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Focus on the Banks

With most banks once again declaring record profits as their first quarter ended, there has been an unusual level of attention directed to the fees they charge, and particularly their charges for use of automatic telling machines.

The level of criticism was so intense that the Conservative government of Canada felt compelled to look active. First, Finance Minister Jim Flaherty told the House of Commons that he had spoken to the banks in "fairly lively conversations", the content of which was undisclosed. Then he called a meeting with bank representatives. The consultation was held behind closed doors, so we do not know how congenial the atmosphere ac-

tually got. The Finance Minister appears to believe that the banks face heavy competition — from credit unions! — so he probably did more sympathizing than chiding.

Many of our readers may be old enough to remember the banks' big campaigns when the ATMs were being introduced. By handling our own transactions, we were told, we would reduce the costs faced by the banks (meaning that tellers' jobs would be gone) and keep our own charges down.

Now that the tellers are gone, and consumers are accustomed to using the ATMs, the banks have imposed serious fees. First, they charge an account fee for using "your own" bank's machine. Then they tack on a network access fee for using another bank's machine. Then they add on a \$1.50 convenience fee, recently imposed, just because you'll pay it and to prove how much competition they face. A single transaction using a machine with a big bank name on it can cost \$4.65.

If you use the other machines, so-called white-label ATMs, the cost of a transaction can climb to \$6.15. (These numbers came from the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada. On its web site the FCAC, says, "The Financial Consumer Agency of Canada (FCAC) is an independent body working to protect and inform consumers of financial services."

Then it adds, "We were es-

tablished in 2001 by the federal government to strengthen oversight of consumer issues and expand consumer education in the financial sector."

A banking industry representative, in a recent interview on CBC radio, pleaded the high cost of buying, installing and servicing the ATMs. That is the story told by the Canadian Bankers Association (CBA), which considers the whole operation to be "convenient, accessible and affordable", and refers to "intense competition in the market-place".

The opinion of Raymond

Protti, the CBA's Chief Executive Officer, is that all the concern is "typical NDP bank bashing". So there.

However, a report on practices in eleven countries, produced for the British Bankers' Association, said that Canadian banks have the highest "own bank" ATM charges and the fourth highest fees if some other bank's machine is used.

In spite of all the jaw-boning supposedly done by the Minister of Finance, there is no indication that the banks are about to reduce their fees.

--Sz

Questions about the Confession

In mid-March, the Pentagon released a transcript of a secret military hearing, held in Guantanamo, Cuba, in which Khalid Sheikh Mohammed purportedly confessed that he was the mastermind behind the attacks of September 11, 2001. In addition, he supposedly confessed to more than 30 other terror attacks or plots, some of which were not previously public knowledge.

Newspaper reports of the confession highlighted the September 11 events and Sheikh Mohammed's confession that he had personally beheaded *Wall Street Journal*

reporter Daniel Pearl in 2002.

However, the Pentagon had a problem. Sheikh Mohammed was claiming responsibility for crimes for which others had been judged guilty, and in at least one instance, sentenced to death. The US government found an interesting solution.

Almost all the press stories which trumpeted the confession also expressed some doubts about the truthfulness of that confession. The doubts were reportedly based on Sheikh Mohammed's personality, the claims being that he was an egoist who would exaggerate his role and importance in events.

Brilliant! The commercial press reported this "character flaw" with a straight face. Now the US administration will be able, with the cooperation of the press, to have us accept the general validity of the confession, while also telling us which parts to believe and which parts to reject.

Though many of the stories reported that Sheikh Mohammed indicated that earlier statements by him were made under torture, none suggested that the threat of further torture, or that other motives than

Check your label at left. Is it time to renew? Why not do it now?

egoism, could have generated the confession. Some of the press stories reported the hearing conditions, which give the prisoner no possibility of a successful defence, but few suggested that those conditions in any way tainted the result or any confession.

It is established knowledge that American authorities have tortured prisoners (including those held at Guantanamo) to elicit "information". It is established knowledge that these hearings are allowed to accept "information" elicited under torture. There was no report that US authorities challenged Sheikh Mohammed's claim, in his confession, that he had been tortured. Amnesty International is not the only observer to note that Sheikh Mohammed did not have the "usual legal safeguards". It is a fact that the only place Sheikh Mohammed was going after his hearing was back to his cell, so that more torture was not to be ruled out.

It may be that the US administration has been totally truthful about Sheikh Mohammed, and that the accusations against him are 100% accurate. Or not.

The problem with being a lying torturer, like the administration of President Bush, is that your truth becomes indistinguishable from your lies.

Perhaps the truth of this whole business will be revealed decades from now, if the record is ever declassified. Or perhaps the truth will never be known.

- W. Szczesny

Support for Proportional Representation

When the *Toronto Star* printed an editorial on February 23 favouring the current "first past the post" electoral system over some form of proportional representation which will probably be recommended by the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform, the result was a mass of mail opposing the paper's position.

The system in place, the "Star" wrote, "while not perfect, has served us well."

Reader Herb Wiseman, referring to several series of articles printed in the paper, responds, "Your paper has been documenting how the present system has not served the poor. It describes the environmental problems. It reports on the increasing problems in education and health care."

Mr. Wise concludes with an offer of swampland in Florida.

The best argument the "Star" saw for the status quo is that it leads to strong governments, while proportional representation leads to the "legislative chaos" of Israel and Italy.

Reader Derek Kraan, however, saw the many West European countries with proportional representation and stable coalitions. Real chaos was to be found in Ontario in the 1990s, which went from the "left-of-centre policies of the NDP" to the "right-of-centre policies of the Progressive Conservatives". With proportional representation, he writes, both of those parties, lacking a majority, would have had to work with others.

Arguing in the same direction was Roland Lindala-Haumont, who called the decision of the "Star" to oppose proportional representation

"bizarre" for a paper "that purports to represent the views of progressive Canadians."

A number of readers suggested that governments elected by proportional representation served "us" better.

Jeff Denis, for example, wrote that "countries with PR systems have more generous social programs, less poverty and higher voter turnout than those without."

Dennis Raphael pointed out that Scandinavia and the countries of continental Europe, with well established proportional representation, have better income and social security for citizens than does

(Continued on Page 3.)

