

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Volume 15 Issue 48

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1200, 10011 109th Street NW
Edmonton, AB T5J 3S8
800.788.9041 ext. 2905

Publisher AU Students' Union
Editor In Chief Tamra Ross
Managing Editor Sandra
Livingston

Regular Contributors:
Mandy Gardner, Katie Patrick,
Hazel Anaka, Bill Pollett,
Janice Behrens, Barbara Godin,
Wanda Waterman St. Louis,
John Buhler, Zil-E-Huma Lodhi

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May the Road Rise to Meet You

As the time draws near to say farewell to 2007, a year of wildfires, the soaring loonie, protests in Burma, and the Conrad Black trial, it naturally follows that we cast our thoughts forward to 2008. Here are some hopes—a few frivolous, most not—for the coming year and what it may bring.

May your passport be current and your line ups be few.

May we finally stop talking and start to take meaningful action before this bountiful planet of ours reaches the tipping point of pollution, wastefulness, and greed.

May the small gains in democracy hold fast—and grow stronger—for the millions who have yet to taste the liberty of basic human rights such as freedom of speech.

May those lottery numbers you've been playing for years finally pay off (and may the lottery agent be honest).

May there not be another case like Maher Arar's.

May all your toys be lead free.

May wireless telephone providers write a contract that the average consumer can understand, and may they finally realize that hidden charges, iron-clad contracts, and poor customer service won't win them happy, or loyal, customers.

As the credit fallout from the U.S. mortgage fiasco ripples out, may people realize that, just because an institution will allow them enough easy credit to get in over their heads, they don't have to jump into the shark-infested water.

May you discover that you truly are smarter than a 5th grader.

May George W. Bush finally wrap his tongue around the word "nuclear." Please.

May the food, water, and medical supplies so desperately needed by so many in war-torn countries make their way to their destination, and not be commandeered into the hands of warlords and mercenaries.

May the writers of *Grey's Anatomy* finally imbue Meredith with some emotional maturity, and stop subjecting viewers to such a whining, ineffectual character.

May the next person who is drunk, angry, or emotionally troubled choose a different course before deciding to take the life of a young Mountie called out alone in a remote post.

May we all find the time to thank just one of the silent army of volunteers who contribute so much to the health of our communities—or even become a volunteer ourselves.

May reality television cease to be a part of our collective reality.

May 2008 bring you health, happiness, and a year of joy.



I have a long history of being late with Christmas shopping. Well, being late with everything, according to my husband, but late Christmas shopping is where I particularly shine. The closer it gets to Christmas, the more exciting it gets. I can find awesome gifts at the grocery store on December 24—and have a blast doing so. (I've even been known to buy and wrap presents *after* Christmas, but please, don't spread that around.)

Usually, I had excuses for the lateness. Real ones, of course. I was studying for finals . . . or studying for finals . . . or studying for finals. Or lying in bed with horrible morning sickness. Or—and the list goes on. Regardless of the reason, each year you'll find me scurrying around the mall on December 23 (and sometimes, 24).

This year, things were different. I decided to be smart, focused, and, for once, on time. I started Christmas shopping in the fall. That is, I found a great bargain on a play kitchen for my daughter in September. Everything else I bought in November. Come December 1, my closet was full of wrapped, tagged presents. My Christmas shopping was done.

How wonderful! Now I finally had time to focus on decorating and baking. I could shed all that materialistic, stressful shopping nonsense and concentrate on the real spirit of Christmas. Now, I could have one of those relaxed, deep-breathing, homemade-cookies-Martha-Stewart Christmases, instead of a frantically-wrapping-presents-at-2-a.m.-after-midnight-Mass Christmas. I was so proud of myself.

I should have been happy.

I wasn't.

