

Vanier College Teachers' Association



Newsletter

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Employee Picnic



Association Council 2011/2011(left to right): Maggie Kathwaroon , Eric Durling, Geeta Johal, Janice Paquette, Lourdes Meana, Catherine Greffard, Farid Sandoghdar, Fred Andrews, Joel Casseus, Mark Prentice, Nick Rudy, Brian Aboud, John Tromp, Anne Bernard, Sophie Jacmin

The Newsletter is the
voice of the
VCTA
MEMBERS.

Send submissions to
the attention of
Eric Durling at

vcta@vaniercollege.qc.ca

The views expressed are not necessarily
those of the VCTA

Executive

fneeq 
CSN

FNEEQ (Fédération nationale des enseignants & enseignants du Québec) regroupe 86 unions, 46 of them from cegeps, and represents about 17 000 workers. It was founded in 1969.

<http://www.fneeq.qc.ca>

The CSN (Confédération des syndicats nationaux) was founded in 1921. It is a union central that represents an important proportion of public sector employees. It is both engaged in defending its member's rights and promoting a more egalitarian model of society.

<http://www.csn.qc.ca>

The VCTA Executive is

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Officer's Office Hours

C-101

Mondays: 9—2:00

Tuesdays : 1:30– 4:00

Wednesdays:

10:00– 3:00

Fridays

10:00– 12:00

The State of The Union

The last few years have been busy ones for the VCTA- winding down our old federation, rejoining FNEEQ/CSN, implementing a new collective agreement – while trying locally to deal with a changing administration, has been a challenge for the past few years.

In 2010/11, our CRT team played a crucial role, placing an emphasis on creating postes so that more of our teachers would be able to get tenure. Special thanks to Joel Casseus, who lead the effort in the Social Sciences and Arts and Letters. Miles Denora, Kelly Purdy and Lourdes Meana who worked to make sure that some program courses were used equitably across the disciplines to create 9 new postes. As a result, 9 social science teachers got tenure. In addition, our CRT team argued that as many postes as possible should be created across the board and in the first round, over 30 postes were sent to the pool then came back to Vanier to go to Vanier teachers, many of whom got tenure with the poste*. In the Second Round, another 7 postes were sent to the pool. The CRT team also worked hard to make sure that the administration applied the rules of the new Collective Agreement, which added new allocations to the College's allocation projet and in August, new postes in Math and Humanities were sent to the pool. We fully expect that these will also go to Vanier teachers.

Unfortunately, the Vanier administration was not willing to support continuing the Cont Ed Dec agreement and we have lost it for the moment. At the last CRT, we talked about the special package deal in Cont Ed that has been offered to some students, who would have been day students if we had space. The Executive is determined

that these students must be treated as day students and we are considering a grievance/ on this matter.

In June, we signed an agreement on the 27 pay issue, after 2 years of working on it!) however, were not able to reach an agreement with the administration to give the advance pay of August 19 to all teachers, rather than just to teachers who had a full time contract in August. Going for 4 weeks without pay is a real hardship for many of our teachers and we will be looking for a way to avoid this situation ten years down the line. We did manage to make sure that any teacher who fell ill or had an accident during the 2 week non-availability period, would still be able to get a medical leave if necessary.

Association Council also played a pivotal role helping the Executive run the union as well as working on bringing our constitution/bylaws up to date. We hope to bring these bylaws to the General Assembly by next semester. Thanks to the Bylaws Committee, chaired by Mark Prentice, for all of their hard work on the bylaws and of course, thanks to our Association Council members for revising the bylaws and their input on union matters. By the way, all Association Council meetings are open to the membership. They are held on Thursdays, at 1:30 pm, usually in the Boardroom F216 and you are urged to attend. The meetings give you an idea of the range of issues that our union deals with and will **perhaps give** you an incentive to



get involved in the future in Association Council.

This year will also be filled with important tasks. The experience of all teachers will be recalculated using the rules of the new Collective Agreement, which will mean some people will move up an echelon in pay. Cegep teachers will finally get their raise for employment equity and it is up to the VCTA to contact anyone who worked after Dec. 2010 but is no longer an employee at Vanier. If you are in touch with anyone in this position, please contact the VCTA. Also, early in the semester we will be offering a lunch meeting for new teachers to inform them of their rights as cegep teachers. We will also have to start applying the new collective agreement and help the membership to understand the changes, starting with a workshop on the Department, especially aimed at Coordinators.

Besides all of this work, the Executive will be presenting the following to Association Council as priorities for the 2011/2012 academic year.

1. Full time contracts- Many non-tenured teachers teach for many years having part time contracts

until April or May. When there are 4 or 5 of these teachers in a department, this is excessive. The teachers do not have the security of a year's contract and HR has to make 4 or 5 contracts for each teacher so they have a lot of extra, unnecessary work. We hope to be able to change this.