In This Issue

"The Best AGM Ever" 9
Commentary 4
Editorial 4
The Fellow Traveller 11
Happy Birthday, Friends . 12
Join Us! 12
Joke Time 12
NC AUUC Considers
Major Projects 8
Poverty and
"Child Poverty" 4
Myron Shatulsky 2, 10
Sustaining Fund 12
Thunder Bay Brings
a Date9
Ukrainian News Briefs 5
Ukrainian Pages 6, 7
Welland Orchestra:
Moving Right Along 8
Who, What, When,
" 110, " 11at, " 11c11,
Where

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A Writer At War

A Writer at War, Vasily Grossman with the Red Army, 1941-1945, Vasily Grossman. Translated and edited by Antony Beevor and Luba Vinogradova. Alfred A. Knopf Toronto, 2006).



VASILY GROSSMAN

Vasily Grossman will be remembered primarily for his monumental novel Life and *Fate,* which vividly recreates the bravery and suffering of the Soviet people during the battle of Stalingrad, while developing characters representative of the various ranks and stations of Soviet society.

The recent publication of A Writer at War makes available in English some of the notes and diaries made by Grossman while a journalist covering the war on the front lines for Krasnaya Zvezda (Red Star), the daily newspaper of the Red Army. Thus they contain background material for Grossman's fiction, as well as creating a panoramic view of the German invasion and its impact on soldiers in the lower ranks and peasants living near the battlefields.

Grossman (1905-1964) was born in Berdichev, a town not far to the west of Kyiv. Ethnically he was an assimilationist Jew who, these notes disclose, thought the ultra-orthodox Jews brought problems on themselves through their own brand of racist separatism.

Berdichev at the time, fell victim to the Nazi slaughter of Jews in Ukraine in 1941.

He lived much of his adult life in Moscow as one of the Revolution's ardent supporters, whose faith was repeatedly tested.

In the mid-1920s Grossman was a university student of science in Moscow. Toward the end of the 1920s he began developing his writing career and, with the encouragement of a cousin who had influence in high places, became a member of the Writers' Un-

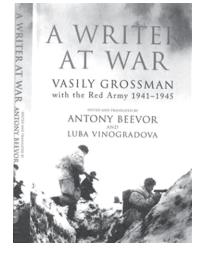
In the early 1930s, he worked as a chemical engineer with the coal mining industry of the Donbas area of eastern Ukraine.

According to his colleague and friend Ilya Ehrenburg, Grossman escaped the "terror" of the late 1930s mainly by luck.

The notes contained in this volume begin with the German invasion in the summer of 1941, and end with the USSR's triumphal entry into Berlin in 1945.

Travelling at the front, with a photographer, as an officer in the Red Army, Grossman sent dispatches to the newspaper's head office in Moscow, where he had an editor, David I. Ortenberg, who understood the literary value of the submissions.

However, Grossman's first dispatches, in the summer and fall of 1941, when the Germans were advancing across Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia to the doorsteps of Moscow, were not published. The generals were not well prepared and were often incompetent, due to the purge of military leaders recently completed, His mother, who lived in and there was general chaos,



making the whole picture terribly disheartening.

So the notes from that period are especially valuable.

Because Grossman began reporting on the central front in Belarus and northern Ukraine in August, 1941, he was not able to cover the German invasion of Ukraine through Kyiv, so we do not learn much about Ukrainian military defections or Ukrainian collaboration with the Na-

When Grossman joined the divisions on the southern front later, he noted that "thousands" of Ukrainian refugees were moving east with the armies to escape the Germans, and that the Ukrainian soldiers in the Red Army fought as bravely as anyone.

On his way back through Ukraine in 1943-1944, he found evidence of significant Ukrainian collaboration. This was an embarrassment to the Soviet government and a forbidden topic in journalism.

Soviet resistance stiffened as the armies approached Stalingrad, and the unusually cold winter took its toll on the German forces. Grossman became fascinated with the courage displayed by the Soviet soldiers. The general public, and the soldiers themselves, loved his articles, while Ortenberg gave him the freedom to begin work on stories, novels, and plays.

Grossman's general reputation grew during the war and beyond, and reached its peak at about 1952.

As Grossman himself saw it, his primary obligation was to the USSR and the war effort, and his specific duty as a soldier was to be a journalist of the first rank. One time Ortenberg asked Grossman him why he had not written about the brave Soviet defence of a specific installation. Grossman replied that he didn't write about the defence because there was no defence. Ortenburg apparently accepted the explanation.

On another occasion Ortenberg asked Grossman for a story on Stalin's "Not One Step Back" order, issued during the Soviet retreat. This order, similar to one issued by Hitler for his troops earlier, forbade retreat or surrender. Stalin directed that retreating soldiers are to be considered "traitors to the Motherland", and summarily shot.

The deadly results of this battlefield strategy were already known. By refusing to retreat, an entire division could be quickly encircled and destroyed.

Grossman steadfastly refused to write about Stalin's order, even though Ortenberg was his boss and military superior. Grossman probably thought that not even his gifted pen could transform this cruel order into a morale booster.

Meanwhile, Grossman's reporting helped solidify Soviet feelings of national pride. He wrote in his notes that in the battle against the Fascist invaders it did not matter whether Soviet citizens were Russian, Ukrainian, or Jewish; they were all as one in the struggle. He wrote that what he saw before him was the Workers International taken to the battlefield.

The sad thing is that in the late period of the war, and after the war, his grand vision was to fall to pieces, and he was to come to disillusionment and despair.

When he followed the retreating German army back through Ukraine after the Soviets had stopped the Germans at Stalingrad, he wrote that he found no Jews in Ukraine at all.

This sounds as if it must have been an exaggeration, and sometimes Grossman's estimates on the number of casualties were indeed necessarily hasty and inaccurate. His later study showed that in Berdichev, for example, a centre of Jewish culture, where somewhere between 20,000 and 40,000 Jews lived before the war, perhaps as many as 15 Jews and no more survived after the Germans attempted to wipe out remaining Jews before leaving the town.

In Berdichev, Grossman confirmed what he had thought for several years that his own mother had been murdered.

He was on the front lines with the Red Army when they came to the Treblinka death camp in Poland, which he found had been manned and operated by Ukrainian militia under the direction of the SS. The camp had recently been rendered to ashes by the retreating Germans.

Here, the editors of AWriter at War provide long segments from Grossman's essay "The Hell of Treblinka", departing from their usual practice of publishing notes and short paragraphs from published submissions.

