

Prospects of a Disaster State: Reflections from Cape Town

HERIBERT ADAM

South Africa's many troubles require attention to stave off a further deepening of what has become a systemic disaster of state incapacity. The spectacular country with enviable human and material resources has to address its real problems frankly and realistically with new policies.

In January 2023, the South African government, for political and party gains, declared a "state of disaster." Potential loss of the African National Congress (ANC) majority in parliament in the upcoming 2024 elections had forced President Cyril Ramaphosa to act. Electricity blackouts, euphemistically called "load shedding," had enraged the public, and incurred great economic costs. After 30 years of majority ANC rule, the celebrated liberation movement itself is now facing accountability for the malaise.

"Disaster" normally denotes a shocking natural catastrophe, unexpected and traumatic – an earthquake, tornado, flooding, wildfire, accidents, an epidemic – over which humans have no or little control. In this case, the blackouts originated entirely from human mistakes. Attributing them to natural causes distracts and exonerates. Mcebisi Ndletyana, a political scientist, traced the disaster over time, writing that previous ANC leadership had ignored urgent advice to build more power stations:

"Lights switched on every day and the newly built houses were electrified, evidence for the ANC to highlight their justification for being in power. This was exactly the reason why they were not persuaded ... to spend money building new infrastructure."

Beyond this self-infliction of developmental negligence, five top "real disasters," unresolved or caused by government, have dominated South African conversations across the political and ethnic spectrum. During three months of research in 2023, the main concerns of interviewees were: gross inequality, violent crime, incompetent policing, worsening corruption, and failing education.

Pessimism about the future and a sense of crisis pervades the country. Reactions range from fatalistic resignation to seeking private happiness. Many checked out of politics all together into rugby, cricket and soccer obsessions. Patriotic progressive groups make remarkably determined efforts to dismiss gloomy forecasts, highlighted by emigration among the more affluent. Real estate agents advertise how to acquire a second citizenship.

Inequality foremost justifies the disaster label. South Africa has a Gini coefficient of 0.64, one of the highest in the world. Unemployment, officially at 32 percent, but 60 percent among the 15-25 age group, adds to a tragic waste. A high violent crime rate, largely resulting from this impoverishment, falls into the disaster category. Home robberies have only increased, and the daily murder rate has risen from 58 people in 2021 to 78 in 2022. Homicides incur mostly in still segregated black areas, a legacy of the Apartheid Group Areas Act.

Police protection is widely questioned because of poor training, internal strife, and partial corruption. Private security guards outnumber the 194,000 police personnel. The police cannot even secure threatened whistleblowers, as the example of Babita Deokaran demonstrates. The former chief financial accounting officer for the Gauteng Department of Health became an icon among several other corruption fighters killed.

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PHOTO: CLAUDIO FONTE, CAPE TOWN / UNSPLASH

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Dear members,

I will keep my report brief as I am currently on a walkabout in far away lands.

We had a great turnout for our Welcome Back luncheon in early September. It was an opportunity to see many familiar former colleagues once more and to meet new members. It was a well-attended and lively event.

The SFURA Board of Directors is pleased to invite you to the SFU Retirees Association's Annual Dinner and AGM on November 2nd at the Trattoria of the Italian Cultural Centre in the heart of East Vancouver. The food is fabulous and we look forward to seeing you all.

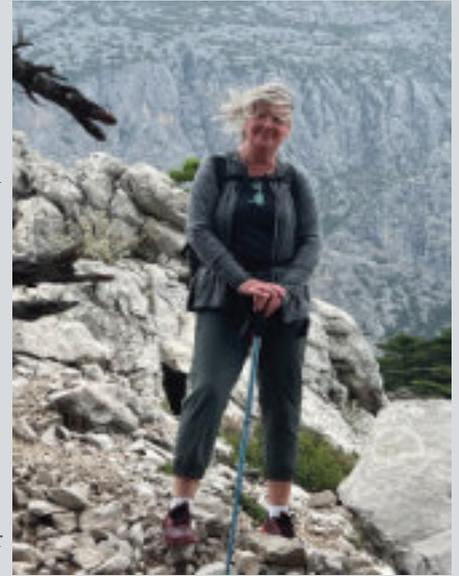
A reminder that we always welcome your inquiries and encourage your participation, whether it's in online conversations, in-person gatherings or as contributors to our quarterly newsletter, *Simon Says*. We also encourage you to get involved in running the Association. We thrive on the active participation of our members.

