

CUPARUC

newsletter of the concordia university pensioners' association

bulletin de l'association des retraité-e-s de l'université Concordia



vol. 21, no 1, Apr, 2012

P RESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greeting to all our CUPARUC members. If you are like most of us, the recent, unusually warm weather put you in mind of our glorious Montreal summers and made our winter cares fade away. Well, it snowed today; after all, it's Montreal and we should neither be surprised nor lulled into thinking we can put away our winter boots and cautions. It's a bit like that with CUPARUC. For the most part, ever since Concordia's administration has been distracted by the ousting of President Woodsworth and its aftermath, it has been sunny weather with few threatening clouds hanging over our pension and benefit tomorrows.

But it is our job at CUPARUC to keep in mind a longer view, and to be ever watchful for threats to our pensions or benefits. A couple of years ago, the administration was beginning to propose a move to a "flex plan" benefits scheme. Our view at the time was that it would not be in the best interests of our members. All such matters have been absent from discussion since the big coup, but as the climate returns to a sense of normalcy, we hear rumblings that the flex plan proposals may come back again.

All of this is to say that it is in all of our interests to maintain a strong Association. To this end, I urge you to attend our General Meeting on April 26th, and to renew your memberships. A healthy membership puts us in a better position to present a strong front to the Administration when necessary. It allows us to accumulate a fund for obtaining timely legal advice when that is important. And good participation by the members means that you can be better informed about the state of the Association, and that you can have a say in our affairs.

So, come on down to Loyola to our General Meeting on the 26th. Hear updates on the pension and benefits committees and the state of CUPARUC. Let us maintain a strong Association together.

M essage du Président

Bienvenue à tous nos membres de CUPARUC. Comme la plupart entre nous, la météo des derniers jours vous a sûrement fait rêver de nos étés glorieux de Montréal. Cependant, il a neigé aujourd'hui; après tout, c'est bien Montréal ici et nous ne devrions pas être surpris par ces changements de température. Ce n'est pas le moment de serrer nos paletots et nos sabots. Ça passe un peu comme ça chez CUPARUC. Généralement, depuis la confusion engendrée par le départ subite de Judith Woodsworth et tout le tralala qui est survenu, le temps a été beau et sans nuages pour menacer l'avenir de nos pensions et nos avantages sociaux.

Mais, chez CUPARUC, nous devons regarder loin devant nous et demeurer toujours vigilants afin de protéger nos pensions et nos avantages sociaux. Voilà, il y a à peu près deux ans l'administration proposa un régime d'avantages flexibles. A notre point de vue à l'époque, un tel programme ne serait pas dans les meilleurs intérêts de nos membres. Depuis le grand coup de hache, l'administration a été muette à ce sujet, mais à mesure que ça tourne au normal, nous entendons des rumeurs que ce régime flexible pourrait être proposé de nouveau.

Tout ça pour dire qu'il est de l'intérêt de tous nos membres de soutenir une Association forte. A cette fin, je vous urge d'assister à notre Assemblée Générale le 26 avril et de renouveler votre adhésion à l'Association. Une Association forte en nombres nous donne plus de pouvoir quand il s'avère nécessaire de faire face à l'Administration. Cela nous permet également d'accumuler les fonds nécessaires afin d'obtenir des conseils juridiques quand ça devient important. Votre participation vous tiendra au courant de l'état des choses et vous donnera une voix dans les affaires de notre Association. Alors, rendez-vous à Loyola pour assister à l'Assemblée Générale le 26 du mois. Mettez-vous au courant de ce qui se passe aux comités de pension, d'avantages sociaux ainsi que de l'état de CUPARUC. Continuons ensemble de maintenir une Association forte.

SOCIAL EVENTS UPDATES

A group of twelve members attended the Centaur event on March 14th. We met for brunch at Stash's Cafe before the play. The play (The Game of Love and Chance) was absolutely wonderful.

For your information, the next play at the Centaur, 'Intimate Apparel' is playing from March 27th until April 29th, starring Quincy Armorer, our guest speaker from last November's general meeting. We won't be planning a group outing, but individual tickets can be purchased on the Centaur's website, <http://www.centaurtheatre.com> or by phone at (514) 288-3161.