This was a remarkable piece of investigative reporting. Working in 1944, Grossman interviewed people who had escaped the death camp and were hiding out in the forest, as well as peasants living in the area. From these interviews he pieced together a

horribly compelling account of the daily operations of the camp at its peak in 1942 and 1943, a report which was published in a Soviet periodical and later used as evidence at the Nuremberg trials.

For Grossman the victory over the Fascists was a victory won by the ordinary soldier and the ordinary civilian, not by Stalin or the Party leadership. This spin on the war is like that of his literary hero Leo Tolstoy, whose War and Peace Grossman carried with him as his only reading on the front. For Grossman, as for Tolstoy, history is driven by ordinary people.

During the period of Operation Barbarossa, when the Germans were ravaging the countryside on their push eastward, Grossman made two visits to Tolstoy's estate, to add colour and poignancy to his writing, as well as to renew his own spirit.

In Life and Fate, Stalin is mentioned only once, and that one time is in connection with one of his infamous late night phone calls.

Life and Fate, with its balanced and not always complimentary view of Soviet society, is a work that has won major international acclaim. The novel is not historically accurate in every detail, but it is "true" to the spirit of the war, and it develops the idea that the deep sacrifices of the Soviet people are justified by the humane values and love of freedom which the Fascists endangered.

The novel fulfilled Grossman's commitment to memorialize the bravery and the sacrifice.

His family reports that even when Grossman was having trouble with the Stalinist authorities in the Cold War years, at home he gathered the family together to sing again the patriotic songs of the

He loved his country, or perhaps longed to love it. Grossman believed that the Soviet people transcended Stalin, and he never lost his faith in them, nor in the humanistic values which he thought were as much indigenous to his country as they were Western.

However, his humanistic vision was, in the end, too allencompassing for the Soviet authorities. He was accused of "cosmopolitanism", and his unpublished manuscript was seized by the police.

Grossman wrote his fiction about what he knew best. A Writer at War takes the reader intimately into the experiences of Grossman himself, and the people he interviewed, and so deepens our understanding of the war, Soviet society, and Grossman's art.

The book is due to come out in paperback this spring.

- Brent Stearns

Proportional Representation

(Continued from Page 1.) Canada, and low poverty rates. Mr. Raphael thinks that is because proportional representation "produces governments that are more responsive to citizen needs and more likely to stand up to business interests."

The "Toronto Star" cites the fact that no party has won more than 50% of the vote in an Ontario election since 1937 as evidence of the benefits of first-past-the-post. Many "Star" readers did not agree.

The previously quoted Herb Wise asked "How does a system serve us well when more than half the voters in every

election vote for a party other than the one that wins?"

Jeff Denis, again, pointed out that "Many citizens don't vote at all because they feel that if they don't support the Tories or Liberals, they are wasting their votes."

June Macdonald expressed, referring to women and visible minorities, that proportional representation "may be the only thing that will appreciably help minorities gain a voice in our legislatures."

There was a technical error in the "Star" story. BC voters rejected a proposed single transferable vote system, which is not PR.

UKRAINIAN CANADIAN

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Dangers of Cost Cutting

An Editorial by Wilfred Szczesny

We are still reaping the familiar "benefits" brought to us by the governments which engaged in cost cutting as a way to finance tax cuts for the rich. We are also having additional dangers being brought to our attention as the cost cutting continues.

For example, Virgil Moshansky, the judge whose inquiry into an air crash in Dryden led to changes in aviation safety regulations almost twenty years ago, recently told the Transportation Committee of the House of Commons that funding cuts at Transport Canada pose the danger of an aviation tragedy. Transport Canada is moving toward giving air carriers responsibility for regulating safety in the aviation industry. Apparently Mr. Moshansky does not trust the new Safety Management System, unless there is strong governmental oversight. I second that.

The continuing underfunding of schools in Ontario is leading to concerns that adequate supervision is not being provided to ensure the safety of pupils and the security of the buildings. Recently Blair Hilts, President of the Ontario Principals' Council, expressed the fear that, "Instructional time is being lost, safety is being jeopardized and morale in the schools is being negatively affected." This at a time when there are increased pressures for greater vigilance in the schools.

Inadequate funding for legal aid programs, at a time of growing costs of legal action, means that many people in Canada are acting as their own lawyers, or abandoning the search for justice because of the cost. The result is a tipping of the balance of justice to the benefit of those with the means to pay heavy legal bills.

Underfunding in the health field is contributing to conditions creating the danger of a shortage of qualified doctors. This is in addition to the many other problems in the field of health care. Many critics suspect that the crisis situation in health care has been deliberately created to generate pressure for privatization. It's hard to argue against that view, in light of the changes in the last couple of decades.

Though the cost-cutters would rather put people into prisons than into schools or community centres, there are apparently funding shortages in this area as well. Again the motivation is to justify and encourage privatization.

Actually, "cost cutters" would seem to be a synonym for "privateers" in the realm of government. As the Conservative Party of Canada has shown in government, spending is fine, as long as it goes to buying votes, or contributes to the top 1% getting richer even faster in true neo-conservative fashion.

COMMENTARY

Poverty and "Child Poverty"

We still have people writing and talking about child poverty as though it were somehow distinct from general poverty, and about the elimination of child poverty as though it could be done without the elimination of general poverty. That kind of thinking is why governments in Canada can give to the children with one hand and take from the parents with the other, while leaving families (and the children in them) in deeper need every year.

A recent example is the family of Cheryl Patterson, as reported in the *Toronto Star*.

When Ms. Patterson's exhusband and the father of her two children died, the children were entitled to Canada Pension Plan survivor benefits. Ms. Patterson received a \$2800.00 retroactive payment on behalf of the children, who are also eligible for additional payments of \$400.92 monthly.

The family had been living on \$800.00 a month. Ms. Patterson worked part time and received welfare. She is unable to work full time because of her own, and her children's, health problems.

Now Ms. Patterson has been ordered to pay Ontario Works \$2121.37 out of the \$2800.00 CPP payment and has been ruled ineligible for further welfare assistance.

Previously Ontario Works, a welfare program had been clawing back national child benefit payments of \$242.00 monthly from the Patterson family income.

That is the sort of give and take governments impose on this country's poorest people. While paying lip service to eliminating poverty, they work to ensure that poverty spreads and deepens. Liberal governments and Conservative governments, at the federal and at the provincial levels, are both guilty.