Best Regards

Frances

Frances Atkinson

SFURA President



September Equinox



ECARD: SEPTEMBER 2023 EQUINOX GREETINGS / JAS W. FELTER

'SIMON SAYS' IS always interested in the unique and varied experiences of retirees, including stories of lives before SFU. Many people traveled extensively, studied abroad, committed themselves to other careers, or came to Canada as curious or even reluctant sojourners, perhaps not expecting to stay. Of those experiences high on the interest list has to be having spent the Cuban Missile Crisis in the Canadian military. For those of us who were teenagers at the time, it was a consciousness altering time, and for **Ray Squirrel**, one that he experienced as part of his job.

AS MAURICE OFTEN said: "We, at the newsletter, feel that we are the memory of the university, and if we do not get the stories down, they will be lost, and lost forever. Let us get your story on the record."

Ray's Story.

Ray's life story is truly remarkable and reflects a deep commitment to his country and community. From his early years in Ottawa to his military service and later career, his journey is a testament to resilience, dedication, and a willingness to serve others. Here are some key highlights from his story.

Ray was born into a family with a history of military service, as his father, Robert Squirrel, was a WWI veteran wounded at Vimy Ridge. Ray grew up as the seventh child in his family, which undoubtedly instilled values of service and duty.

Ray joined the military in 1958 and became a Sapper (Engineer) in the Royal Canadian Engineers. He served in various postings, including Petawawa, Ontario, and NATO forces in Germany during the Cuban Missile Crisis. His dedication and service led to promotions and responsibilities as a Section Commander.

After completing his military service, Ray transitioned into civilian life. He initially worked in the Drafting Department of the Department of Agriculture before moving to British Columbia and taking a position with a private mapping company in Coquitlam. His expertise in cartography eventually led him to Simon Fraser University.

Ray's career at SFU allowed him to use his skills and passion for cartography to their fullest. He introduced new techniques and technologies, including type setters and silk screen printing, to enhance map production. His dedication earned him recognition and awards, including the SFU Staff Achievement Award.

Even with a demanding career, Ray found time for volunteer work. He mentored students at Camosun College, ran a printing shop with a partner, and engaged in curling activities. His commitment to helping others extended to a handicapped young man, whom he offered an opportunity for employment.

In retirement, Ray faced a series of health challenges, including knee replacements, prostate cancer, and heart surgery. Despite these obstacles, he continued to seek ways to make a positive impact in his community.

At age 85, Ray embarked on a new career path by recycling and repairing electric mobility scooters. This endeavor allowed him to provide affordable mobility solutions to seniors in need, reflecting his ongoing commitment to helping others.

Ray's story underscores the enduring dedication of veterans to their country and their continued service to their communities. His commitment to Canada and his fellow citizens is truly inspiring.

His life journey is a testament to the resilience and spirit of service that define many veterans. His story serves as a reminder of the lasting impact individuals can have when they dedicate themselves to making a positive difference in the lives of others.

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An “assassination industry” is widely blamed. Hit squads, linked to criminal taxi cartels, can be hired for R10.000 to R500.000, dependent on the status and protection of the victim. Unfortunately, an independent, but under-resourced, judicial system takes years to process such crimes to conviction, if perpetrators are located at all.

Corruption is exposed by a free media with committed investigative journalists. Rigged procurement contracts, blackmail of construction companies, bribes to politicians, nepotism, and truck burnings form daily news. Even some

universities are implicated in “financial mismanagement” and fraud. At the University of Zululand, the educationalist Jonathan Jansen reveals in his 2023 book *Corrupted*: “A special investigative

“FIVE TOP “REAL DISASTERS,” UNRESOLVED OR CAUSED BY GOVERNMENT, HAVE DOMINATED SOUTH AFRICAN CONVERSATIONS ACROSS THE POLITICAL AND ETHNIC SPECTRUM.”

unit found hundreds of degree certificates (with a vacant space for the name) in the desks of several academics.”