It was like something was missing. At first, I tried to ignore the signs. I pretended that I wasn't still Christmas shopping for my daughter; the fact that I was officially done buying for her about 10 presents ago just meant that I was a savvy shopper—or a sucker for a sale on cute baby items. The fact that I kept writing and rewriting my gift list showed that I was kind and didn't want to forget someone, not that I secretly hoped I had forgotten someone so I could start thinking up ideas. My husband wasn't much help; according to him, if I felt so badly I could always go out and buy more gifts for him!

It wasn't until I found myself looking at items and seriously considering buying them for *next* Christmas—that's Christmas 2008—that I began to understand the nature of the problem.

I suddenly realized that last-minute shopping had become a Christmas tradition for me, as familiar and necessary to that Christmas feeling as lighting the Advent wreath, hearing carols on the radio, decorating the tree, or eating tourtière on Christmas Eve. I *liked* Christmas shopping, especially at the last minute. Without it, December didn't seem, well, Christmassy.

So here we are the weekend before Christmas. I'm at home, watching *It's a Wonderful Life*, listening to carols, looking at the decorated tree, thinking about the freezer stuffed with homemade cookies and Christmas breads. And checking and double-checking that Christmas list. And then checking it again.

I give up. To all of you packing the malls on December 23, I'll see you there. If nothing else, I can get started on next year's Christmas shopping.

AU Profiles:

AU Profiles: Michelle Bonnier

by Christina M. Frey



In this week's profile, we meet Michelle Bonnier, a student in Athabasca University's Bachelor of Science (Human Science) program. Michelle, a "traditional" student age-wise, chose AU because of the focus of its biology program. She discusses the additional benefits she's discovered in distance education, and tells what she's using as motivation to keep herself grounded amid full-time work and six concurrent courses.

Michelle began studying biology soon after high school at the University of Alberta's francophone Faculté Saint-Jean. However, toward the end of the second year, she ran into difficulties.

"I found out I needed hearing aids," Michelle says. "Money started getting tight . . . I applied so many times to get [financial] help but I couldn't get it . . . no scholarships, no bursaries." At that point, Michelle moved home to Calgary and began looking at her options.

Initially, she planned on attending the University of Calgary, in her hometown. However, while the U of C's biology program focused on ecology, Michelle's interests were concentrated in human sciences (for example, anatomy, genetics, and nutrition). Michelle became interested in Athabasca University when she discovered that it offered a Bachelor of Science in human sciences.

"AU had a great program," she says. She also realized that distance education would offer a unique advantage: "It worked well with my hearing problems," she says. "[I would have] less dependence on using my ears." Michelle enrolled at Athabasca, transferring most of her University of Alberta credits into the program.

Enrolling at AU and transferring courses was fairly easy. Switching from French-language biology classes at the University of Alberta to English-language courses at Athabasca presented a small challenge. "Some of my biology classes are a bit strange for me, because I know all the terms only in French after 14 years of school in French," Michelle says. "But it's not been too hard of an adjustment."

Now, with only 11 courses remaining, Michelle is a big fan of distance education. "It . . . ended up working out way better than I thought it would," she says. "I love it!"

It's not just the efficiency of working independently and the ability to avoid the hassles of class that appeal to Michelle. She enjoys the actual approach to studying that distance education entails. "I like the method

of studying by reading," she says. "I never used to have to read my textbooks before, and I've found I've learned so much more this way."

Another benefit of distance education has been the chance to work as well as study. Initially, Michelle hadn't planned on working full-time while studying, but when the opportunity arose, distance education gave her the flexibility to accept the position. Michelle currently works as a nanny to a three-year-old boy and two-year-old girl, a job she's had for two years now.

Although it's almost impossible to get homework done—the very active toddlers keep her busy—she enjoys the job. "They're so good for me," Michelle says. "They make so much mess and noise and drive you crazy but you can't help but love them because they are so darn cute!"