In addition to keeping people poor by playing sleight-of-hand games, governments in Canada are outright stealing from working people, and particularly working people in need. An example is the employment insurance program.

At one time, this was called unemployment insurance, and

provided some income to workers who has lost their jobs. Now the program has a surplus of \$51 billion, providing an income of over \$2 billion annually to the government, while most unemployed workers (over 75% of them) do not qualify for benefits.

There are those who advocate cutting premiums to levels required to provide benefits. This would slightly benefit workers with jobs, and greatly benefit corporations with large payrolls, but would do nothing for the unemployed. More children would be kept out of poverty by restoring the program benefits to what they were before the program-cutting corporate agenda dictated impoverishing the unemployed and their families.

As he slashed social programs and corporate taxes, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney declared that the best social program was a job. Then he and his corporate supporters set out to degrade the value of jobs and increase the cost of goods and services.

Measures in the sense of degrading jobs included (and this is not an exhaustive list) leaving minimum wage levels unchanged while cost of living rose, reducing inspection of work places so that many workers got less than minimum wage, contracting out jobs held by unionized workers, making it more difficult to unionize a work site, replacing full-time jobs with part-time work, changing the social security net to discourage workers leaving even terrible working conditions.

Measures in the direction of increasing the cost of goods and services included (again, this is far from a complete list) direct increases in the charges for certain licences and permits, imposition of user fees and charges for previously "free" services, delisting certain health services and drugs so that consumers had to pay for them, forcing municipalities to charge more for services by downloading responsibilities without providing adequate funding, privatizing some utilities and incorporating others while allowing them to charge debt-reduction fees on governmentally created debts.

The result of the actions of the Mulroney government, and the continuation in the same direction by its Liberal successors, along with provincial governments like that of Mike Harris and the talk-big-donothing likes (at least to this date) of Dalton McGuinty, is that the gap between rich and poor has become a growing chasm, with the poor increasingly desperate and the working poor indistinguishable from people on welfare.

In a recent study released by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 70% of Canadian children living in poverty had at least one employed parent. The study also indicated that Canada ranked 19th out of the 21 countries in the study in its spending on family benefits and social services.

In a recent article in the *Toronto Star*, Linda McQuaig notes that, "At the very heart of conservative economic philosophy is the theory that if we unleash market forces — cut back government interventions in the form of taxes and social supports — the economy will grow vigorously and we'll all benefit.

"Now that we've experimented with this for two decades, we can see that the theory is at best only partly true. The economy has grown vigorously. But only the rich have benefited."

Ms. McQuaig cites Neil Brooks, a professor of tax law, who says that "the top one per cent of income earners have increased their share of national income substantially, from 7.5 per cent during the post-war decades to 13.6 per cent in the neo-conservative era — a level of inequality not seen in Canada for about a century.

In spite of the rapidly growing level of inequality revealed by Statistics Canada data, with the bottom 40% of Canadians worse off than 30 years ago, the "Tax-cut mantra (which is) music to (the) ears of the wealthy", writes McQuaig, is still the focus of budget debates.

— W. Szczesny

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Ukrainian News Briefs Selected by George Borusiewich

Bad Cop, Bad Cop.

According to a research report by Gorshenin's Institute of Management in Kyiv, 51.7% of Ukrainians believe that the most corrupt people in Ukraine are the police. In second place are the courts, as rated by 49.4% of the Ukrainians polled. The Prosecutor's Office takes third place with 39.9%. Fourth place is nailed down by the . Verkhovna Rada (parliament) at 38.5%. The Customs Office is next at 36.7%, followed by local governments — 35.5%, and the federal government — 31.4%.

The list goes on. After reading the report, the question arises: "Is there anyone left to trust?"

Good Cop — Bad Cop

According to the latest polls, 26% of Ukrainians would vote for Viktor Yanukovich (present Ukrainian Prime Minister) if he ran for president.

Orange Revolution coleader Yulia Tymoshenko would get the vote of 16.5% of the Ukrainian people.

Orange Revolution coleader Viktor Yushchenko would be the choice for president of 11% of Ukrainians (Viktor Yushchenko is presently president of Ukraine).

In another poll by a different polling organization, 63.8% of Ukrainians disapprove of Viktor Yushchenko's performance as president, while only 23.3% approve.

Taras H. Shevchenko

President Viktor Yushchenko attended a ceremony last month at the National Opera and Ballet Theatre to honour this year's nine winners of the Shevchenko Prize.

In his speech, the President said that millions of Ukrainians saw Taras H. Shevchenko as their spiritual guide in times of hardship. He said that Ukraine must formulate a national strategy to emerge as a potent and confident nation.

He went on to say that it was important to start preparing for Shevchenko's bicentenary birthday, which will be marked in 2014, and suggested publishing a collection of his works, opening a new museum, and erecting his monuments in the world's capitals.

"Shevchenko's presence in the world is the presence of Ukraine, its spirit and idea," he stated. "As Ukraine's President, I resolutely condemn any deliberate demonstration of disrespect towards the name of Shevchenko."

He then specifically asked the government of Canada to investigate a recent attack by vandals on the poet's monument in Toronto, Canada.

Torah Scrolls

Recently, amid allegations of improper treatment of the scrolls, the Zhytomyr Jewish community was forced to return ten *Torahs* confiscated by Bolsheviks decades ago and lent to the community two years ago by the local state archives.

A leading Christian Orthodox cleric in Ukraine has demanded that the state return confiscated *Torah* scrolls to the Jewish community. (*Torah* scrolls contain the five books of Moses and are read each Shabbat, or Saturday.)

Archbishop Yuri of Donetsk and Mariupol recently called on Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko, Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich, and regional authorities in the city of Zhytomyr to ensure the return of the scrolls to their original owners.

In his statement, a rare public show of solidarity with Jews by a leading Orthodox Christian cleric, the archbishop said the situation was sensitive to every believer.

"Brothers, know that you are not alone; we are together with you," he wrote.

Klitschko Brothers

Ukraine's Klitschko brothers, Vitali and Wladimir, are world famous.

Not only have they both been world heavyweight boxing champions in the recent past, but they both have earned university doctoral degrees as well, and both are accomplished linguists, each having mastered several languages.

In addition, both have been tireless in promoting the goals of UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization).