2. Increase membership- Not all teachers are union members and we think that most of them are not aware that they have to actually JOIN the union, even though they pay dues. Please help us to increase the membership by talking

to people in your area about the union.

3. Face to face contact- We hope that the Executive can meet more members and are planning a tour of the various departments to do so.
4. Building the General Assembly
5. Reconciling work and family.

Just a reminder that the VCTA office (C101) is open from 7:30am- 8 pm for teachers to use. Come and have a cof-

fee, read the newspapers, eat your lunch and talk to other union members.

Hope to see you soon!

Your VCTA Executive,

Catherine, Eric, Geeta and Janice

**When new postes are created by retirements or an increase in students, the poste has to be sent to a provincial body to see if there are any tenured teachers laid off from other cegeps who have a right to the workload.*

Female Representation in Unions

Catherine Greffard

At Fneeq's last Congrès fédéral, Caroline Senneville, the head of the Women's Committee reported on the presence of women at different levels of our federation. To try to understand the situation, the committee visited different local unions all over trying to find out what obstacles there are to the trade union militancy of women. We can group the answers in three categories : 1. "Do you think I'll be able to do it", 2. "Not now!" or "Only locally" and 3. "It's not my style" or "If we're two it's better".

1. "Do you think I'll be able to do it" Men and Women don't think of their involvement in the same way. Often, men will more easily accept being on the executive while women will need to be reassured that they will be able to do the job. Often they have to be asked many times before they will accept.

2. "not now!" or "only locally" Reconciling work and family responsibilities is a big issue not only for women but for men too. But women often wait until their kids are older to get involved and even then, being away for a few days may cause a problem.

3. "It's not my style" or "if we're two it's better" : People often see unionism as a place for confrontation and some women don't like confrontation. Also, the feeling that everything must be done really fast as a union executive member makes it easier to recruit women for other things like Academic Council, for example. And women like to be at least two on the executive to support each other but also to enrich the discussions.

At the end, I asked Caroline Senneville, if they had statistics about how many women and men have kids and are part of an executive at any level; they didn't know, but may try to find out the next time.

But we do know that even though, women represent half of the Fneeq membership, only 30-40% of local executive members are women and the percentage has never been higher than 40 %. And within the Executives, women are not equally represented in all positions, as you can see from the statistics gathered by the Women's Committee. These show the percentage of women in various positions in local unions.

Secretary: 52 %

Treasurer : 36 %

President :33 %

Vice-president : 45 %

CRT : 24 %

After Caroline Senneville's presentation of the report, there were some questions and commentaries and just before Fneeq president Jean Trudelle's call for the vote to approve the report, the McGill's representative of "chargés de cours" stood up at the mic and said : "yes we have to take action to increase the participation of women in the unions but we also have to take action to increase the participation of minorities and women minorities also. The crowd spontaneously applauded!

Let's hope that this is followed by concrete actions to get more women and minorities involved in our unions at all levels.

Catherine Greffard is the VP external on the VCTA Executive, she teaches French.

Globalization of Plant Genetic Resources: Implications for Food Security (Part I)

Moses Geepe Nah Tiepoh

This is a three-part series designed to explore the food security implications of the globalization and privatization of plant genetic resources for developing countries. It will argue that the rapid increase in patents on genetically modified seeds and other plant genetic materials, and the monopolization of these patents by a few multinational corporations, undermine public agricultural research into crucial applications of the new biotechnology in world food production. In this first part of the series, I provide an overview of the economic globalization thesis and the key counteracting positions and historical developments that have defined the genetic resource rights struggle. This shall be followed by an analysis, in a future segment, of the extent of private corporate monopolization over patents on plant genetic resources. In the final part, I shall then examine how such rapid expansion and concentration of patents in a few corporate hands undermines food security in developing countries.

Resource Property Rights Under Globalization

In a sense the continuing international struggle over plant genetic resource rights embodies a key contradiction of globalization, whereby national resources are being drawn into a global market space only to be expropriated by private corporate forces. Systems of ownership rights do have significant effects on the way a society controls and uses its economic resources in development. When resources residing within the territorial boundaries of a given nation-state are considered as a

'global' property, then the right and role of the nation-state in protecting such endowments and controlling national resource policies is effectively undermined. In such a case, resource management and the making of national policies become the collective responsibility of international actors, presumably for the welfare of the country and the common good of the world system. A frequent result of this is that the policy regimes supposedly designed to transform the domestic economic and social realities of a resource-endowed country end up benefiting more the dominant international bodies and private corporate forces that manage such policies.