*"I've met some great
friends . . . who have really
helped keep me
motivated."*

After graduation, Michelle plans to enrol in the University of Calgary's accelerated nursing program. The 18-month program, intended for those who already have a Bachelor of Science, expands on the BSc and includes the necessary practicum hours. Although she had considered studying nursing when she enrolled at AU, Michelle decided against it when she realized she'd have to start from the beginning. With the accelerated program, "I'm done in the same amount of time, but have two degrees," she says.

For the long term, Michelle's goal is to become a pediatric nurse. She loves children, and her work as a nanny has given her plenty of hands-on experience. Plus, "I've had health problems as a kid," Michelle says. "It's always been on my heart to help other sick kids."

Currently, Michelle is taking six courses, which, when combined with her full-time work, results in a hectic schedule. "It's crazy," she says, but she makes it work.

First, she staggers her course enrolment: rather than beginning all her courses at the same time, she enrolls gradually over a period of several months. As a result, "I never have more than one or two finals in a month," she says. Second, although she plans her time carefully, she also makes it a point to schedule downtime. "[Take] it one unit at a time, but [ensure] that you take a break and refresh yourself," she says.

For Michelle, working out and taking fitness classes is refreshing emotionally as well as physically. "I take two [fitness] classes for an hour each," she says. "[It] is my time to myself to not think about school or what I have to do."

To keep connected with other students, Michelle has become involved in the AU communities on both AUSU's website and Facebook.

"We don't have that same environment as brick and mortar universities," Michelle says. "[But] I've met some great friends . . . who have really helped keep me motivated."

She has participated in AUSU's chatroom and Study Buddy program. She also has started an AU human science major group on Facebook, where members discuss courses and homework. "It's a great system, even if we are in different classes," she says. "It makes you feel less like you're doing everything on your own."

Michelle's biggest motivator, however, is an upcoming trip to Australia. Her sister, who lives down under, is getting married next fall, and Michelle has set her visit as a goal for completing her degree.

"I kind of have a deadline," she says. She's planning on spending three months traveling in Australia, having a well-deserved break from studying. For once, she laughs, "[I'll be] doing absolutely nothing!"

Aging Authentically



That Diane Keaton advert for some cream or other drives me insane. You know the one: “Oh, I believe in aging . . . authentically.” Yeah, right. My handy well-used dictionary defines “authentic” as “true” and “genuine.” I’m not sure when plastic surgery and hair dye became true and genuine, but maybe I’m just being ungracious.

After enrolling in the Introduction to Human Health course (I’m a humanities major in desperate need of science credits), I started to wonder: what is “aging authentically,” anyway? I know what aging is, but how do I know if I’m doing it right?

Enticingly, the course material promises to reveal all to me, although I rather suspect the textbook is written from the point of view of students for whom aging is some far and distant possibility, as opposed to those of us who deal with its realities on a daily basis.

I decided to take my curiosity to the Internet. Now, this is always dangerous and good for at least an afternoon of assignment procrastination as I get waylaid by sites that have nothing to do with what I’m supposedly looking for. However, I thought I’d start with how the brain ages and its effect on memory.

I was heartened to read an article on the BBC website saying new research shows we do not necessarily lose massive amounts of the little white cells as our brains age. In fact, the current thinking is that our neurons replace themselves as we get older. They’re just slower, like everything else old.

The only disconcerting fact is that scientists still aren’t sure why some of us are all bright-eyed and bushy-tailed well into our 90s, and others of us look and feel like we’ve been round the block a few times by our 60s—diet, exercise, and drinking habits notwithstanding.

As I suspected, my surfing got out of hand and I came across an [article](#) written in 2000 by Heather M. Ritenburg for the University of Regina Teaching Development Centre Newsletter. What caught my eye was her opening question: “What options are there for university teachers when faced with mature students in an undergraduate program?” Ms. Ritenburg goes on to elaborate about her experiences as a mature student and what types of courses and professors kept her fire for learning “kindled.”

The article got me thinking about my old brain and its memory and how it fits into a university environment; an environment that, by its very nature, needs to be focused on the young and the career oriented.