Now, they have added another feather to their caps — The Golden Camera award. This is the most famous media award in Europe.

The citation reads, "For their dedicated work in and out of the ring, the Klitschko brothers have received The Golden Camera."

Both brothers were in attendance to accept the coveted award at a gala ceremony in Berlin, Germany. The popular, well-respected role models were honoured not only for their success in boxing, but also for their support of, and

involvement in, the democratic movement in their native Ukraine.

Said Wladimir, "This kind of award will only make us work harder with UNESCO and the 'Children in Need' program in which we are deeply involved".

Others honoured this year with The Golden Camera were Tina Turner, Bryan Adams, Roger Federer, Dustin Hoffman, Goldie Hawn, Bruce Willis, and Jerry Lewis. All were in attendance in Berlin.

Protecting Children

Last month, Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko chaired a meeting aimed at improving child protection in Ukraine.

Titled "With Love and Care for Children", the meeting was held in Zhytomyr and was attended by mayors, ministers, governors, social workers, and church leaders.

In November, 2005, President Yushchenko issued a decree to declare 2006 a year for the protection of children's rights. At last month's gathering, the successes and failures of his program were reviewed

As successes, he pointed to the fact that the number of adopted children increased by 300% last year and that the number of family orphanages grew by 40%. He also reported that more babies had been born in 2006 than in 2005.

As failures, he reported that 64% of Ukrainian families raising more than 3 children still lived in poverty. He added that Ukraine still suffered from the relatively-high infant mortality rate of 11.5% and said that it was vital to reform the national healthcare system to resolve the problem.

To sum up, the President called on all those present to be "very serious about decisions they are going to make during the meeting," and asked them to cooperate to fulfil them.

"The aim of this meeting, the third such meeting in the past two years, is to strike the bell to remind our society of this problem," he concluded.

No Booze

The Minister for Family, Youth, and Sport has called upon the mass media to refrain from the advertising of alcohol and tobacco products during sport programs.

At a recent press conference, Viktor Korzh stated further, "It is a pity that TV and radio channels broadcast (such) advertising." He also

called the manufacturers of alcohol and tobacco "irresponsible".

He closed by pointing out that "none of the producers of alcohol production has any support program for Ukrainian sport".

The Muslims Are Coming

According to some statistics, Muslims make up just 4% of the population of Ukraine. However, that statistic may be changing — fast!

When the Germans attacked Ukraine in 1941 and invaded Crimea, many Crimean Tatars welcomed the Nazi invaders and collaborated with them. In 1944, when the Soviet Red Army liberated Crimea, the bulk of the Crimean Tatars were sent into internal exile in Siberia and other parts of the Soviet Union (much as the Canadian Government did to Japanese-Canadians in 1941).

Now the Tatars, who are Muslims, are going back home.

"Today it's estimated that more than 250,000 Crimean Tatars are moving back to Crimea and those villages and little towns are growing rapidly. They're building mosques," said Sergey Rakhuba of Next Generation Christians, a Christian Evangelist group. According to Mr. Rakhuba, his church has recently held a conference in Crimea to encourage their "believers" to "take the Gospel to the Crimean Tatars". Next Generation Christians have already been building bridges to their Tatar neighbours. Through evangelistic summer day camps in rural villages, Sunday school ministries, and special events, these Christians are "reaching out" to Muslim families. Fear is the difficult obstacle for "believers" reaching into the Muslim culture. Says Mr. Rakhuba, "Some Muslims are radical. In the Northern Caucuses we have to be very careful because it's very dangerous for our missionaries."

Seven Billionaires

After only 15 years of capitalism\independence, Ukraine has 7 *billionaires*. According to *Forbes*, the American magazine which compiled the list, that is an increase of 4 from last year.

(The magazine did not tabulate the number of Ukrainians who have become poorer in the last 15 years.)

The richest Ukrainian is a 40-year-old businessman named Rinat Akhmetov. He is worth US\$4 billion and is the 214th richest man in the

world

Assuming that he was not a billionaire (and probably not even a millionaire) during the days of Soviet Ukraine, it must mean that he amassed (after all expenses) an average of \$250 million each year in the past 15 years.

Press Freedom Worse

Press freedom is rapidly declining in Ukraine, says a new study by Reporters Without Borders, a French nongovernmental organization (NGO).

The report indicates that press freedom in Ukraine has gotten worse over the last year, calling into question the democracy credentials of President Viktor Yushchenko and his failed "Orange Revolution". The study points to a dramatically worsening situation as Yushchenko's Western allies look the other way.

As if in confirmation of the French NGO's report, the Institute of Mass Information, a Ukrainian NGO, also noted a decline in press freedom. According to the Ukrainian group, "Press freedom has gotten worse.... There has also been a rise in censorship, political and economic pressure, and lawsuits against journalists."

Potatoes, Cheese, and Vodka

A former shepherd, apparently the world's oldest living person, celebrated his 116th birthday recently by drinking a glass of champagne.

According to his passport, Hryhory Nestor was born in what is now Ukraine on March 15, 1891. At the time, his home region belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, only to become part of Poland after World War One. In 1939, the territory became part of Ukraine, and has remained so since.

Hryhory attributes his long life to the fact that he has never married, saying that being single has kept him feeling young. He also recommends a diet of potatoes, cheese and milk, with an occasional shot of vodka.

Reviewing his long life, he recalled that life was best 100 years ago, when the region was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

It was only at the age of 100 that he retired from working as a farm labourer.

Dozens of well-wishers crowded into the modest twostory house in Stariy Yarchiv (near Lviv) that Nestor shares with the family of his late sister's granddaughter.

US Star Wars

The United States should have consulted Ukraine and Russia over its plans to establish a missile defense system in Eastern Europe, states Ukrainian Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich.

"The stationing issues should have been discussed with everyone in advance, including Ukraine and Russia," Yanukovich told *Handels-blatt*, a German business daily.

"Only once there has been a comprehensive European debate, a dialogue between Western and Eastern Europe, should such a decision be made," he said. "Europe must not be split again like it was before the Iraq war."

Yanukovich said that Poland's support for the American plan "did not help" bilateral ties between Warsaw and Kyiv.

Stressing that Ukraine aimed to join the European Union, he said Europe needed to have good relations with Russia, and that Kyiv wanted to act as a bridge between the two sides.