Several universities have hired bodyguards for their senior administrators. In February 2023, the Vice Chancellor of Fort Hare University, Sakhela Bulunga, escaped a failed assassination attempt when his driver was shot. Electricity supplier Eskom’s CEO, Andre de Ruyter, survived drinking cyanide-poisoned coffee. He fled the country after publicizing internal corruption and after being accused of treason by a cabinet minister. What’s astonishing is the general apathy and numbness after such outrageous events occur. The SA public seems inured to daily violence. The editor of the insightful *Daily Maverick*, Branko Brkic, diagnoses the problem as “an acid cynicism that permeates the land.”

The structural inequality of SA society starts with a failing education system. This is surprising, because education is strongly embraced for upward mobility in all groups. But only 18 percent of 10-year olds can read. Reading comprehension is often missing even among matriculants. Mother tongue education of African students has been abolished after grade 4, which disadvantages these pupils in examinations, competing with their English or Afrikaans-speaking counterparts. Almost half of all township pupils drop out during their 12 years of compulsory schooling.

This disaster exists because conditions are not conducive to learning. Most township ‘learners’ come from families with absentee fathers. Illiterate rural mothers often head households, where pre-school tuition is lacking. Domestic sexual violence reigns and too many girls endure teenage pregnancy. Township teachers of a similar background, themselves disadvantaged and unionized in a radical collective, hold low expectations and work with far too few resources in educating their vulnerable custodians. The very upbringing in a spatially segregated, disproportionately crime-ridden ghetto, becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. This sad state contrasts starkly with the semi-private former Model C Schools in urban areas, where the multiracial middle-class,

including most ANC officials, always had their children educated.

Conditions for a Turnaround

The obvious priority should be to attract more investments for job creation, even casual work. The unrealistic ANC dreams about an incremental demise of capitalism in the “second stage of the revolution” (the first stage was achieving political power) only prolongs the misery of a marginalised underclass. It is in the long-term interest of big business to participate in ameliorating inequality and soften resistance to higher taxes. Black and white tycoons need to use their leverage to prevent more unrest and repetition of looting shopping malls, as happened during the weeklong anarchy in July 2021. Many CEOs already collaborate with the government in infrastructure projects and policy advice. Yet progressive taxation and inheritance taxes for the super-wealthy was advocated in vain by French economist Thomas Piketty and by some former Afrikaner nationalists, like Sampie Terre Blanche. The necessary outside support this heavily indebted disaster state requires could be made contingent on such inequality alleviation.

High earning corporations and the tax-paying middle-class, particularly the 1.3 million civil servants and senior officials with bloated salaries, would have to accept a wage freeze and loss of benefits, such as free air travel and car allowances. Most low-income earners are already burdened with a high VAT Tax of 15 percent for common essentials. If those who are privileged to live in the beautiful regions of the country