I realize that when universities talk about mature students they’re not referring to maturity at all, just the fact that the student did not come straight from high school or college, but it is a bit disconcerting to find that at Concordia University, for example, mature students are serviced by the same department that services at-risk and failed students!

Anyway, back to my afternoon of surfing: does the old memory have to let us down as we age? We all know that children can pick up a second language with ease, while I’m ready to yell profanities after studying and “memorizing” the future perfect conditional endings in French for the hundredth time, completely confident that I won’t remember them for the exam anyway. But does it have to be that way?

My former stepson-in-law (don't you love extended families?) who had a PhD in some exotic subject like Environmental Engineering (he designed sewer and waste systems) once used a computer analogy to explain to my husband why, in his 70s, he can't remember things that he knows he knows (shades of Donald Rumsfeld).

"It's no mystery, Dad," Terry said, "you have a 286 brain in a Pentium world. It's all there. It just takes forever to locate the information and print it out!"

Apparently our memory starts to deteriorate, ever so slowly, around age 25. And the old saying "use it or lose it" is truest when used in relation to the brain. Activities such as reading, puzzles, crosswords, word games, and (are you listening?) learning all contribute to a healthier, more attentive brain.

Did you know that sweating makes you smart? Now, I really got excited about this one. Do you remember another old saying, "horses sweat, ladies glow, and gentlemen perspire"? Well personally, I should be living in a barn. Unfortunately for me, the statement relates to the body-brain connection. An article in the May/June 2004 Psychology Today magazine reported that a "good workout may be as good for your mind as it is for your muscles."

So there you have it: if you want to keep your brain active and healthy and your memory worth having well into your senior years, study and sweat. Not necessarily at the same time.

Maybe I should give Diane Keaton a call?

CLICK ON THIS - One Thousand Words

Lonita Fraser

Not that print cameras are going the way of the dodo bird anytime soon, but the rise of digital cameras gave rise also to droves of new shutterbugs. The Internet gives all of us photo nuts a forum for showcasing our art, or our insanity.

English Russia - Some Not-So-Usual Photos - Well someone's got an eye for the morbid; and they do this for fun, to boot.

Curiously Incongruous - "Over the past few years I have walked thousands of kilometres through the streets of every part of London photographing what I thought might make interesting photographs. It's the method I used for teaching myself photography." I'll tell you this much: having a camera on you opens your eyes. You look at things differently, and see things you might otherwise pass by without noticing at all.

Urban Exploration - Beauty exists in all things; even the abandoned, the rusted, and the forlorn.

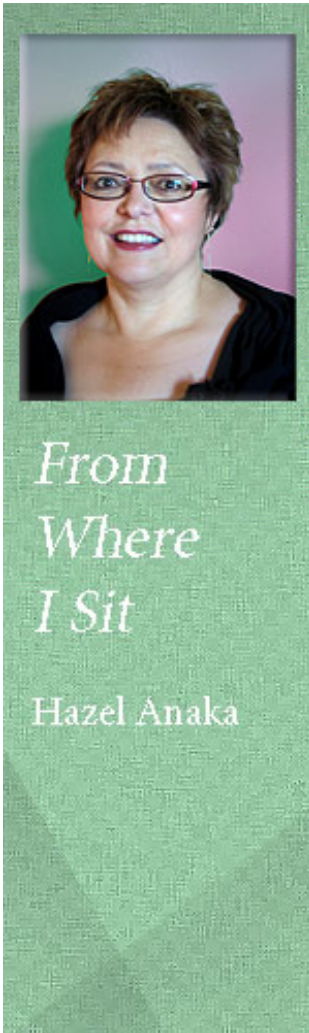
Plastic Bag Gallery - There's something so charmingly "trainpotty" about websites like this. I adore them.

Pinhole Resource - A wealth of information for the shutterbug who truly wants to take matters into her own hands, right from scratch.