Ukrainian
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NC AUUC Considers Major Projects

the Association of United Ukrainian Canadians met in Winnipeg on February 9-11, 2007, to consider several major projects as well as a number of more routine items.

One of the largest projects currently under preparation is the 43rd AUUC National Convention, scheduled to take place in Winnipeg on the Thanksgiving weekend in October, this year. In addition to the usual preparations which have to be made, this time there is the major task of achieving a substantial amendment of the AUUC constitu-

An effort to amend the constitution was made during the 42nd convention, but ran out of time as delegates became mired in details. This time, the intent is to do enough preparation in advance that the convention will be able to proceed

The National Committee of to voting on the document with limited discussion at the national meeting. The National Committee has devoted a lot of time to considering proposed amendments, and is on the verge of publishing the proposed new edition.

To expedite discussion by members at AUUC Branch meetings, the National Committee has directed that John Horstman, Chair of the Constitution Committee and the person most familiar with the proposed changes, visit every AUUC Branch to participate in local deliberations.

Reporting on behalf of the National Convention Planning Committee, Kathy Schubert reported that such measures as reserving the convention hall and reserving a block of hotel rooms had been done, and others would be undertaken soon. The committee drew attention to some planning tasks created by the structure of AUUC leadership and the specific features of the AUUC in Winnipeg.

Another major project considered by the National Committee was the celebration in 2008 of the 90th anniversary of the AUUC. The 90th anniversary Celebration Committee presented a proposal for the celebration, and the National Committee augmented the program.

It was proposed that the celebration be initiated at the National Convention.

It was also agreed that the Ukrainian Canadian Herald play a leading role in publicizing and promoting the anniversary. To this end, the Editorial Board will develop a publishing plan, starting with the convention and ending with 2008, for multifaceted reflection of this AUUC milestone.

The National Committee considered a proposal from the National Performing Arts Committee that the successful National Dance Instructors Seminar held at Sylvan Lake last year be repeated. The proposals required further development, but the National Committee was of a mind to view this project positively, based on the positive evaluations of last year's seminar.

The National Committee has devoted no little time to the Vancouver renovation project, and particularly the substantial financial commitment embodied in that project. A time-line for national assistance to this task was considered and tentatively approved. A fundraising campaign and other measures to generate financing received expressions of strong support.

Vancouver AUUC Branch anticipates that paying for the renovations will require an effort spanning several years.

At this meeting, the National Committee once again considered the situation in the AUUC in Edmonton, where relationships have been growing increasingly strained since the eve of the 41st AUUC National Convention, held in Edmonton in 2001. This meeting of the National Committee heard that, at the request of almost 110 Edmonton members, the National Executive Committee had agreed to the establishment of a second Edmonton AUUC Branch. The national leadership is hopeful that this step will reduce the danger of membership loss, allow the two groups to pursue their preferred activities, and encourage higher levels of AUUC activity in that city.

Members of the National Committee, which was meeting for the first time since the theft of the Shevchenko statue from Taras Shevchenko Memorial Park in Oakville, Ontario, were deeply moved by the loss of this national treasure. In their discussion, they paid close attention to the significance of that loss.

In recognition of the difficult and trying circumstances faced by the Museum Board, the National Committee passed a motion "That the National President attend the

(Continued on Page 12.)

Welland Orchestra: Moving Right Along

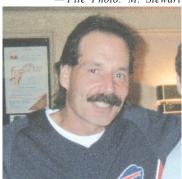
The Welland Ukrainian Mandolin Orchestra (AUUC) continued to maintain a hectic pace in February and March.

For years, perhaps decades, the Welland Ukrainian Mandolin Orchestra (AUUC) rehearsed on Mondays. Quite recently, for several reasons, rehearsals were moved to Thursday. One of the reasons was that a Thursday rehearsal would be closer to any weekend performance.

The test of the theory came quickly, as the orchestra was meeting on Saturday, March 3, to re-record some items for the compact disk which it hopes to release soon.

Well, Thursday, March 1, was a nasty day in the Toronto area, in Welland and the Niagara peninsula, and all points north and west. With

File Photo: M. Stewart



On March 3, John Manning worked with the Welland **Ukrainian Mandolin Orches**tra AUUC to re-record material for the orchestra's soonto-be-released CD.

one-hour trips stretching into four hours and more, it was considered best to reschedule the rehearsal of the Welland Ukrainian Mandolin Orchestra (AUUC) to the following day.

This was not a decision taken lightly, because moving from the established day, however recently established, could result in a disastrous turnout. Moreover, there was no guarantee that Friday would be much better for travelling. Cancelling the rehearsal was out of the question, because the orchestra did need to review the material before recording it. Changing the recording date was also



Welland Orchestra Conductor Rudy Wasylenky.

problematic, because an alternate date would be so hard to find.

Some players, as it turned out, did have unbreakable commitments on Friday. However, there was enough attendance that a worthwhile rehearsal could be held. In addition, John Manning of Toronto, the recording technician, was able to set up his microphones, computer, and other equipment, to reduce preparation time the next day.

Recording a CD is one project; re-recording is quite another. The second session involves correcting flaws and improving the quality of the performance. The easy stuff is "in the can"; the more challenging material is the order of the day. Take follows take, sometimes because of a noise from outside (the taping was at the Ukrainian Labour Temple), sometimes because a performing slip is detected, sometimes to explore the effect of a variation.

For some, like John Manning and Conductor Rudy

File Photo: Wilfred Szczesny



MPP Peter Kormos was among the speakers at the memorial meeting celebrating the life of Nick Petrachenko on March 10.

Wasylenky, it was a long day. For others, it merely felt like a long day. However, the job was eventually done, and the feeling of satisfaction kicked in, the knowledge that a better CD would be the result.

The following Thursday, the orchestra was back in rehearsal, preparing for its appearance on March 10 at the memorial meeting for Nick Petrachenko.

The participation of the orchestra in the memorial meeting started a few minutes after 1:00 p.m., playing some of Nick Petrachenko's favourite tunes as people arrived to celebrate Nick's life.

The orchestra is used to playing in concert, with the audience listening quietly. However, for the most part the musicians coped well with the distraction of background conversation and the occasional loud verbal exchange.

