the dark. Maybe because when my mother put me to bed, she always asked, "What was the happiest part of today?" and she would remind me to remember that as I fell asleep. Or perhaps because when my father put me to bed he always said, "Sleep warm and safe, my darling."

I like the night time when I am at our cabin in Northern Ontario. There, the nights are very black. The huge sky is dusted with millions of stars like a sprinkling of sparkling sugar crystals. The chartreuse of the aurora borealis undulates across the sky. In the darkness, a brown toad with shining eyes, is hardly visible. I watch the bats dart

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against the moonlit sky.

The nights are very quiet; the stillness suddenly broken by a loon's lament. I barely hear the soft swoop of an owl's flight or the easy soaring of a flying squirrel. And there in the silent water, a sleeping fish.

In the cabin, the orange light of the lamp casts shadows on the ceiling and rounds the corners of the room. It warms me and brings me comfort.

I like the night time in the city, too. Before bed, I bathe with only the glow of a candle or two, surrounded by warm water, warm light and blackness. Then in a fresh nightgown, I stand by my bedroom window to say goodbye to the day. A raccoon waddles across the road; a cat hides in the shrubbery; a skunk ambles over the lawn.

I can see black trees and blacker leaves upon an even blacker sky. I see lightening slash open the dark fabric; watch the rain glistening past the streetlights. I watch as pure white snowflakes drift or dance past my view so close I could catch one on my tongue.

Some nights, when the moon is full, I lie abed and gaze at the stream of silver moonlight splashing across my walls and carpet. I am filled with wonder and with peace.

In the dark silence, I close my eyes, remember my day and sleep safe and warm.

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### **A Song for Enzo: a Diptych**

By Jim Head

*Enzo Altobelli, one-time head of the Kapuskasing Labour Council, died of leukemia in 1996. A member of TVO's board of directors, Altobelli became friendly with another board member, former OSSTF President Jim Head. During Altobelli's illness, Head visited him in hospital and, moved by Altobelli's courage, wrote the poem "A Song for Enzo." The poem placed second in the 1996 North American Poetry Competition and was included in a collection of works, Beneath the Harvest Moon. – Ed.*

out of pity, curiosity, or to  
view my own mortality?  
Like the face in the mirror  
after a shower's end  
or crushed glass on black  
asphalt

What do you say to him he  
has not heard before?  
What tears can he cry for  
me? What work?  
O yes I can play the clown,  
a frown, a smile,  
in calico or black, in satin  
or serge.

But will his mother's wail,  
my pathetic sighs  
ever solve the mystery of  
these shredding skies  
rent in two across the dark,

leaving this shell  
apart from that drifting soul  
or justify this hell  
holding hands in a black  
bed while white figures  
trace  
the halls and alleys of my  
face?

Enzo is fragile like fading  
lily petals  
but he sits up valse-like,  
crystal-eyed  
gripping your hand like  
there's no tomorrow  
and sings to you a song that  
settles  
even my cynicism, a shaky  
tremolo, but a tide  
that rushed in to erase all  
sorrow.

# Voodoo Histories:

*The Role of the Conspiracy Theory in Shaping Modern History.* By David Aronovitch  
New York: Penguin, 2010. 356 pages

Reviewed by Ian Cameron

A FRIEND OF MINE MET ME at a stoplight on Bayview. He said, "Ian, have you noticed the amazing number of contrails in the sky early this morning?"

"No," I said, "I didn't get up until 9:00."

"Oh, well I think something is going on. Maybe there's a massive military manoeuvre. Maybe it's about population control . . . like maybe they are spraying the sky to sterilize men and keep the population down."

As the light was changing, I did not have time to collect my thoughts and respond. But I felt a little uneasy, as when you disagree with your dentist, but he has his tools in your mouth. Maybe you have experienced similar conversations. Maybe you have also had the feeling that the ideas asserted are highly unlikely. Or sometimes you may have thought that there is a real conspiracy and that the truth is not being told.

A co-worker of David Aronovitch spurred his interest in writing *Voodoo Histories* when he informed David that he believed that the US Apollo landing on the moon was faked by NASA. Aronovitch concludes that it is not likely that the number of people involved in staging a fake landing in a studio could suppress the truth for long. For him, the scale of the cover-up was too great. His book on conspiracy theory is a good read, not only because of the interesting subject matter, but also to determine in your own mind the extent to which conspiracy theory has shaped modern history.