Chema Madoz - Truly work that embraces the concept of never dismissing anything as a possible subject. It's a photographic motto I live by myself.

Mystery Meat Microphotography - The above being said, I'm not so sure everything on this earth needs to be documented.

Filmwasters - "This site is dedicated to showcasing and promoting the creative side of film-based photography." I may dig the digital, but film is fabulous too.



Just Do It

List makers unite! It's that time of year again. As we eat and drink our way through the holidays the reality of another year drawing to a close hits hard. It's inventory time.

It's time to add up the wins and losses of the year. Are we better off than we were this time last year? Is our blood pressure up and our bank balances down? Or vice versa? Did we impress the boss and earn the undying admiration of our co-workers or are we one screw-up from oblivion? Have we said more "I love you's" than "eff you's"?

This exercise isn't easy. It requires courage, honesty, awareness, and insight. Most don't even understand the importance and value of such an activity. Jim Rohn, speaker extraordinaire, suggests taking time not just at year end, but each week and each month, to re-examine where we are in relation to where we said we wanted to be.

Success coaches advise making a goals list and an action plan to get there. Studies have shown the simple act of making a goals list increases the odds of attaining them, yet only three per cent of the population ever put their wishes on paper. Some friends of mine have a slightly different spin on this that I've since copied.

We've each created a personal dream board—a visual, in-your-face reminder of where we want to go and what we want to have or be when we get there. Though some of the pictures represent things like dream homes, money, sports cars, and some outrageous bling, others signify intangibles.

I've also got images of books representing education and life-long learning. Adirondack chairs, footprints on a sandy beach, a Canadian passport, and exotic locales symbolize leisure. Flowers and a photo of a woman getting a massage speak of pampering. A photo of a gorgeous infant is the hope for a grandchild some day. Pictures of a middle-aged couple represent our long-term marriage. Others represent health and fitness. This project is a living, breathing work in progress. It occupies a prominent place in my office where it's sure to be seen daily.

Having both a written and a visual list signals the universe of my desires and intentions. It solidifies what my next actions should be. It also sets in motion both seen and unseen forces that come together to make things happen. Doors open, opportunities appear, help is offered. In a word: serendipity.

Periodic re-examination of both the goal and the requisite steps to achieve it are critical to staying on course. Rohn calls it setting the sail. Rather than cursing the wind (read economy, in-laws, taxes, any external forces) we control what we can—ourselves, the set of our sail.

The start of a new year is a logical time to re-think both the goals and the action plan. Big or small, tangible or intangible, behavioural or materialistic, it matters not. The important thing is to just do it, from where I sit.

The Chronicles of Cruiscin Lan

by
Wanda
Waterman
St. Louis



Top Albums of the Year



It's the end of another quick year, and the albums we've been seeing are really of top quality. Some strong debuts, impressive contributions from established bands, and only a few discs the world could do without entirely. A year of plenty, I'd say, and with Christmas sneaking up fast it's time to reflect on the year in music with a good old-fashioned top-five list:

At number five, it's the Strays with their debut, *Le Futur Noir*. This album is still on my playlist, with great punk/ska-tinged tunes. The Strays know how to play, and more importantly how to write songs that people will want to listen to. They've got politics, emotion, punk beats, and an overall great sound. An absolutely excellent debut that should not be missed.

Number four has got to be the Yoko Casionos with *These are the New Old Times*. The Vancouver/Toronto group has taken the art of the nightclub groove and recorded it for posterity. There's never been a band so unadulterated by a session in the recording studio, and this bunch is worth the effort it takes to get over the stigma of buying a mellow album.

The next spot goes to The Killers with *Sam's Town*. This deserves the number three slot for a lot of reasons, but mainly for the ability to break into the mainstream without succumbing to that over-processed, formulaic sound that so many other bands have to create before selling an album or finding a producer. The Killers have got a creative and prideful spark that keeps them safe from interference. It's a vital part of this year's soundtrack and none of us is ever going to forget the singles on this album.