In pursuing globalization governments around the world, especially those in less-developed countries, are being pressured to desist from economic intervention and allow 'free' global markets to determine national economic policies and resource allocations. Proponents of this phenomenon see a world system that is rapidly becoming interconnected, and in which "no natural, cultural, and technological resources are only local resources any longer" (Cleveland and Murray, 1997:477). Some point to a "vision of the world and its resources as a globally organized and managed free world/free enterprise economy" (McMichael, 1996:300). Yet, others see a world that is already "borderless", in which economic resources move freely across nation-states (Omae, 1990). Overall, the vast literature on the globalization thesis speaks of a world that has already achieved, or is in the process of fast achieving, a truly globalized econ-

omy in which the nation-state has lost all regulatory ability and should therefore surrender to global markets and international institutions in deciding domestic economic and social outcomes. The argument is that market forces have become so omnipotent and efficient in managing world resources that it is not only futile but counterproductive for any national government to try to interfere with them.

Contrary to such perceptions, however, skeptics see a globalization that is not as inclusive and uncontrollable as its proponents claim. These skeptics cite, as an example, the evidence that the overwhelming majority of foreign direct investments (FDI), an important measure of economic integration, continue to flow only among developed countries; and flows to developing countries are still heavily concentrated in just a few East Asian and so-called 'emerging' economies. For example, of the \$334 billion of FDI that flowed to developing countries in 2005, well over a third (\$118 billion) was invested in China and Hong Kong alone. Moreover, the perceived uncontrollability of global markets by governments is also contested. As argued by Saskia Sassen (2001), while the state has found it difficult, in recent years, to regulate certain new transnational economic processes, such as foreign exchange and 'derivative' markets, the notion that globalization is creating a distinct territorial space economy beyond the regulatory capacity of national governments is false. Transnational production and financial industries and firms continue to be deeply embedded in certain strategic sites located in their

home national territories.

Plant Genetic Resources and Bio-Piracy

Most people who grew up in rural African societies, for instance, are practically familiar with the meaning and importance of plant genetic resources. Whenever you got ill, your parents would go into the nearby bushes to fetch some unique plant or root to be prepared and administered to you as cure for the illness. In many cases,



such traditional plant-based medicines worked more effectively than modern pharmaceutical drugs. Scientists have now confirmed that these folk plant and crop varieties do have certain genetic codes or DNAs that confer on them specific traits, such as cures for ailments; resistance to disease or pest infection; and food-nutrient and other agricultural use values. Today, as part of the consequences of globalization and privatization, an increasing number of multinational biotech corporations, based largely in developed countries, are financing expeditions across the developing world where most of these rare genetic resources are located. When these companies find the unusual plant and crop species, they are able to identify and isolate their DNA codes through genetic engineering techniques, on which they then claim intellectual property rights protection. Such a practice has been condemned as "bio-piracy" by a number of international non-governmental organizations, such as the Genetic Resources

Action International (GRAIN), arguing that while the technological expertise needed to manipulate these resources resides in the scientific laboratories of the industrialized world, it is through the traditional knowledge and practices of local farmers and villagers over centuries that they have been preserved. Therefore, if there are any intellectual property rights to be claimed in them, they should be given to the indigenous farmers who are their true discoverers and breeders.

A few examples from publications by the GRAIN, the ETC Group (a Canadian-based NGO), and Consultancy Africa Intelligence (CAI), will demonstrate these acts of bio-piracy. Local villagers in West Africa have for centuries used the *thamatin* plant protein as sweetener for food. This protein, which is the sweetest substance on

Earth (about one hundred thousand times sweeter than sugar), is also low-calorie, making it highly commercially valuable, as the market for low-calorie sweeteners grows in the US and other Northern countries. In 1993, a Korean pharmaceutical firm, Lucky Biotech Corporation, and the University of California received U.S. and international patents for genetically modifying the *thamatin* plant sweet protein, thus awarding these organizations effective monopoly over the use of the genetically engineered protein, the biotechnology technique used in creating it, as well as the gene sequences of the plant itself. Meanwhile, West African villagers, whose ancestors are the real discoverers and breeders of *thamatin*, have not shared in the good fortune of the plant. A second example is the case of *Endod*, commonly known as the African

soapberry plant. This perennial has been selected and cultivated for centuries in many parts of Africa, where its berries are used as laundry soap and shampoo. *Endod* is also used by rural communities in many African countries, such as Ethiopia, as intoxicant to trap and harvest edible fish. As far back as 1964, the biologist Aklilu Lemma discovered that *Endod* was an effective medicine against schistosomiasis, a tropical disease that causes some 200,000 deaths per year in the developing world. Although Dr. Lemma's discovery proved promising, attempts to support his research and make *Endod* available to African communities were persistently stalled during the 1970s and 80s, due to biases on the part of some individuals and organizations in the West, who find it difficult to accept that any good science can come from [that] part of the world. In the late 1990s, however, the University of Toledo applied for and received a U.S. patent on the use of *Endod* to control zebra mussels in the U.S, thus giving the University a 50% share of royalties on all future commercial products from *Endod*.