Aronovitch defines a conspiracy as: "The attribution of deliberate agency (rather than accident) to something that is more likely to be accidental or unintended."

So it seems that we are dealing with what is factual and subject to proof or disproof by appeal to evidence as opposed to what people believe to be true. In terms of shaping modern history, a belief in a conspiracy may be a cause of events. The author points out that it may be also that behind the belief in a conspiracy lies a larger truth that needs to be exposed.

Aronovitch examines many conspiracy theories and comments on whether he sees the theory being true, false, likely or unlikely, and that many of the authors of

such books became rich. Velikovsky's *Worlds in Collision* was "lionized by the scientifically illiterate literary elite", and sold very well. Eric von Daniken may have spent 3 years in prison for tax fraud and embezzlement, but his 1967 book *Chariots of the Gods* sold 63 million copies. Baigent and Lee's *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* is extensively examined. It seems unlikely that the Church could "systematically suppress the truth for 650 years." This of course was the forerunner of *The Da Vinci Code*. Aronovitch covers the plagiarism trial. He examines the death of Diana in 1997. The claim that she was pregnant and was killed rather than have a mixed-Muslim child fall heir to the throne is examined and rejected. But as Aronovitch also points out, there have been genuine conspiracies in history. The 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement between France and Britain to carve up the Ottoman Empire is cited. The 1953 U.S. and U.K. coup against Mossadeq, Latin American plots, Watergate and Iran-Contra, the 1980's Israeli secret development of nuclear weapons are given as evidence of real conspiracies.

Most of the modern conspiracies are given searching examination. This is a dense book. The Stalinist show trials are covered. The 1933 Reichstag fire in Germany is attributed not to the Nazi party, but to Dutch revolutionary Marinus van der Lubbe. *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the fictional Zionist conspiracy theory and Henry Ford's adherence to that belief and the horrible consequences of the Nazi belief in a Jewish conspiracy are covered. Did America participate in WWI for the cause of American banking? Did Roosevelt have foreknowledge of Pearl Harbor and keep it secret in order to get the USA into WWII? Were Sacco and Vanzetti guilty? Were Ethel and Julius Rosenberg guilty of espionage and subversion? Was JFK killed by a lone gunman? Was the death of Marilyn Monroe the result of an enema administered by the Mafia? Was the British state involved in the death of British subject Hilda Murell, rose grower and nuclear activist? Was President Clinton guilty of corruption and murder over Whitewater? Did the U.S. government knowingly

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murder 3,000 of its own citizens in the destruction of The Trade Towers in 9/11? In 2009, in Georgetown, a lady in red gave rise to the birthers by asking, "Where is Obama's birth certificate?" The in-depth examination of conspiracy theories takes us right up to the legitimacy of Obama's citizenship and his run for President of the USA.

But what are the psychological and other factors involved with a conspiratorial belief system? Perhaps paranoia is a healthy, protective response to the reality of life that no-one really does care for us. Oscar Wilde may have been right to say, "There is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about." Or as Aronovitch points out, Susan Sontag's clever development of it: "I envy paranoids. They actually feel people are paying attention to them." Then there is the view that conspiracy theory is "the Demonic projection of the politically and socially defeated." Such a belief places a believer among an elite who know the truth. I. F. Stone, Noam Chomsky, and George Monbiot, according to Aronovitch say a conspiracy theory is "a coward's fantasy ... an excuse for inaction."

In our media-dominated world, the methods used to foster and spread a conspiracy theory are mentioned by the author. One method is called "Just asking questions." A humorous illustration of this technique is that of British M.P. Mr. Norman Baker, U.K. Liberal Democrat. In 10 years, he asked 8,000 questions. He was nick-named "Inquisitor of the Year." Each question of course would insinuate that there is a secret not being revealed or a hidden agenda. As the author points out, "There is transparency and there is a perverse desire never to be satisfied." Questionable authority is cited. There is "death by footnote." Aronovitch also details the personal attacks and scurrilous vocabulary used by conspiracy believers. The book *The Obama Nation* is a case in point. "An abomination is something loathsome or disgusting." What is the association made with "nocturnal missions?" Aronovitch types "hardly likely" as "a blind guess based on no evidence." The author also writes about "unearned omniscience."