See more information later on in the internet section of this newsletter on the upcoming event:

HISTORICAL TOUR OF MOUNT ROYAL CEMETERY

MAY 10, THURSDAY AT 10:00 AM

GUEST SPEAKER

No one can complain about our next guest speaker. But if they attend the session, chances are their complaint will be that much more effective.

The guest speaker will be Amy Fish. Amy has an MHSc in Health Administration from the University of Toronto. She is the Ombudsman for five health care organizations in the Montreal area including Maimonides Centre for Geriatric Care, the Miriam Home and CHSLD Bayview.

Amy speaks, teaches and writes about complaints. How to complain effectively. This is your chance to hone your skills in this area.

And don't complain to me about it.

ISLAND IN THE SUN



Just reading this title and the mind begins to wander... sunshine... sand... drinks with little umbrellas, bikinis and beautiful girls and a song comes to mind, please feel free to join in:

*"This is my island in the sun,
where I have toiled when my career began.
I see woman with bended knee,
sipping coffee under a maple tree.
As mornings came and the sun raised up high,
I was going to work and asked myself 'why'.
All my days I will sing in praise
of your beautiful women,
not your 'separate' ways..."*

My thanks to Harry B., for the inspiration. This song makes my point, and what a beauty this island is with almost 500 sq km, fifty km long and 16 km wide with its lush green foliage at certain times of the year. At its highest point, the island raises to about 233m above sea level. And the climate? Ah, we'll get to that later.

Not surprisingly there is a network of roads, probably dating back to colonial times, today neglected and decaying, and full of pot-holes or like they might say in the local patois 'trous de casserole'. The inhabitants are a diverse bunch, some of whom recall better days, others are still optimistic about reaching their unreachable dream. Some got stuck there, on the island, others have moved on.

A vibrant and misunderstood island for sure, but comparisons to others don't do it any justice. How about Aruba with 193 sq km, Barbados with 331, Antigua with 440, Hong Kong with 1092 or how about the bigger islands like Costa Rica with 3515 sq km. No, none of those measure up, they just don't have the climate.



Well, how about the climate? Humid with an average of 160 days of precipitation, also known as rain and an average temperature of just 10.9 degrees centigrade.

My recommendation, worth a visit, as long as you make it July. And this island, wait, let me check the tag on my bag from my last trip, oh merde, they tore off the name, but here is a code for the airport. It says "YUL".

alexS

IN DEFENCE OF FASCISM

You can call a person a Maoist. The response might be a giggle; but you can get away with it. You can even get away with Stalinist. But you can't call anybody a fascist any more. Not only will the person so addressed get angry, but so will most listeners or readers. Scholars (always a big help in these things) will raise the objection that fascism was unique, restricted to a time and place – and indefinable, anyway. But people don't listen to scholars (who don't talk to people, anyway). So there must be some other reason why fascism is a forbidden word..

When you say or write a word, people don't hear the meaning. They see. And what they see is an image. This can be very difficult because you may speak a word with an image in mind – but the listener hears it as something you did not mean at all. When I say conservative, for example, I mean someone who sees a society as an organic whole. Most listeners don't. Some see an image of a person who is wise and prudent with the tax-payers' money; and steeped in traditional values. Others are so perverse as to see an image of a corrupt puppet of big business.

This sort of problem has been on my mind lately because I write a daily blog called The Moncton Times and Transcript – Good and Bad. I started it because The Moncton Times is pretty bad, mixing propaganda and trivia to a degree I had never before seen in a newspaper. Like all the English dailies in New Brunswick it's owned by the multi-billionaire family which also employs some ten percent of the provincial workforce, backs a very far right wing think tank called Atlantic Institute of Market Studies, and is on almost erotic terms with the interchangeable Liberal and Conservative parties in the province. The influence (and fear of) Mr. Big reaches into every aspect of daily life from the office of the premier to the local Home and School meeting. (It's not different from Quebec. But, on this small scale, it's far more blatant.)

Just over a year ago, the multi-billionaire announced he was forming a conference which would plan the province's economic future. Most of those invited were

businessmen with a sprinkling of community leaders and the presidents of the universities. The latter two groups must well have understood that their role was to be decorative – rather like potted palms in the waiting room of a high class brothel.