A more recent example involved the two plant species, *Pelargonium sidoides* and *Pelargonium reniforme*, which are widely used in traditional medicines in South Africa and Lesotho. In the early 2000s, Schwabe Pharmaceuticals (a German firm) used extracts from these species to produce a



natural medicine, marketed as "Umckaloabo", which is for treating respiratory tract infections such as colds and bronchitis. The European Patent Office (EPO) subsequently granted two patents to Schwabe on the Pelargonium species, allowing the company to monopolize both species and consequently make profits of about 80 million Euros in 2006 on related sales. Unfortunately for Schwabe, its patent rights were revoked last year, after the Eastern Cape community of Alicedale, represented by the African Centre for Biosafety (ACB) and with the support of South Africa's Traditional Healers Organisations, successfully challenged such rights, arguing that the Pelargonium species in question had been used by them for successive generations and therefore they were the rightful holders of the traditional knowledge of the medicinal value and extraction methods claimed by Schwabe.

Evolution of the Plant Genetic Resources Debate

It is within the above context of contradictory globalization and privatization that one must locate the evolution of the international debate and struggle over plant genetic resource rights. In a sense, such a debate has been inevitable, given the increasing pressure for globalization; the environmental, commercial and agricultural importance of these resources; and the technological disadvantages of the majority of developing countries where most of the resources are found. In a world where nations strive constantly to improve their economic standards of living, these resources are so important to be left unharnessed. Thus, countries with the technological advantage and those endowed with these resources must enter some forms of international understanding and arrangements whereby the resources can be utilized to the mutual benefit of all.

The international debate over genetic resource rights has evolved around what may be termed the multilateral approach, the national sovereignty position, and the private corporate agenda. The multilateral approach is embodied by the *International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* finalized in 2001 by member states of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). This classifies genetic resources as a "common heritage of humanity" and seeks to establish a "multilateral system" into which certain plant genetic resources will be pooled and managed for "benefit sharing". Its supporters, including governments and non-governmental organizations, believe that a multilateral system is better to have than the monopolistic Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO), which place private commercial and international trade interests over and above agriculture and local food security. It is believed that such a system will protect global plant genetic resources against the intellectual property rights claims of commercial interests.

In the late 1980s, the same governments that had begun the initial negotiations for the International Treaty also drafted the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Originally intended to be a framework for conserving biological resources in national parks and protected areas, the CBD gradually assumed the political discontents of some FAO member states, especially those from the developing world, which were dissatisfied with the idea of classifying genetic resources as a "common heritage" to be managed multilaterally. Thus when the CBD was finalized in 1992, it incorporated provisions reframing the status of genetic resources from a common heritage to "national sovereignty". The main argument of supporters of the

sovereignty position was that plant genetic resources, like other types of natural resources such as iron ore, oil and tropical timber, should be managed under the regulatory authorities of the individual governments of states within which they are found. Bringing their management under a multilateral authority is a circumvention of national sovereignty.

Consequently, for twenty years (1981-2001), FAO member countries tried to achieve an appropriate international treaty that would reflect the interests of all sides. In November 2001, the two most contentious issues that had been left unresolved in previous negotiations were finally addressed. These issues were: a) whether and to what extent the monopolistic WTO TRIPS rules should be applied to genetic resources accessed through the multilateral system; and b) how many plants and crops should be included in the common pool. On the first issue, the battle lines were drawn. Whereas private corporate interests advocated for the TRIPS rules to be applied, many non-governmental organizations opposed them, arguing that this would promote privatization and bio-piracy. Regrettably, the current compromise Treaty that emerged out of this process now contains a paragraph which allows for the patenting of seeds and other genetic materials held by the system, as long as such resources have been modified in some significant way.

As pointed out earlier, given the new international realities, a multilateral approach to managing global genetic resources is inevitable. Moreover, the national sovereignty position, depending on how one defines "national sovereignty", faces a double jeopardy. On the one hand, in subscribing to the existing multilateral framework, developing countries must surrender some level of national control over their biological resources. On the other hand, if a

country fails to join this framework and instead chooses to deal bilaterally with individual transnational corporations, under WTO TRIPS rules, private corporate control over these resources will intensify, thereby increasing the propensity toward bio-piracy. Either way, the national sovereignty position is bound to come under a tremendous stress.

The real challenge to the current Treaty is whether the powerful developed

countries (e.g. the United States and Australia), which have been adamantly opposed to any prohibition of intellectual property rights application, will allow a system that equitably benefits everyone. It is unlikely that this treaty, which is now in its 10 years, will effectively discourage commercialization and piracy of genetic resources. Already, the private corporate agenda has significantly won over both the multilateral and national sovereignty positions, as evidenced by the increasing

monopolization of patents on plant genetic resources and the biotechnological processes necessary for feeding the world's population - a fact that will be analyzed in a future article.

Moses Geepu Nah Tiepoh is a development economist. He teaches Economics and Methodology at Vanier College.