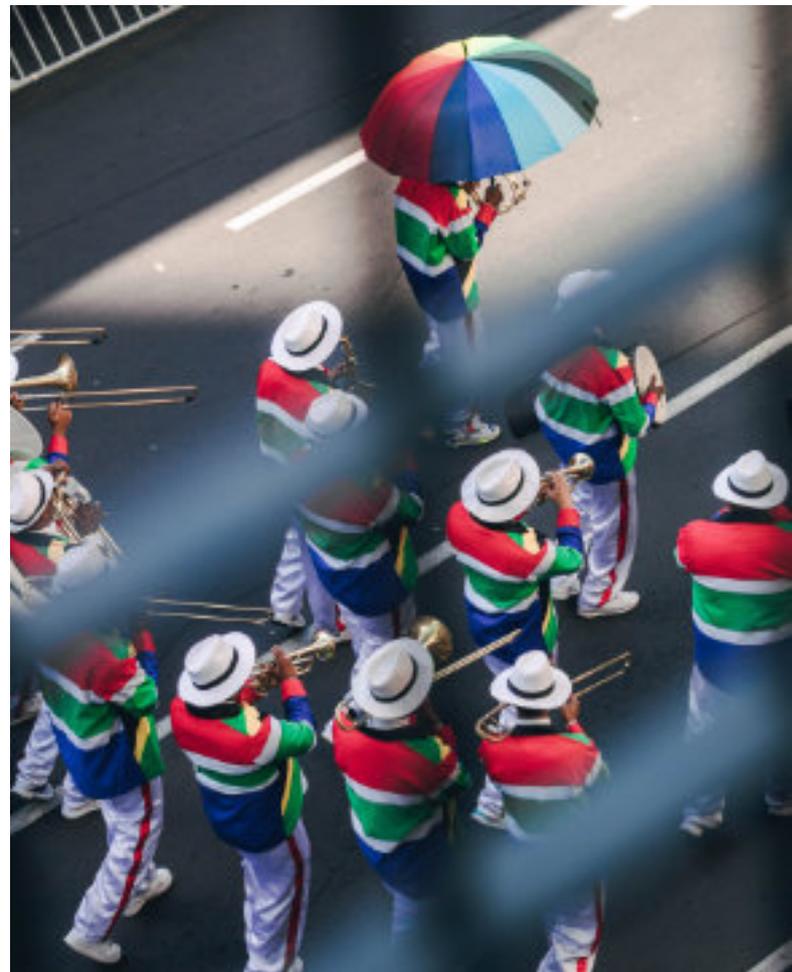


PHOTO: LEO MOKO, CAPE TOWN / UNSPLASH



contribute to financing their splendid lifestyles, they would also elicit support from like minded foreign sponsors.

South Africa could be a paradise for tourists, a global retirement home for seniors, a role model for prudent governance and preservation of a scenic environment. The desert-like Karoo can house unlimited solar panel farms, which could satisfy sub-Saharan electricity needs. A peaceful democracy would entice some nostalgic exiles to return. With preservation of threatened wildlife and biodiversity in its renowned parks and oceans, South Africa could be the model for humanity and nature coexisting harmoniously. Forest restoration and re-wilding of a damaged ecosystem could simultaneously benefit local degradation as well as assist a burning planet. The assets of South Africa in social and natural capital outweigh the negative prospects, but only if appropriate policies are implemented.

Priorities for Policy Change

Instead of conflating party and state through “cadre policy,” civil service appointments must be made on the basis of merit and not on party loyalty. Legislating racial quotas, according to national representation, causes the same malaise and needs to be abolished.

Racist hate speech – “Kill the Boer, Kill the Farmer” by EFF (Economic Freedom Fighters) leader Julius Malema – ought to be outlawed and prosecuted. A potential ANC-EFF coalition government rings the death knell of Nelson Mandela’s vision and interethnic solidarity. The liberal opposition seems to underestimate the appeal of an articulate racist demagogue. Malema as a charismatic saviour on an elevated platform celebrated by a roaring crowd of 90,000 evokes images of a Nuremberg rally. At that time during the 1930’s in Germany, a single leader slowly acquired tyrannical power “democratically” with 37 percent of the vote. The established political elite acquiesced, and most business conglomerates supported the abolition of democracy.

An ANC split should therefore be welcomed, because it would force a coalition government. Never mind that coalitions rely on compromise that frequently destabilizes such governments. Party coalitions still supersede a one party dictatorship, as in China, let alone one person rule. However, fear of losing their meagre welfare cheques by 27 million recipients out of a total population of 61 million, could also motivate continuous ANC electoral support among the poor, if they register and bother to vote in sufficient numbers.

As a sovereign state in the current nationalist world order, South Africa can claim the right of self-determination. It can choose its allies, but also has to reckon with retribution for selecting questionable friends. Only 2% of SA trade is conducted with Russia. And so, potential sanctions by adversaries of Russian actions must be considered. The extension of BRICS - an anti-Western economic bloc, now including such habitual human rights violators as Iran, Saudi Arabia, UEA and Egypt – amounts to an as yet unrecognized economic risk for South Africa in the long run. On the reputational scale, the once shining Mandela country without any enemies worldwide, has now created its own global adversaries. South Africa’s moral leadership, after liberation from human rights abuse, has already been undermined by successive ANC presidents befriending the oppressive regime in Zimbabwe. Now, relationships with worse offenders, exacerbate this trend in a multipolar world.