A standard method used is the question "*Cui bono?*" (For whose benefit?). A standard defense by conspiracy theorists of any new evidence contrary to their beliefs is that the new evidence is part of the conspiracy. Glenn Beck appeals to "common sense" or something that "just doesn't feel right." But the media has an insatiable thirst for content. Regardless of

research or academic credentials, talk shows give equal time to different points of view. Aronovitch types this idea as, "you show me your reality, and I'll show you mine." Fact gives way to narrative.

However, film makers such as Spike Lee say that the conspiracy theory itself is beside the point. With reference to the damage done to poor neighbourhoods by hurricane Katrina, many poor blacks believe that the damage done could have been avoided. The conspiracy runs that the damage was foreseen, that the levees were not properly shored up, and that the devastation that followed was just what white real estate developers wanted. *Cui bono?* He says that a conspiracy theory is the fuzzy shadow cast by the hidden bulk of real oppression: it has a kind of reality. He says, "the poet understands that myth is not a lie but the soul's version of the truth." On Katrina, Kulish of the *New*

**"I envy paranoids. They actually feel people are paying attention to them."**

**- Susan Sontag**

*York Times* says, the possible untruth of the allegations was far less important than "the bigger truths revealed by them." Postmodernists and poststructuralists have a distrust of normative notions of the truth. This is so because the status quo benefits those in power. Spike Lee says, "The normal order of things itself amounts to a conspiracy." The real problem is of black exploitation and power relations in the South and elsewhere.

To what extent have conspiracy theories shaped the modern world? Certainly, Hitler's belief in a Jewish conspiracy was a very big factor leading to the Holocaust. Obama could have lost his bid for the presidency based on the conspiracies that were manufactured.

Aronovitch concludes by saying, "I have written this book because conspiracies are not powerful, but the idea of them has power." The power can be used to address the problems with the interests vested in the status quo or to ignore them. Conspiracies can be used as a cop-out for action. They can also illuminate real relations that require change.



Steve Fuller's Toronto

# A North African meal

**Couscous and lamb recipes will give you and yours a memorable feast. Even more fun than watching *Casablanca***

**THIS ISSUE TAKES A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT** perspective. You'll understand why as you read on.

A growing proportion of immigrants to Toronto is from North African countries. I have had personal contact with this population, in the latter days of my classroom teaching career as have many of you. Their populations, of course, are diverse as is their cuisine, their culture and even their colour. Neil Walker has recently returned from a Moroccan vacation and raved about the food; I thought a couple of recipes of classic North African dishes would be appropriate.

Hint: If you look through the Yellow Pages or do an Internet search, you'll find dozens of small restaurants presenting the special cuisine of their owners.

## **African red beans and couscous**

(<http://newhope360.com/food/african-red-beans-couscous>)

"If you've always thought beans were boring, try this extraordinary recipe flavoured with almonds. The beans are served over couscous, a grain popular in Northern Africa." Note: Couscous is a form of PASTA, not a grain! If you don't like couscous, substitute a very small Italian pasta, such as orzo. Other points to bear in mind is that tomatoes, potatoes and cayenne pepper have their origin in the Western Hemisphere.

- 2 cups dried red beans
- 6 cups water
- 2 tomatoes, coarsely chopped
- 2 tsp olive oil
- 2 onions, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup celery, finely chopped
- 1 medium potato, peeled and cubed

- 1 cup almonds
- 1 1/2 cups soy milk
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp cayenne pepper
- Black pepper to taste

## Couscous

- 4 cups water
- 2 cups whole wheat couscous
- 1 tsp olive oil
- 1/2 tsp salt

1. Soak beans overnight. Drain and rinse beans well. Place beans in a large, heavy-bottomed soup pot with 6 cups water and tomatoes. Bring to a boil, lower heat and simmer 1-1/2 to 2 hours until tender. Add more water during cooking if necessary, using just enough to make a gravy-like sauce.
2. In a medium skillet, sauté onions, celery and potatoes in olive oil 15 minutes until potatoes are almost soft. Set aside.
3. Puree almonds and soymilk in a blender until smooth. Add sautéed vegetables, almond milk, salt, cayenne and black pepper to cooked beans and simmer for 20 to 30 minutes.
4. While beans simmer, bring 4 cups water to boil in a medium saucepan. Stir in couscous, 1 teaspoon olive oil and salt. Cover saucepan, remove from heat and let sit 10 minutes. Fluff with a fork before serving. Serves four.