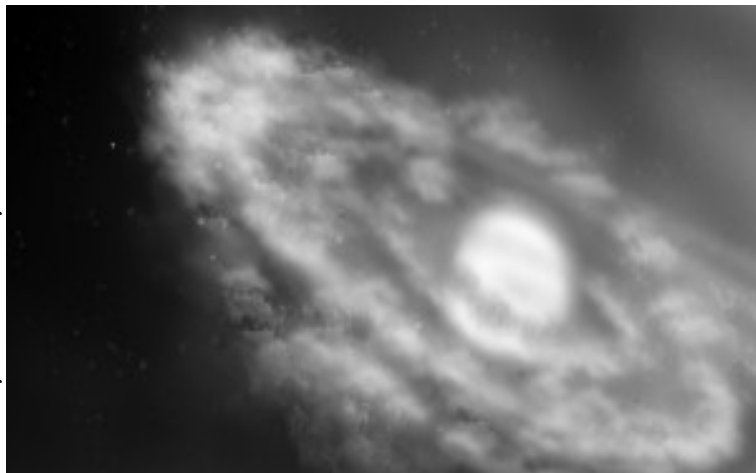
Tree of Life – Terrence Malick’s Film of Cosmic Proportions

Eric Durling

This film is big, really big. It's difficult to avoid such facile humour when discussing a film that gives you the formation of the universe and its ultimate disappearance while pausing to examine the life of one family in post-World-War-Two Waco, Texas. At the pre-release press screening I attended, it was interesting to hear the first impressions of critics in attendance. One was struck by the obvious, to him, autobiographical correspond-

ences of the film with director Terrence Malick's life. Indeed, one could interpret the film as a filmmaker coming to terms with his own childhood and family life, much like the Sean Penn incarnation of the protagonist does as an adult. Another critic was struck by the attention to detail in the reconstruction of 1950's America.

I personally could not prevent myself from immediately placing **Tree of Life** in the same category as Kubrick's **2001** and Tarkovsky's **Solaris**. All three examine human existence in the



context of our physical universe and metaphysical preoccupations. The difference between these two and Malick's film is that, whereas Kubrick and Tarkovsky ask questions, Malick appears to come to terms with an acceptance of cosmic mysteries while fashioning a very sincere emotive and spiritual response, complete with some of the most stunning visual imagery that you are likely to see (some of the images are actual pictures of planets provided by NASA).

What is a bit disarming, until you grow accustomed to it, is that the characters maintain a constant dialogue with God as well as each other. The basic premise of the film, explained by the mother in her first voice-over is that the nuns taught her that there are two ways to live life - the way of

nature and the way of grace. For the remainder of the film, we see her and one of her boys as the proponents of the way of grace, while Brad Pitt's husband character and the boy protagonist personify the way of nature until they too are touched by grace. After this, the universe winks out and we are left with a simple message: « If you don't love, your life goes by like a flash ».

Eric Durling is the VP Internal of the VCTA Executive. He teaches English.

An Affordable Dental Plan

Stephen Block

Concerns have been expressed about the fact that our new Dental Insurance program does not include coverage for crowns. There are a number of considerations therefore that need to be reviewed.

First, it should be understood that crowns are very expensive. The whole idea of the new plan was to keep it within manageable premium rates.

Our old plan, which was voluntary, cost about \$2,000 in yearly premiums. And we could not charge more than \$2,000 to it. The new plan is no longer voluntary. We voted to make it mandatory for everyone. The rationale for the support of the new plan was that it was relatively inexpensive. Depending upon which precise plan you are covered by, the premium costs are reduced by 50% or more. The idea then is to provide some basic coverage – for cleaning, some expensive periodontal work, x-rays and other

benefits, but not crowns. Now it is possible, that in the case of an accident, crowns would still be covered, but not by the dental plan. La Capitale should be contacted in such a case, to see if the Health Insurance plan covers it and the union will lend a hand to try to ensure the best outcome. But the point is, we should understand that this is a modest plan.

I committed to this plan because it is quite unusual for a union body of our size, meaning a teachers' federation, not to have a dental plan. It is an important benefit, both for families and individuals. Further, when we entered the CSN, it was my personal view that we needed to prepare ourselves to push for greater coverage of benefits in the pre-existing health and dental plans. We did try last year to improve the health plan, with partial success. But we have to understand the trade-offs: the other unions will likely con-

tinue to balk at increased coverage because they want to keep the costs down. This is the reality both of being in a large federation and of having an affordable plan. We can continue to push for the coverage of crowns and other benefits, but we have to understand that those who manage the plans will simply pass the costs back to us in the form of premium hikes.

It is fair to say that most teachers will benefit from the new plan as is and will likely at least break even over a period of time. That in itself is a considerable improvement over the previous options which were: a) not to have dental coverage at all or B) to accept onerous premiums so long as we remained in the old plan.

Stephen Block teaches Philosophy at Vanier College.

We've got a 0.93 % raise !