These next two were a tough call. Both scoring a 10 on my own formal ratings scale, the difference came down to a simple factor: which album can I listen to the most without tiring of the tracks?

That question answered, the runner-up for album of the year is the Arctic Monkeys. *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* is going to be a music essential for an entire generation. It's bold and utterly British, helping give rise to the return of quality English rock—and that's long overdue.

It isn't often that a rough bunch of 19- and 20-year-olds can tap into a poetic vibe and deliver not only amazing lyrics focusing on the social structure of northern English cities, but couple it with incredible guitar solos and intricate musical creations. This is a very well-deserved placement for the debut album.

Finally, we're left with the number one album of the year. They're brassy, outspoken, unconventional, and, best of all, they come from Toronto. Who else but Billy Talent? *//* was the flawless follow-up to the self-titled album released in 2003, and it didn't disappoint.

The boys are still prone to shouting and can still deliver the kind of songs that make you feel as though moshing isn't enough of a response. I've noticed the new video release, "Red Flag," getting the tiniest bit of air on British music channels, so it looks like the boys are poised to take on Europe after incredible success back home. Without a doubt this is the finest album I've heard in a long time, and it's hardly been off my stereo for more than a couple of days at a time.

So there you have it! It's been a great year for music, and Canadian music at that. If you're looking for some good CDs for Christmas presents in the next week, this is a good place to start. Happy holiday!



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

CD: J.D. Miner, *Ain't No Ordinary Hillbilly*

Release date: 2007

Label: Blueshift Productions

At last, a folk trio from the present decade to add to my folk trio album collection (a musty flea-market horde burgeoning with Peter, Paul, and Mary, The Kingston Trio, The Courriers,

The Travellers, and even the apish Limeliters). Yes, those trios could really wail and make those old banjos ring, but not a one of 'em had the musical prowess and writing ability of J.D. Miner, three neat guys based in British Columbia.

I was in B.C. once. Nanaimo. It was a high school band exchange. One night my host treated me to a rant about how his province was sick and tired of supporting us Maritimers. Earlier he had taken the family and myself on a drive through the local reservation (which, I had to admit, looked much more poorly funded than the reservations back home in my have-not province), inviting me to be revolted at how these people allowed themselves to live.

I recently relayed this story to a counterculture acquaintance who told me I had been in the wrong part of B.C. and that the province was chock full of, as he put it, "really groovy people." And he was right.

I still don't know who the lead singer of J.D. Miner is, but his voice is eerily like Garrison Keillor's, adding to the home-smoked quality of the sound. Another pleasure of this CD is its delightfully tactile cover. Opening it feels like unpacking a box of doughnuts. The inside reads: "This cd jacket was printed on 100% recycled paper with vegetable based ink, so if you don't like the cd, at least you can feed this to your cat."

The music echoes old-time hymn sings, bluegrass festivals, Dixieland jamborees, Texas swing, Woody Guthrie, Stan Rogers, and classic country. The three instrumental numbers on this CD are each more enticing and repeatable than the last.

And then there are the words, all written by Darryl Klassen or Joel Klingler. These are witty and thoughtful lyrics, from guys who obviously don't take themselves seriously, a sea breeze beside the narcissistic moaning of so many folk prima donnas. If anyone has a right to be vain it's these guys; Joe Worst is a classically trained bassist, and Joel Klingler and Darryl Klassen are a couple of fingerpicking virtuosos, yet they come across as people who'd be pleased as punch to be invited over to perform at your next backyard barbecue or union rally.

J.D. Miner couldn't have come along at a better time. Remember those movies Hollywood put out in 1942 (unfairly labelled "escapist") to take our minds off the war? Movies like *Casablanca*, *Bambi*, and *Tortilla Flat*? Those of us enduring the present political climate know all too well the urgency of using entertainment for healing and sustenance. Such things help us get things done. Their purpose, if they have one, is not to blind us to our troubles but to carry us through them. For artists they are one way of staying sane while keeping the old muse fed.