The memorial meeting was a huge success, a fitting reflection of the prestige and respect Nick enjoyed in the Welland community and beyond. The Welland Ukrainian Labour Temple was full to overflowing, and many people were disappointed that they could not gain entry. Speakers included NDP MPP Peter Kormos, George Chipman of the Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee (and the Welland Historical Society and Museum, and the Rose City Senior Activity Centre), Jerry Dobrowolsky of the National Shevchenko Musical Ensemble Guild of Canada, Welland AUUC Branch President Clara Babiy, Wilfred Szczesny with a message signed by AUUC National President Bill Bilecki, and sons Nick Jr, Lonny and Michael. Nick's son Myron

sang a farewell to his father, accompanying himself on the guitar.

Among those honouring Nick, and perhaps having come the greatest distance, was Hazel Skulsky, AUUC Cultural Director in Calgary, who worked in Welland early in her career and knew Nick from those days.

The orchestra completed its two hours on stage with two more numbers, one of them Nick's favourite "Kalinka", before refreshments were served, and those in attendance were able to share their memories of Nick more informally.

Days later, on Wednesday, March 14, again a new rehearsal date, the orchestra gathered to be taped for a television broadcast. Michael Curry of the Ukrainian television program *Kontact*, which is aired by OMNI.1, came to the Ukrainian Labour Temple in Welland with cameraman Ihor Slezhuk. They taped material for a segment expected to run sometime in May.

Orchestra members were pleased to welcome Kay and George Keniak, who travelled with the Kontakt team, and formed an encouraging audience

The orchestra was due to appear again at Heidehof Long Term Care Home in St. Catharines on Wednesday, March 28. At that appearance, a number of new additions to the orchestra's repertoire were to be unveiled. With only one regular rehearsal left (March 22), the group gathered on a — you guessed it - Monday (March 26) to continue preparations for the Heidehof appearance later that week.

- Wilfred Szczesny



Board members of the Taras H. Shevchenko Musem and Memorial Park Foundation (seated left to right) Bob Kisilevich (Edmonton), Jim Skulsky (Calgary), Carmen Ostermann (Winnipeg) and Peter Livingston (Ottawa) consider business, while Bill Harasym, President, listens to a point made by Treasurer Nancy Stewart.

"The Best AGM Ever!"

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Taras H. Shevchenko Museum and Memorial Park Foundation was held in Toronto on March 10, 2007. Following a custom established in the distant past, the date chosen for the AGM was the Saturday closest to Taras Shevchenko's birthday (March 9).

Again following a long-established custom, the AGM was held in Toronto, the location of the Shevchenko Museum. Although the meeting could have been held in one of the Museum exhibit rooms, it was decided instead to use

The Annual General Meetg (AGM) of the Taras H. the more spacious facilities of the AUUC Cultural Centre, located only two doors away.

A total of 14 Board Members were present — Joseph Dzatko (Vancouver), Jim



Renominated to the Resident Executive of the Board were Andrew Gregorovich (left) and George Borusiewich.

Skulsky (Calgary), Bob Kisilevich (Edmonton), Bill Uhryn (Edmonton), Bob Ivanochko (Regina), Carmen Ostermann (Winnipeg), Peter Livingston (Ottawa), Oryst Sawchuk (Sudbury), and 6 members from Toronto (Bill Harasym, Andrew Gregorovich, Lyudmyla Pogoryelov, Nancy Stewart, Bill Morris, and George Borusiewich).

Unable to attend was Clara Babiy of Welland, Ontario.

In addition, a number of observers were present, including special guest Bill Bilecki, National President of the Association of United Ukrainian Canadians.

In keeping with tradition, the Board voted to allow AUUC observers voice, but no vote, during the day's proceedings.

The day began at 9:00 a.m. with a continental breakfast of orange juice, coffee and pastry. This allowed the delegates to wake up, look sharp, and renew old acquaintances.

At 10:00 a.m., it was down to business.

The agenda looked daunting!

Out-going president Bill Harasym took the chair, and in short order, elections for AGM Chair, AGM Vice-Chair, and AGM Recording Secretary were held. Elected were Bill Harasym, Andrew Gregorovich, and George Borusiewich respectively.

Next, Carmen Ostermann (last year's recording secretary), read the minutes of the 10th AGM, and it was then moved, seconded, and carried that the minutes be adopted.

The meeting continued with reports of the Resident Executive Committee (REC).

The main report was given by Office Manager Lyudmyla Pogoryelov. She elaborated in detail on her activities and her (considerable) accomplishments during the past year.

The discussion after her report showed that the Board Members recognized the major contribution that she has made toward the Museum's success. In fact, a motion was made from the floor that Lyudmyla be granted an immediate 5% increase in salary, and that her salary be adjusted upward if it be found that the AUUC pays a higher salary for an equivalent job description. The motion passed without a dissenting voice!

The President's Report, given by Bill Harasym, was next. His report centred on the interrelated issues of the theft of the statue of Taras Shevchenko and of the future of Shevchenko Memorial Park in Oakville. He reported

The Ukrainian Canadian Herald — for information about events in and around the AUUC community.



Board members Bill Uhryn (Edmonton) and Joe Dzatko (Vancouver) give the documents of the Annual General Meeting their full attention.

on inquiries that we have already received from potential buyers. He also informed the Board of a meeting that the REC had recently with the Ukrainian Ambassador (who was accompanied by a local Ukrainian businessman). Bill further reported on the complications caused by an option-to-purchase held by a Mr. Jerry Weiner.

After considerable discussion, several motions were made, debated, and passed. These were: (a) "to not replace the Shevchenko statue at this time"; (b) "that we obtain a professional market evaluation" of Shevchenko Park; (c) that "any meeting of stakeholders is to be arranged after the receipt of the professional market evaluation"; and (d) that "we explore the feasibility of establishing a small, symbolic park at Oakville (Palermo) when, and if, we dispose of the rest of Shevchenko Park".

The next REC report was the Financial Report given by Nancy Stewart. Her report was so complete and thorough that it raised little controversy.

Similarly, Peter Livingston's Auditor's Report caused few ripples in the audience.

The call for nominations to next season's Board of Directors resulted in the following names being put forward: Joseph Dzatko (British Columbia), Jim Skulsky (Calgary), Bob Kisilevich (Edmonton), Bill Uhryn (Edmonton), Bob Ivanochko (Saskatchewan), Carmen Ostermann (Manitoba), Peter Livingston (Ottawa), Oryst Sawchuk (Sudbury), Clara

Babiy (Welland), Bill Harasym (REC), Bill Morris (REC), Andrew Gregorovich (REC), Lyudmyla Pogoryelov (REC), Nancy Stewart (REC), and George Borusiewich (REC).