Some years ago, when the government was working on salary equity, cegep teachers argued that they were a job category with both men and women (catégorie mixte). Because of this, our work category has not been examined by the government yet. But during those years, elementary and high school teachers (mainly women workers) got a salary adjustment under pay equity and we didn't, since we are in the "catégorie mixte, to be considered later, under what is called salary relativity. Fneeq did some lobbying and the 0,93 % adjustment applied up to Echelon 17, is now applied to all of us to Echelon 20, while waiting for the examination of our situation under the salary relativity dossier.

If you received a pay cheque on August 4, the pay equity increase was included but teachers who worked after Dec 31st 2010 and are not currently working for the college have to ask for their money. So if you know someone in this situation, please help us and tell them to contact the VCTA .

Special Welcome to New Teachers!

VCTA New Teachers' Meeting
Sept. 21, 2011 at UB (12:30-2pm)

Board Room- F217

Come have lunch with us and learn about your rights and responsibilities as a cegep teacher.

Bring your questions!

RSVP with Sheree at 7411.

He came, He Saw, He Was Conquered

Ravi Raina

Alexander the Great, after subjugating King Darius of Persia and annexing the ancient empire of Cyrus the Great, set his sights on the eastern frontier of the then known world. Before the summer of 327 BC he had crossed the Hindu Kush mountain range on his way to India. He was perhaps one of the earliest conquerors to use the Khyber Pass on the North-western frontier of the country. His strategy was to lay the siege to the fabled Kingdom of Magadha in the east whose capital was Patliputra, the present day Patna. But before that he had to secure the western flank and face a very formidable foe in the person of King Porus. Alexander knew that Porus was no Darius and India was not for the taking. Darius had run away from the field of battle leaving his empire and his family at the mercy of Alexander, who showed mercy as the victor and in fact married one of Darius's daughters.

Alexander's war with India was unnecessary because he had no threat from there. I guess it was more his curiosity that forced him into the desire for war. Not content with the occupation of the Persian Empire, he was impelled, not merely by the desire of the conquest but also by the joy of scientific discovery to reach out beyond its limits to the furthest confines of the inhabited world. His teacher Aristotle said in his *Politics*, that if there is a man who in his ability and political capacity is incomparably superior to all others, such a man is 'as god among men', and added that 'against such there is no law, for they are a law unto themselves'. His father King Phillip of Macedonia had also commented that he regretted the world was not large enough to contain his son's ambitions.

Alexander never advanced without

having the area combed by his spies. After he crossed the Hindu Kush into the Indus valley there was the kingdom of Pauravar ruled by a strong king Porus on the eastern flank of the turbulent river Jhelum. It was the month of July. The waters rise during the frequent rainy days and the river becomes difficult to cross. There were two princes in



the area who were enemies of Porus and who saw an opportunity in the stature of Alexander to bring Porus down. These princes were named Chandergupta and Ambhi. Many of these kingdoms extended from the Indus River to the Jhelum.

Porus had a powerful army with many chariots and something that Alexander had never encountered in all his battles before and that was war trained elephants. Normally elephants are ferocious if attacked or aroused but once they are trained as a fighting force they are menacing on the field of battle. The other advantage that the elephants provide is that they can carry many men on their backs and because of their height they provided a tactical advantage to the fighters they are carry-

ing. They also make shrieking deafening noises on the battle field to wreak havoc on the psyche of the enemy.

Perhaps the most signal stroke of genius is to be seen in his last great battle on the Jhelum, when Alexander had to deal with the totally new problem presented by the huge elephant force of Porus. His strategy was to kill the mahouts controlling the elephants and create confusion in the minds of the animals. The elephants ran amuck and crushed their own men. There was a tremendous confusion in the rank and file of the Porus forces with the result that many of his generals abandoned the battle and ran away. There was another stroke of ill luck for Porus. It rained very hard during the battle with the result that the chariots could not move in the rain soaked mud. Porus's sons were first defeated and finally Porus was taken captive before Alexander.

'How should I treat you?' Alexander asked Porus

'Like a king treats a king' Porus replied.

It must have been an extraordinary sight, a giant of a man Porus standing nearly seven feet tall, arms and legs in chains, bruised but not bowed, facing a young Macedonian with fair skin, hazel blue eyes and a shock of golden curls.

Alexander was so impressed with the answer that he returned all the captured territory and restored Porus as the king of his state. The machinations of Chandergupta and Ambhi at the end proved to be futile,

This battle of Jhelum (Hydaspes) in 326 BC left both the kings crestfallen.

Porus lost both his sons while Alexander his most precious possession, his horse Buciphalus that had carried him all the way from Macedonia to India. Alexander had ridden Buciphalus into every one of his battles in Europe and Asia, so when it died he was grief stricken. He founded a city which he named Buckephalia, in his horse's name. It is said that Buciphalus was so concerned for the safety of his master that he took him out of many dangerous situations. In this battle the horse was mortally wounded and could not be saved. Buciphalus was originally a vicious and wild horse and it was only a youthful Alexander still in his teens who could tame him and thereby win his life long loyalty.