Shortly after, there appeared a notice in the provincial newspapers that Mr. Big and his friends had formed a coalition with the government – in other words, they, without being elected or invited, were declaring themselves members of the government.

The premier, Mr. Alward, prostrated himself in ecstasy, and announced they would have official status with direct access to the Minister of Finance (a former employee of Mr. Big).

Meanwhile, oil companies (with Mr. Big a major player) have been drilling for shale gas for some ten years. That's a dangerous business with serious and poisonous risks for land, waters, the atmosphere, and people. For those ten years, the provincial government has had few regulations, none of them carrying any penalties. Police appear at drill sites only to protect drillers from angry residents.

Well, geegollywhiz, now, I look at that, at big business officially represented in government simply because it is big business, and it sure looks like Mussolini's brand of economic fascism.

But you can't say fascism. The image that comes up is so negative that you just aren't allowed to use it, even though that's the direction most of the developed world has been going in for decades.

I mean, isn't it time to rethink this? Shouldn't universities take the lead here? Shouldn't economists and historians, in particular, be taking the lead in recreating the image of the man who was prophet and founder of the new world economic and political order? Let's hear it – and, in the hearing, let's all see – an attractive image for Benito Mussolini and fascism.

Okay. I know it means taking a position. But almost any position is better than the traditional one of standing around with our faces hanging out.

Graeme Decarie

CUPARUC AWARDS

Each year our association participates in the scholarships and awards ceremonies. This year the recipients of the Concordia University Retired Faculty and Staff Scholarships and Awards are:

Undergraduate recipients:

- Anne Durning - Bachelor of Commerce (International Business)
- Nicolas Fiévet - Bachelor of Engineering (Electrical Engineering)
- Laura Hudspith - Bachelor of Fine Arts (Ceramics)
- Joseph Posel - Bachelor of Arts (Western Society & Culture, Psychology)

The year's graduate recipients are:

- Elian Angius - M.Eng Software Engineering
- Paul Fontaine - M.A. Journalism Studies
- Elena Korniakova - M.A. SIP (Fine Arts)
- Michal Popiel - M.A. Economics

Also a number of bursaries were awarded.



Mary Baldwin, Joseph Posel, Anne Durling, Bill Knitter

NEW MEMBERS

- Loni Cornax
- Sandra La Fontaine
- Anthony Synnott
- Cindy Canavan
- Ginette Laurin
- Margaret Ferley
- Tony Anvari
- Sybil Lewis
- William Taylor

CONDOLENCES - DECEASED MEMBERS

- Molly Petrie
- Alex Sproule
- John O'Brien
- Kurt Jonahsson
- Margaret Crosby
- Michael Von Grunau
- Maureen Schrotter
- Alice Duquet
- Austin Lee
- Gwendolyn Holden



NEXT MEETING

April 26, 2011 - LB-130, Loyola campus

Guest Speaker: Amy Fish, 'The Art of Complaining'

The CUPARUC Newsletter

Do not reproduce without permission.

The Association assumes no responsibilities for the statements or opinions of authors or articles

The Newsletter continues with the Internet only version from this point. We apologize to those not having access to this however, it is necessary to control printing and mailing costs

FUTURE SOCIAL EVENT

HISTORICAL TOUR OF MOUNT ROYAL CEMETERY

MAY 10, THURSDAY AT 10:00 AM

(Note: This is a change of dates from the original date of April 26. This was recommended by the tour guide. She felt that we would benefit more from the beautiful grounds if we came closer to Mother's Day when the blossoming is usually at its peak.)

We will meet at 10:00 at the North Gate of the cemetery for a walking tour, with explanation from an excellent guide, of the highlights of this park-like and historic cemetery. After the tour, we will go to lunch at 12:00 at a charming restaurant, la Petite Ardoise on Laurier.

Although the tour is free, a small donation to the tour guide for Friends of Mount Royal Cemetery will be much appreciated. This organization offers free activities to educate the public and promote the history and natural beauty of Mt. Royal. It raises money to maintain the cemetery's beautiful landscape and treasures of art and architecture.

If you, and any guests, plan to participate, you must email sanastass@gmail.com by Monday, April 30 at the latest. Please indicate your name and email, and:

[1] How many will you be for the cemetery tour?

[2] How many will you be for the restaurant?