Provincial autonomy in a federal state is constitutionally enshrined. As the Western Cape, the only province controlled by the opposition Democratic Alliance (DA), seeks to expand its limited self-determination, it deserves support. In a weak federal system any devolution of decision-making strengthens democracy. It incentivises more citizens to participate. To be sure, a secession remains a pipedream of growing voters, demanding a referendum. As the prime example of effective and clean administration, however, the Cape serves as a useful model to emulate. ❖

My Village

SHEILA DELANY

When I first came to Vancouver to teach at SFU, I lived with my family in Burnaby, at a dead-end verging on deciduous forest with a creek running through it and salmonberry bushes enveloping the back yard. Once with a friend I sat silently by that creek for a long time; a large crawfish eventually emerged from the streambed to inspect us through the clear water, waving its eyestalks to get a good look. That forest, that stream, no longer exist, developed away.

Later, in Vancouver, I lived in the north part of the city or in Kitsilano or West Point Grey. I knew nothing of south Vancouver—never ventured south of 16th Avenue. My first foray into that unknown territory was not a pleasant mission: the funeral of a punk-rock associate of my teenage sons. Mink, the singer, overdosed on heroin, spent three days as a vegetable in hospital while the others keened in my living room. The funeral was held in the big Mountain View cemetery, at 43rd Avenue. I and my sons drove—me fearful of getting lost, relieved to find the route so straightforward, all of Vancouver so easily navigable.

Now I live across the street from that cemetery. I can visit Mink's gravestone (and have done), as could my sons when they visit. Now they are middle-aged, stable, one a parent himself, the other a lover of classical music. I've lived here nearly 38 years, in a big house built in 1918. It's anomalous on the block: a single-family house owned and occupied by an elderly lady; everything else is an apartment building or, if a large house, subdivided into small units. I've seen a lot of changes in the neighborhood, including the ethnic mix: from German and Russian then, to Chinese, Indian, Latino and Filipino now. It turns out that this area is a favorite for Filipinos; their main national language, Tagalog, is the fastest-growing language in Canada. This is my ten-block-square village, these my Filipina neighbors (all names changed). I wouldn't say we are personally close—their religious and political ideas are far from congenial with mine—but on a daily, practical basis we do well.

The neighbor I've known longest and best is Remi (for Remedios) across the back alley, with her husband and adult children, one of whom works at SFU, the other is a craftsperson on Granville Island. We've socialized a bit over the years—afternoon tea, lunch, a birthday party, discussed religion a bit. Remi has nine siblings, father a rice farmer; she was Catholic, now Baptist, what a South African friend called "happy-clappy". She's given up on converting me, apparently satisfied with my praxis. Our friendship flourishes in good weather, when we are both out gardening. Remi grows vegetables in pots; we often exchange food, from her garden or a Filipino dessert she makes with taro and coconut milk; I give blackberries or apples from my tree, extras when my grocery service delivers too much, or something I might make.

In the converted house on one side (east) there is Min, with her roommate Carrie, both legal secretaries. Having nannied his mother, they are adoptive grandmas to Ricardo, a delightful boy of seven, who visits them every other weekend



PHOTO: BRUNA CORCHELLI / UNSPLASH

and who recently befriended me while I was watering my shrubs. It was fun to be with a smart, funny, active kid again. Min promises to bring him over in future visits so he can bang on my piano and use the crayons my grandson used at that age. Kid energy, one of my sons agreed.

Lagri (for Lagrimos) lives in that same converted house, with her husband and grown-up son. She, too, gardens in pots, mostly flowers. Why pots? Because if they have to move, they will take everything with them. A previous owner of that house planted plum trees, so at the moment, plums are exchanged for apples and berries. My apple tree is unusually tall, having had to grow to get sun, because of the apartment building on that (west) side. The apples can't be picked; they hang, beautiful and tantalizing, visible in all their plenitude from my upstairs windows but unreachable. A dozen or more fall every day. At evening I find a few good ones—Baldwins, I believe—and dispose of the too-bruised or wasp-eaten or rat-chewed ones. But Lagri devised a way to get them, the same she uses for her plums: two long rods bound together end-to-end with plastic tape, with a plastic bag forming a basket at the end. It worked beautifully.

In the west-side three-story red-brick apartment building are several Filipinas I know. Dita is old, short, fat, very religious. Her sister once briefly worked as my housecleaner. Dita's project is to gather glass and cans to sell, the proceeds going to an orphanage or church school here or back home. I save up my glass and cans for her, place them in an orange shopping bag in the bole of a tree by my front fence for her to take when she passes by; she leaves it, empty, in the same place. There is Judith, who works in a hospital, friends with an Iranian doctor colleague not yet accredited to practise here. She would like him to become my tenant, which could happen eventually. Also in the apartment building are several others whom I see less often but occasionally meet on the bus, in the seniors' section at the front; invariably and somewhat embarrassingly they recognize me first.