The battle also was a turning point in the expedition of Alexander in India. The prospect of facing fierce Indian warriors and the marauding elephants in future battles unnerved the resolve of Alexander's soldiers. The men longed to see their parents, their wives and children, their homeland. Alexander wanted to push on but his army and his generals did not share the same passion for this discovery. The only thoughts that were occupying their minds were those of the homeland and the families. Alexander's next goal was to reach the Ganges River which was 250 miles away because he thought it flowed into the outer ocean. Alexander was extremely disappointed but accepted their decision and persuaded them to travel south down the rivers Jhelum and Indus and reach the ocean on the southern edge of the world and then sail westward to Macedonia along the coastal line.

During his stay Alexander sought out Indian philosophers, the Brahmins, who were famous for their wisdom and austerity. The Brahmins, or Sanyasis as they are called, subsisted upon such fruits as they could find, on wild herbs and drank only water. They wandered about in the woods, and slept at night on pallets of the leaves of trees. One

such sage was called Dandamis. King Alexander, accordingly, when he heard of all this, was desirous of learning from the Brahmins and so he sent for this Dandamis, being their teacher.

Onesikratês was therefore dispatched to fetch him, and when he found the great sage he said, "Hail to thee, thou teacher of the Brahmins. The son of the mighty god Zeus, King Alexander, who is the sovereign lord of all men, asks you to go to him, and if you comply, he will reward you with great and splendid gifts, but if you refuse will cut off your head."

Dandamis heard Onesikrates with a gentle smile and then replied:

"God is the supreme righteousness, the ultimate abode, the great purifier and beyond birth and death. God abhors slaughter and instigates no wars. But Alexander is not God, since he must taste death and has left a trail of blood behind. As regards the gifts that he has promised, these are utterly useless to me. The earth supplies me with everything, even as a mother her child with milk. Should Alexander cut off my head, I will lose my life but he does not possess the weapons to destroy my soul for it is eternal. Let him then terrify with these threats those who hanker after gold and wealth, and who dread death, for against us these weapons are both alike powerless, since the Brahmins neither love gold nor fear death. Go, then, and tell Alexander this: 'Dandamis has no need of aught that is yours, and therefore will not go to you, but if you want anything from Dandamis come over to him.'"

Alexander, on receiving from Onesikratês a report of the interview, felt a stronger desire than ever to see Dandamis, who, though old and naked, was the only antagonist in whom he, the conqueror of many nations, had found more than his match. Alexander questioned the sage: "How do you believe in God without seeing him?" The sage laughed and told Alexander that

even though God can not be seen his presence can be felt just like a kite that has gone out of sight can be sensed by a pull on the thread. It was the start of a dialogue between the Lord of the material world and this venerable Sanyasi.

Alexander the Great himself was conquered by two outstanding men from India; one was King Porus, who stood in front of him regal even in defeat, and the other Dandamis, a world conqueror in his own right because he had conquered his own self.

Alexander died in Babylon on June 11, 323 BC, only three years after the famous battle with Porus on the banks of the Jhelum. In just two years after that Chandergupta defeated Seleucus, the Greek general from Alexander's army, and founded the legendary and fabled Maurya Empire in 321 BC and became the king of Takshila, the site of a famous university. He is regarded as the first unifier of India and its first genuine emperor. His descendant was Ashoka the Great, known also as Emperor of Emperors, the greatest King India has ever produced and one who played a critical role in helping make Buddhism a world religion. Chandragupta's advisor, Chanakya, who is the author of the famous treatise 'Arthashastra' is regarded as India's greatest diplomat. In fact the diplomatic enclave in New Delhi is named after him, called Chanakyaपुरी.

Alexander's death is shrouded in mystery. Was it death by poisoning or from malaria is a question of debate. He was one month short of his thirty third birth day.

"You will soon be dead and you will own just as much of this earth as will suffice to bury you," so had said the Indian sage Dandamis to the world conqueror Alexander the Great.

Crossing, I Wonder

Marcia Goldberg

How often have we city dwellers stepped with huge confidence on the rising escalators, lowered gaze glancing off steel strips staggered at quarter-inch intervals while steps unfold, shined steel plates flashing on left and right as the cement casement pulls up from sub-basement to the first landing, aware, I suppose, of the oil and electricity, thank heavens, functioning and the engineering squared into the heft and regulating regularities of plain access, dependable lifting of our well-clad and coated bodies to the upstairs, stained glass golds and tangerines catching light on the silver gully of the escalator stripped basically bare of ornament, simple sheets of steel resembling modern art, open, unframed “framing” of us coming through moving beams of more sun emerging from the innerds of the metro to brick inlaid landing and turnstiles with their poker/poles poised for our arrival our transceptal cross-tanglements beyond glass doors already washed at ten by window experts paid by the city and then onto the sidewalk and the curbed street where buses crawl up slowly because they are so long a single bus is a “pair” of buses with an accordion-like middle and then go away to start our morning with a sorbet-touch of light and fait and form to cleanse the psychic pallet.