*(Recipe excerpted with permission from Shoshoni Cookbook: Vegetarian Recipes from the Shoshoni Yoga Retreat (The Book Publishing Co.) by Anne Saks and Faith Stone.)*

Mrouzia – African Sweet Lamb  
([http://www.superluminal.com/cookbook/substantial\\_mrouzia.html](http://www.superluminal.com/cookbook/substantial_mrouzia.html))

**VERSIONS OF THIS DISH** are prepared throughout North Africa during Ramadan and Eid al-Adha. The large quantity of honey preserves the meat, a necessity when a family is blessed with an abundance of meat but no refrigeration. It is sweet, rich, and best served in very small portions.

- 3 lbs. boneless lamb, or 5 lbs. with bone, in large serving pieces
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. black pepper
- 1/2 tsp. turmeric
- 1/4 tsp. ground ginger
- 1/4 tsp. cayenne
- 1/4 tsp. cardamom
- 1/4 tsp. nutmeg
- 1/4 tsp. cloves
- 1/4 tsp. saffron (optional)
- 1/2 cup oil
- 1/4 cup unsalted butter or oil
- 1 cup whole blanched almonds
- 4 cups water
- 2/3 cup honey
- 1-1/2 cups raisins
- 2 tbsp. orange blossom water

1. Mix together all of the spices and the oil. Rub this mixture into the lamb and let marinate for at least an hour, or as long as overnight (The latter is preferable)
2. Melt the butter in a large pot over medium heat, then add the lamb, stirring constantly, until the meat has browned lightly.
3. Add the almonds and water, bring to a boil, lower the heat and simmer, covered, for an hour or until the lamb is tender.
4. Add the honey and raisins and cook over low heat, stirring frequently, for another 1/2 hour until the sauce becomes very thick. Turn off the heat, stir in the orange blossom water, and serve.

*I think it would be really neat if a few (two to four) of the "Foodies" in ARM-12 would like to meet at my house, cook our dinner and then devour it! We could even have a "Foodie" club to rotate sessions for different countries in different kitchens. In my house, the restrictions are no seafood without scales, no pork, no wild game and some restrictions on vegan dishes, only because most prefer animal protein. - SHF*



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THE NEW EDUCATORS MONTHLY INCOME FUND is ideal for those who need a regular income from their investments. Bryan Nunn, Vice President, Client Advisory Services, says, *“Educators typically retire at around age 58, which is earlier than the average Canadian. We find that many of our clients need additional income on top of their pension since they lead active retirements. Some also find themselves in the sandwich generation — helping to support both elderly parents and children still in university.”*

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**Give us a call at 1-800-263-9541 to find out if these funds are a good fit for your investment portfolio.**

## Swing For Kids

# Annual Spring Golf Tournament Wednesday, May 25, 2011

**09:30 Registration**

**10:00 Shotgun tee-off**

If playing the Championship Course, arrive earlier as you will have to tee-off around 9 am so we finish together. Shotgun start means we tee off at the same time and finish together for lunch which will be ready at about 1:00 to 1:30 pm

### Place

Rolling Hills Golf Club

### Cost

\$65 for 18 holes in Classic Course and lunch; \$75 if you choose to play the Championship Course; \$20 for lunch only.

Includes 18 holes of golf, power cart for two (compulsory). BBQ lunch menu includes choice of 3 salads, vegetable platter, assorted cookies and dessert squares, coffee or tea, taxes, gratuities and prizes.

**Send your cheque** for \$65 (Classic Course) or \$75 (Championship Course) or \$20 (Lunch only, to Jim Loftus, 7 Roanoke Rd., Apt. 301 Toronto M3A 1E3. Make the cheque out to ARM C12 Fall Golf Tournament c/o Jim Loftus.

**Deadline** Cheques must be in by May 18, 2011. Since places are limited, please act soon.

**Registration** Please notify us at [armchapter12@gmail.com](mailto:armchapter12@gmail.com) so that we’ll have a good idea of how many will be registering. Include your team members’ names and phone numbers and e-mails if possible. Please indicate skill level, 1 being a novice and 5 being a good golfer.

### Directions to golf course

Rolling Hills Golf Club  
12808 Warden Avenue  
Gormley, Ontario L4A 7X5  
Golf Shop: 905 888-1955

From Toronto  
Take Hwy 404 north to Stouffville Road  
Turn right (east) on Stouffville Road and drive to Warden Avenue  
Turn left and go north 2 kms on Warden Avenue  
Entrance is on the left side (west) of Warden Avenue