Mix a healthy dose of J.D. Miner in with your Michael Moore documentaries and your Bob Dylan records and you may actually survive this decade with your ideals intact. You may even still be able to write poetry.

The Bard could use some help scouting out new material. If you discover any books, compact disks, or movies which came out in the last twelve months and which you think fit the Bard's criteria, please drop a line to bard@voicemagazine.org. If I agree with your recommendation, I'll thank you online.

AUSU THIS MONTH



GO HOME EARLY.



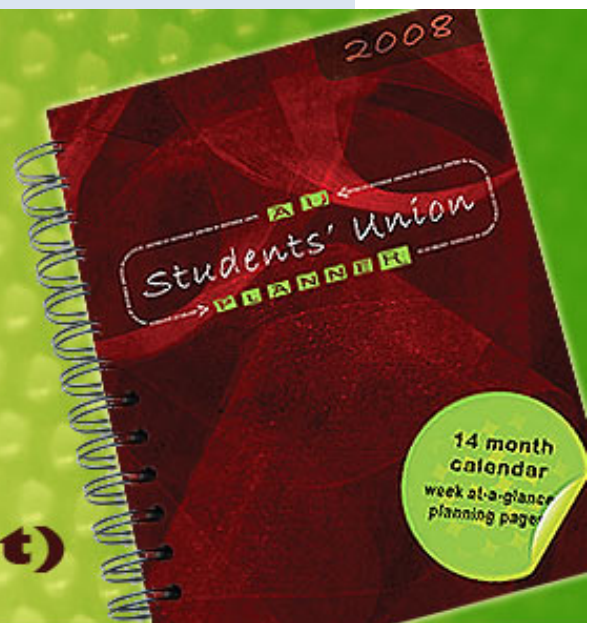
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A look back at the major news events of 2007

Mandy Gardner

At Home

This year Canadians have been focused on one major theme: the rise and fall of the loonie against the U.S. dollar. For the first time in decades, our dollar not only reached parity with the American dollar but actually exceeded it a couple of times. The rise of dollar values played havoc with bank transfers and currency exchanges, but it was a point of pride for the country and a sign that our economy is finally starting to reach its potential. So what's happening with our currency today? According to currency valuers XE.com and Oanda.com, we've dropped back down to the point where one American dollar will buy \$1.006 Canadian; the loonie is still very high with respect to its place in the currency exchange just a few years ago, however, and today's dip doesn't necessarily mean that it will keep falling.

Another big news item this year was the deaths of two men as a result of police Taserings. The deaths brought increased criticism of the use of Tasers by RCMP, and although CBC says that more than 50 people have died as a result of Taserings in North America since 2001 (17 total in Canada) the RCMP maintains that this is the safest way of dealing with certain individuals. Amnesty International Canada had been asking for more research to be conducted on the health risks of Taser guns, and after this year's deaths it has called for the suspension of any use until further studies are undertaken. So far, no formal action has been taken by the government.

In Foreign News

In September this year, the ruling Burmese junta (formally known as the State Peace and Development Council) did away with gas subsidies in a move that saw prices rise 100% in some cases. This led to massive protests not only by average Burmese citizens, but most notably by Burmese monks. Protests were not specific to the gas subsidies, and were actually directed at the eradication of the military government and the establishment of a democratic system. The current Burmese junta is supported by the Chinese government, and this has inspired many international activists to call for a boycott of the Beijing 2008 Olympics as well as Chinese imports. After United Nations envoy Paulo Sergio Pinheiro visited Burma on November 14, the UN reached no satisfactory compromise; China continues to support the current government.