Marcia Goldberg Teaches English at Vanier College.

Are you getting emails from the VCTA?

If not, you are not on our email list and may miss important announcements. One of the last emails to all teachers (you do not have to be a union member to get these emails) was sent on August 1. Please verify tht you recieved this email and if you did NOT, please send an email to vcta@vaniercollege.qc.ca asking to be put on the All Teachers list. If you change emails, it is important to keep us up to date!

In Memoriam: Sara Tooher

It is with great sorrow that the Physics Department shares the news of the passing of Sara Tooher on April 18th after a short battle with cancer. She was 36 years old.



Sara had a rich academic, professional and personal life.

She received a Master’s in aeronautical engineering from Concordia, and worked for the Canadian Space Agency. She maintained a role at the Canadian Space Agency since starting teaching Physics at Vanier in 2002.

Sara was a valued member of the Vanier Community. She was Science Access Program Coordinator, and Departmental Coordinator of the Physics Department. Sara loved to teach and her warmth and energy was recognized by everyone. Her deep commitment to her students was a quality that her colleagues admired and wished to emulate.

Sara is leaving behind her husband Alain and new-born daughter, Isabella. The baby, who was born on April 14th, is doing well.

Sara will be missed.

There will be a college wide memorial soon, and donations are being collected for support of the family

SuYi

Laura Pao

One is simple.

Two could be complicated.

It takes two to have a quarrel, doesn't it?
It takes two to make a pair - by choice or
by chance?

Two axes meet only at their inception.
Two paths leave one ponder at a crossroad.

Two could fall into a dichotomy.
Two could complement one another as a
set.

Like
The sun and the moon; day or night?
Sunrise and sunset; low tide or high tide?
East and West; tea or coffee?
Reward and punishment; pleasure or pain?

Or like
Neighbours and peers; friends or enemies?
Parent and child; love or hate?
Doctor and patient; to get well or to die?
Prosecutor and the accused; innocent or

found guilty?

We were enticed to play this game called
life.

Enjoy it or waste it?

We were told there is hope.
Let's have faith in it.

Inseparable; like
ying and yang,
water in the air,,
salt and pepper,
hands in gloves.

Indispensable; like
Chicken and egg;
Alice and the rabbit,
Beauty and the Beast;
Cinderella and the Step Mother.

We have learnt about
Adam and Eve,
Virgin Mary and Baby Jesus,
Crucifixion and resurrection,
heaven and hell;

with regard to

Who they were;

What roles they played;
Why we have Christmas and Easter; and
Where one may go in eternity.

Not until the moment when
things become formless;
time is timeless,
energy travels without speed, and
space is boundless;

where relationship is not scripted by
ideological hierarchy,
role expectation,
custom and tradition, and
inequality of opportunity, treatment and
result;

here we are
you and I,
pondering and
enfolded in the holiday spirit of Easter.

Laura Pao teaches Sociology at Vanier.

Less Than 3 years Seniority? Be Careful!

If you have under 3 years of seniority, you should be very careful not to turn down work since it could affect your rank on the priority list. According to clause (5-4:17), under 3 years seniority, a full time teacher has priority over a part time teacher, even if the part time teacher has more seniority. If you think that you might need a leave for a given semester, ask for a PD leave within the deadline (usually Oct 15 or March 15) and if you turn out to have a full workload that semester, you will get the leave. Then you sign a contract for the semester and take the leave, with your seniority accumulating. And of course, if you are on maternity leaves, your seniority continues to accumulate.

If you simply turn down the work and end up being part time for the year, and the next person on the list has a full time workload for the year, they will have priority for the hiring in the future and will get hired before you, even if you have more seniority.

Pour la CSN, c'est un battant qui disparaît

« Avec le décès de Jack Layton, c'est un battant qui disparaît aujourd'hui de la scène politique fédérale. Jack Layton aura été de toutes les tribunes pour défendre des idées de gauche, des idées de justice sociale. C'est avec conviction et militantisme qu'il a endossé son rôle de chef de parti en 2003 en prenant la tête du NPD au fédéral », de soutenir Louis Roy, président de la CSN.

Pour le président de la CSN, l'énergie et la combativité qu'a su démontrer le chef du NPD est tout à l'honneur de la charge publique qu'il a acceptée d'assumer pendant de longues années. « L'implication de Jack Layton dans la vie politique aura été et sera un modèle pour toutes celles et tous ceux qui souhaitent prendre part activement à la vie démocratique et faire progresser des débats. Tous le reconnaissent non seulement comme un homme de principes, mais aussi de terrain. »

VCTA HAPPY HOUR



Thursday Sept. 1, @ 16h00

Behind the E building

Music, Food, Refreshments, Camaraderie

Organized by The VCTA Happy Hour Committee

Please Join! help, ideas, and suggestions.