Bill Harasym also proposed that the REC be enlarged to seven people. A show of hands signified the Board's approval.

As usual, all nominations must be approved by the National Committee of the AUUC before taking effect.

Bill Harasym indicated that he would be willing to continue in the role of President, but with greatly diminished responsibilities. He proposed that Lyudmyla Pogoryelov be given increased responsibilities and authority.

The AGM accepted Bill's proposals and it was moved, seconded, and carried that Lyudmyla's new title be "Chief Operating Officer".

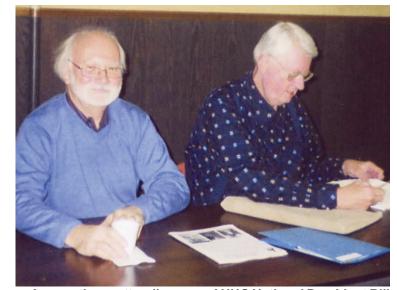
Vice-President Andrew Gregorovich moved that, "In case of the closing of the T.H.Shevchenko Museum, be it resolved by this AGM that the Shevchenko Library collection be offered to the University of Toronto Library and that this resolution be embedded in the Museum constitution." The motion passed.

The AGM felt that the Museum should prepare a mission statement and that this be done before the next AGM.

Amidst generally positive comments, the 11th Shevchenko Museum AGM came to an end.

As President Harasym stated "This was the best AGM ever!"

— George Borusiewich



Among those attending were AUUC National President Bill Bilecki (right) and AUUC National Committee member Bob Seychuk.

Thunder Bay Brings A Date



Some members of the group, after Valentine's dinner: front row, left to right — Diane Garrett Mary Danilevitch, Mary Slobojan; back row, left to right — Olga McDaid, Bill McDaid, Winnie Zazula, John Zazula, and John Dowbak.

On February 14, sixteen AUUC members and friends celebrated Cupid's day with an afternoon meeting, followed by a dinner celebration. Members were invited to bring their significant others.

The event was held at Diane Garrett's home. John Dowbak chaired the meeting.

In addition to the regular business items pertaining to correspondence and financial issues, much time was devoted to discussing the loss of the Shevchenko Monument in Palermo (Oakville), Ontario. Many of the group had been fortunate to have visited Palermo and shared their memories of the impressive statue. This is an incredible

loss to our organization and to Canada.

After the business meeting, we listened to Thunder Bay's blues artist Rita Chiarelli's latest CD, "Italian Sessions". Damon Dowbak, one of our members, plays mandolin on this recording.

We were also fortunate to have a DVD of the recent wedding of Lillian Gulka's maternal cousin's daughter. Lillian's mother was Anna Glowacki (nee Olynyk).

The wedding took place in the Sokalski Region near Temopil. The DVD provided an interesting insight into life and celebration in Ukraine today.

— Diane Garrett

Submitted separately as a .pdf

Submitted separately as a .pdf

Who, What, When, Where

Toronto — The Ukrainian Senior Citizens Club will host Senior Citizens Easter Dinner at the AUUC Cultural Centre, 1604 Bloor Street West, starting at noon on Thursday, April 5. The meal will be followed by Bingo. Admission for members — \$8.00; for nonmembers — \$13.00.

Readers of the *Ukrainian Canadian Herald* are invited to submit items of interest to the progressive Ukrainian Canadian community for free listing in this column. The deadline for material is the 10th of the month preceding the month of publication.

Sustaining Fund Donations

Michael Stefiuk & Otti Nicolai, Mississauga ON In memory of
Z. Nykolyshyn, April 23, 2005\$100.00
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WE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE THESE CONTRIBUTIONS AND THANK THE DONORS FOR THEIR GENEROSITY. IF YOUR DONATION HAS NOT APPEARED ON THE PAGES OF THE "UCH", WATCH FOR IT IN FUTURE ISSUES.

NC AUUC

(Continued from Page 8.) Annual General Meeting of the Taras H. Shevchenko Museum and Memorial Park

CORRECTION

Nancy Thoroski represented the Federation of Russian Canadians and the Beryozka Choir at the Anne Krane birthday celeration in Toronto on February 4. Our March issue provided incorrect information. We apologize for the error.

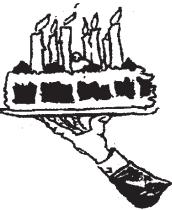
Foundation on March 10, 2007, and offer our support to that committee."

The National Committee considered other matters as well: a financial report (with an update on the audit), membership applications, a report on developments in the Canadian Society for Ukrainian Labour Research, a grant request, a report by the National Office Coordinator, a report from the Long-Term Planning Committee, a few words concerning the "UCH" and others.

Clearly, the future of the AUUC holds the promise of varied, significant and interesting activity and events.

- W. Szczesny

Happy Birthday, Friends



The Edmonton AUUC Senior Citizens' Club wishes a happy birthday to the celebrants of April:

Ed Boratynec Irene Dolinski Anne Husar Mary Kotowich John Rawluk Cheryl Romach Leo Tropak

May you have good health, happiness and a daily sense of accomplishment as you go through life.

The **Toronto AUUC Senior Citizens Club** extends best birthday wishes to April celebrants:

Marie Harasym Tessie Panasiuk

May good health and happiness be yours in the coming year!

The **Vancouver Seniors Club** extends best April birthday greetings to:

Joan Kowalewich Nick Mackiewich Audrey Skalbania

Hope you have a great day!!

The **Welland Shevchenko Seniors** extend a happy birthday wish to April celebrants:

Aldona Sesto George Sitak Greta Taylor

May the coming year bring you all the best in health and happiness!

JoKe TiMe

A new study that cost \$3 million revealed that 3/4 of the people in Canada make up 75% of the population.

According to recent surveys, 51% of the people are in the majority.

80% of all statistics quoted to prove a point are made up on the spot.

When the statistician became a surgeon specializing in obstetrics/gynecology, the bulk of his practice was hysterectograms.



JOIN US!

Join us for a new season of AUUC activities! Each Branch has a unique schedule of events and activities. To discover what we have to offer, contact the AUUC in your area:

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