Instructions for getting to the cemetery:

1297 Chemin de la Foret in Outremont (514-279-7358)

By metro: Exit at Edouard Montpetit. From Edouard Montpetit, walk a short block up the hill on Vincent d'Indy to Mount Royal Blvd. Turn left on Mount Royal Blvd. and continue until you see Chemin de la Foret on your right. Turn right on Chemin de la Foret and walk to #1297, the cemetery North Gate. (About a 10 minute walk)

By bus #11, across the street from the Mount Royal metro: Get off bus at the cemetery South Gate (on Camillien Houde – the road which goes through Mount Royal Park). Walk north through the cemetery road following a green line painted on the road, down the hill to the North Gate. (About a 10 minute walk)

By car: [1] Either follow the bus #11 instructions to the cemetery South Gate on Camillien Houde at the top of Mount Royal Park, enter, follow the green painted line, or

[2] follow Mount Royal Blvd. from Park Ave. until you see Chemin de la Foret on your left. Turn left on Chemin de la Foret to #1297, the cemetery North Gate.

Instructions for the restaurant:

La Petite Ardoise, 22 ave. Laurier (cross-street l'Esplanade – two blocks east of Park). 514-495-4961. (Possible detour- Park Ave. may be closed at Laurier for construction.)

CURAC/ARUCC CONFERENCE

The University of Victoria Retirees Association, in collaboration with the UBC Association of Professors Emeriti and the SFU Retirees Association, is hosting the 2012 College and University Retirees' Association of Canada (CURAC/ARUCC) annual conference and AGM in Victoria, BC. The dates are April 18 – 20, 2012.

The program, designed to appeal to both association activists and a broader audience of association members, includes sessions on best practices in association activities, pensions, regional CURAC/ARUCC groups, issues around communicating with the membership, CURAC/ARUCC input to the upcoming revision to the Canada Health Accord, how to keep fit without really trying, and options for seniors' living arrangements.

For more information see: www.curac.ca

T HE KINGDOM OF SWITZERLAND



Just came back from Switzerland recently, again. I'm not bragging, but who hasn't been there? One thing that struck me coming back was that many people don't know much about Switzerland, except of course for all the cliché stuff, like chocolates, cuckoo clocks, cheese, skiing and secret bank accounts.



Figure 1: Castle X - View of Lake Constance

Much has been written about Switzerland, all inadequate. So I am deciding I'll do it. I'll give it a shot. Ready class?

Let's get one of the most important things out of the way first. According to the Credit Suisse Research Institute, Switzerland was one of the richest countries in terms of average wealth per adult, at \$372,692, in 2010. If you can remember this minor detail and deal with it appropriately, you might be one step closer in understanding swissness.



Figure 3: One Swiss Big Mac or Cheeseburger Royale for 11.50 Swiss Franks or \$ 12.50. Bon appétit!

Another astonishing fact is that Switzerland counts about 600 castles (compare that to only about 119 McDonalds), yet Switzerland is a confederation, a federal republic! Always has been, since the year 1291.

Class, this begs for an immediate analysis: without royal 'guidance' for over 700 years yet showing the highest average wealth per adult. Hmm, very interesting!

How did this happen? The Swiss, or Helvetii, as they were known back then, were first noticed by Caesar, who battled them in 58 BC, when they tried to migrate to Gaul, due to an invasion by Germanic tribes from the north. The Helvetii had to move back and saw the Roman occupiers start important settlements, such as Basel, Zurich, Lausanne and Genève, and develop, in the year 47, the Great St. Bernard mountain pass. By 260 the Romans started to retreat from the region and the Allemanni, a Germanic tribe settled in.

Much later, during the High Middle Ages, Frederick I from the Hohenstaufen dynasty, better known as "Barbarossa", from the third crusade, where he drowned in Turkey while bathing in a river, having forgotten to take his armour off, got the ball rolling by granting independence to the Canton of Unterwalden in 1173, when most of those lands belonged to monasteries.