Last but not least: Teresa, my resourceful and reliable cleaning lady, who lives communally with cousins and friends. She works for people I know and, besides morning cleaning jobs, is full-time companion to a wealthy lady over in West Point Grey. Another client of hers rents to Judith's doctor friend, a fortuitous connection made on my front porch. Teresa has the gift of fixing things-- a drawer, a window-blind—her father was a carpenter. She likes order and symmetry, attends Catholic church weekly, takes a certificate course; I suspect I will lose her eventually to a better job.

So this is my village, or the nearest part of it. As my younger son observed, "They keep you alive," happy for me that I have good neighbors. ❀

A Criminologist's Point Of View

RECENT LEGAL EXECUTION IN SINGAPORE HIGHLIGHTS THE INHERENT ARBITRARINESS OF PUNITIVE JUSTICE / Ezzat A. Fattah

*My object all sublime
I shall achieve in time —
To let the punishment fit the crime —
The punishment fit the crime;*

—Gilbert & Sullivan (*The Mikado*)

How Arbitrary Can Punitive Justice Be??

In the multi racial, multicultural, multi religion, conflict-torn world in which we live, one would have thought no news item would shock a veteran nonagenarian criminologist like me. And yet it recently happened, precisely on July 28, 2023! It was neither a big nor a long news item but it sent my weak diseased heart swirling in my chest. It came from the “modern” Asian State-city of Singapore.

News agencies reported (see Annex) that a woman was legally executed by the government of Singapore for having in her possession some 32.8 grams of prohibited substance, namely heroin. The law in Singapore stipulates that possessing more than 15 grams renders this a capital offence punishable by death! The reason why the amount of 15 grams (not 20, 30, 50, etc.) was chosen as the demarcation line between regular offence and capital offence is probably known only to the legislators behind the law. But to my criminologist's mind it must be, without doubt, **the ultimate manifestation of the inherent arbitrariness of punitive justice.**

Arbitrariness is by no means limited to capital punishment. Yet when the penalty is death it is a visible characteristic of what acts are singled out as capital offences, of legal classifications of murder, jury and judges decisions, as well as sentencing and commutations. The fact is, arbitrariness permeates almost every process in a punitive justice system. And yet, surprisingly, it is rarely debated or scrutinized and even more surprising is that hardly any attempt is made to reduce it or to fundamentally change the system.

It is this blatant neglect of basic fairness, the manifest contradiction between what is “arbitrary” and what is “just” that led me to try, over the years, in several of my books and articles (See FATTAH, 2023a & b; 2022; 2019; 1993;1982; 1980), to draw attention to this fundamental flaw inherent in punitive justice and motivated my persistent calls for replacing it with a less arbitrary justice model such as *restorative justice*. Unfortunately, my attempts invariably fell on deaf ears and were regarded as radical and not practical!

As far back as 1980 in my article “*Sentencing to death: The Inherent Problems*” and in the 1982 article that followed: “*Making the punishment fit the crime: The Inherent Problems of Using Imprisonment As A Retributive Sanction.*”. I decried the

arbitrary nature not only of the death penalty but also of carceral sanctions that are prescribed for almost every offence in the criminal code. In the latter article I stressed the absolute impossibility of establishing a fair equation between an offence, be it against the person, a sexual or a property crime, and a number of years, months or days in prison.

Here is a brief quotation from that article (Fattah, 1982):

“Imprisonment as a retributive sanction lacks the fairness and proportionality of Lex Talionis. The eternal and insoluble problem facing legislators using imprisonment as a means of retribution is to determine what term of prison should expiate an attack on property or to equate physical and sexual assaults with a number of days, months or years in prison. The arbitrariness of such an equation is both evident and inevitable. It is certainly possible to grade various criminal offences according to their objective and/or perceived seriousness. However, to come up with a prison term equivalent to theft or robbery, to assault or rape, is a completely different matter. It is one thing to state and empirically to demonstrate that people regard robbery as more serious than theft or that they view forcible rape as much more serious than indecent exposure, but to stipulate that the punishment for theft or that for rape be so or so many years in prison is a totally different matter. Any such stipulation is inevitably arbitrary, capricious, and despotic.”