In the United States, the Writers Guild of America went on strike this November and we've subsequently been subjected to reruns of Hollywood-based shows like *The Colbert Report*, *The Daily Show*, and many other late-night talk shows. The strike was called by the Writers Guild because Hollywood writers wanted a bigger percentage of earnings, particularly in terms of Internet sales. As yet, there has been no resolution to the matter. However, certain onscreen personalities have begun to rethink their options. David Letterman has decided to try to reach a compromise directly with his writers, and Jay Leno and Conan O'Brien have said they will be back at work January 2. Despite the return to their respective shows, Leno and O'Brien will be working without their regular writers and therefore the established format will have to be changed. For the most part, writers and big Hollywood names remain on the picket line.



Are lower tuition fees worth higher taxes?

Fee reductions lead to tax hikes, analyst says

TORONTO (CUP) -- The image of student activists marching on the legislature, brandishing bright yellow "Reduce tuition fees" placards, is one that most students might recognize.

They bring megaphones to amplify their slogans and wear T-shirts that say, "I sold my other shirt to pay for tuition." Their signs don't read, "Increase taxes." But some think they might as well.

Tuition fee reductions and freezes would lead to "obvious" tax hikes, says C.D. Howe Institute policy analyst Yvan Guillemette. As pushes for freezes and reductions continue, he and others are wondering whether proposals designed to take some of the load off of students' chequebooks will hit other citizens' pockets instead.

In 2003, the University of Manitoba Students' Union criticized the provincial government for funding its tuition freeze through new taxes, saying, "In the end, students saved some money through lower tuition yet ended paying more in taxes . . . government has come out ahead while students and universities have lost."

That's what students can expect from freezes and reductions, analysts say.

Students "can't only expect the government to keep services high and fees low," says Neil Desai, the Ontario director of the Canadian Taxpayers' Federation. "They have to be willing to work with them as students."

Student groups advocating lower user fees may want to be careful what they wish for, Guillemette adds.

"Freezes and reductions are not an investment," he says. "When the government freezes or reduces tuition, it's not putting funding into the other aspects of post-secondary education." Those "other aspects," he says, include building maintenance and research funding.

But Amanda Aziz, national chairperson of Canadian Federation of Students, says fees can add up, preventing students from pursuing their education.

"User fees are a barrier for low-income Canadians," she says. "We have to send the message to the provinces helping to create those barriers that this isn't good for students."

But the CFS and other groups may be forgetting that the provinces' roles go beyond this one issue, Guillemette says.

"Education always seems to lose out to things like health care," he says. Desai agrees.

"The government has so many other things to deal with besides post-secondary education," he says. "There has to be a balance between public and individual investment. When groups are calling for a [tuition fee] freeze, they're calling for society as a whole to fund universities in a greater way."

But funding post-secondary education is "absolutely" society's role, Aziz says.

"Education has a huge societal benefit," she says. "While there are obviously individual benefits, the societal benefits are as great or even greater than those for individuals."

She cited the B.C. government's 2005-06 budget, which stated that "70 per cent of job opportunities will require some post-secondary education," as a reason why "society needs an educated population."

Desai says that while he can understand students' desires to get a good education, they should be prepared to get what they pay for.

"It [currently] falls to all taxpayers to fund universities," he says. "Students need to come to the realization that they're contributing to the cost of post-secondary education, but so are other citizens."

"And not everyone in the province goes to university."

Aziz says that doesn't matter.

"That's just the way our tax system works," she says. "Once you make a lot of money and can afford to pay more in taxes, you have to help to fund education for people who are faced with barriers."

Guillemette says Aziz's argument is indicative of student lobbyists' position—that post-secondary education is society's responsibility.

"They're aware that society is contributing most of that money," he says, "but they think it's the right thing to do." A tuition freeze might even work against students, he adds.

"It would hurt them more than it would help them, I think," he says. "When you freeze tuition, you freeze it for everybody, not just those who have difficulty paying."

Desai recently finished his master's degree in England. He says many students in Canada don't realize how lucky they are.

"We are very privileged here," he says. "We have very high expectations, and expectations don't come cheap."

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