Later when the alpine passes like the St. Gotthard Pass became critically important for the trade routes, his grandson, Frederick II, Emperor of the Romans, King of Germany, King of Italy and Burgundy, King of Sicily and King of Jerusalem placed the Canton Schwyz under his direct control in 1240. The Canton Uri had obtained that status earlier in 1231. Frederick II was one of the most powerful Holy Roman Emperors of the middle ages. He spoke Latin, Sicilian, German, French, Greek and Arabic and was excommunicated by the papacy at least four times, once for not going on a crusade, then for going without the pope's approval. He resided mostly in Palermo, Sicily and did not care much about his northern possessions. That's why he was one of the last of the Hohenstaufen dynasty. Then the Habsburgs, another line of German kings took over and promptly increased taxes and curtailed the independence of the Swiss cantons. In 1291, after the first Habsburg king died, the cantons banded together to defend their independence.

Today, with no pension plans and make believe jobs for a royal clan, to burden their treasury, it looks like the Swiss have succeeded extremely well.

So you planed your trip, studied German with the Rosetta Stone method and are landing at the Zurich airport. You know that Switzerland has four official languages, German 65%, French 18%, Italian 10% and Romansch 0.5%.

What is their secret to managing four official languages?

Class, you heard it here first: They don't! Romansch, leftover from the Roman period, which is a sort of Vulgar Latin, is just there for confederation purposes. Only 0.5% of the population speak this language. Yet you can communicate with officials in Romansch (purple) but only if you are a native Romansch speaker! Then there is Italian (blue), spoken in the south east, that borders on Italy. This is the same Italian, as spoken in Italy. The French speaking Swiss (green) are a bit more complex, the language is the same as in Paris, except less sassy, but their affinity for Switzerland, for France or for independence changes based on their economic well being.

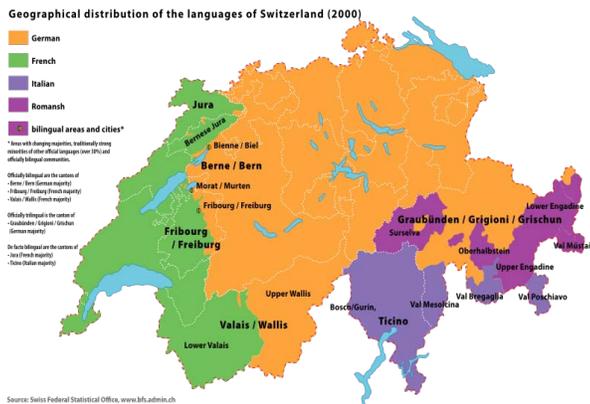


Figure 2: Distribution of languages in

Then there is German (orange). As you are getting off the plane, you notice that all your language training was for nought – you don't understand one word.

The Swiss speak an Allemannic dialect that is almost incomprehensible for non native speakers. Yet you check the Swiss newspapers on the news stand and find they are written in so called high-German, identical to newspapers in Germany! So, what's up with that?

This dialect is not a class or status thing, it does not reflect the social status of the speaker, it's universal. Everyone from the president of a company to the receptionist speak the same way. There are some geographic variations only discernible to the locals.

Luckily for the tourists, most Swiss speak English, in fact that's what they use when they encounter another Swiss person from a different language area. The Swiss are bi-lingual, one of their official languages plus English!

Class, did I mention money? Today, the Swiss are the odd man out in Europe, no E.Union. currency here, but the same old Swiss Frank, at about par with the Canadian dollar.

My advice, take lots of \$\$ with you, there are no specials for Seniors and no 'all you can eat' places, but you can enjoy the fresh air with the occasional overwhelming country aroma, priceless!

alexS.

CARP MEMBERSHIP

Want to join CARP (Canadian Association of Retired People)?

CARP is offering about a 1/3 reduction on membership to members of associations represented by CURAC (College and University Retiree Associations of Canada). That's you! If you are interested, find the form on our website (cupa.concordia.ca) and send it in by May 10, 2012.

If you cannot access the form on the web, write me at roger@rogerkenner.ca and I will send you a copy (in pdf format).

C ONCORDIA ALUMNI TRAVEL PROGRAM

Are you interested in travelling but don't know where to begin? Do you need advice on how to plan a trip so your interests match your expectations? If so, join us on our next adventure.

The Concordia Alumni Travel Program offers organized tours to interesting and exotic destinations, such as Italy, Russia, Ecuador and the Danube River. To learn more and register, visit:

www.concordia.ca/alumni-giving/alumni/connect-learn/travel