We have to admit that **since Lex Talionis, no criminal law has ever succeeded in making the punishment fit the crime.** Faced with this problem penal reformers of the 18th and 19th centuries such as Cesare Beccaria, advocated that punishment be made as much in conformity with the nature of crime as possible. For this reason, Beccaria recommended that crimes against the person be punished by corporal punishment and that thefts not involving violence be punished by a fine. Later on, however, most legislators decided to make imprisonment the primary penalty for nearly every crime. Since the dilemma of equating the amount of deprivation of liberty with the degree of moral guilt or with the extent of harm done had never been solved, the determination of the length of imprisonment was left either to the arbitrariness of the legislators or to the discretion of the sentencing judge with all the disparities and inequities that ensued”.

The Impossibility of Measuring the Pains of Imprisonment for Each Individual Offender

The insoluble problem of making imprisonment fit the crime is not the only insurmountable obstacle in using imprisonment as a retributive sanction. At the heart of retributive justice are the notions of fairness and equality. But fairness and equality are not achieved if the allocation of punishment is made solely by reference to the nature and the seriousness of the offence of which the offender has been convicted. Fairness and equality do not mean sentencing people guilty of similar crimes to identical or similar terms of imprisonment and do not remedy current sentencing disparities and do not restore fairness and equity. Retreating from a concept of individualized justice and discretion in sentencing does not solve the serious problems of disparity nor discrimination. Mechanization of justice may be a workable proposition for distributive justice dispensing

monetary penalties, compensation or ordering restitution. It is hardly feasible when the punishment meted out to various offenders is imprisonment.

Retributive justice requires that offenders convicted of the same offence be subjected to the same amount of pain and suffering, to the same degree of unpleasantness, to identical deprivations, and that they be made to suffer similar consequences. But the pains of imprisonment are not at all the same for all those who experience it, even when they are kept in the same or similar institutions for the same length of time.

“ARBITRARINESS IS INERADICABLY INHERENT IN THE DEATH PENALTY. IT IS NOT SIMPLY A RESULT OF STANDARDLESS, UNGUIDED OR ABSOLUTE DISCRETION OF JURIES AND JUDGES.”

The pain of losing one's liberty varies greatly from one individual to the other. The deprivation of material amenities depends on what amenities are available to the person when they are outside. The rupture

of family and friendly ties depends on whether the person has a family and friends or not. The loss of status or reputation is not of the same degree and does not carry the same consequences for persons of different standing and from different social classes. The loss of autonomy and choice depends on how much autonomy and choice the person enjoyed before being put behind bars. The forced abstinence from sexual intimacy with the other sex can be a highly traumatizing experience for a heterosexual individual while a homosexual may have a greater opportunity for sexual activity in prison than on the outside.

As long as it remains impossible to measure the pains of imprisonment and to weigh the sufferings and deprivations resulting from it for each individual offender, the use of incarceration as a retributive sanction will always be an arbitrary, capricious, unfair and inequitable exercise.

The sentence of life imprisonment, whether subject to review by parole authorities or not, poses yet an additional problem. Like the death penalty, life imprisonment fails to take into account the age and life expectancy of different offenders. It thus constitutes a much harsher penalty when imposed upon younger offenders than when imposed upon older ones”.

The Erroneous Belief That Criminal Courts Can Dispense Fair, Just and Individualized Sanctions

As shown above, the faulty premises underlying the punishment response are many. Yet, probably the most erroneous of all is the idea that courts of justice can mete out penal sanctions that are proportionate to the injury or the harm done, that they can “make the punishment fit the crime”.

It is utterly ludicrous to think that imprisonment can be a fair, just, and personal punishment that is commensurate with the wrong being punished. The plain truth is that the punishments that are daily dispensed by the Criminal Justice System are blatantly arbitrary and unjust and thus cannot be ethically condoned or morally defended. And while the requirements of efficacy, profitability and necessity do not withstand any empirical test, it is the condition of

proportionality that can never be met by punitive sanctions, particularly imprisonment.

Suppose it is argued that punishment will be proportionate not to the seriousness of the offence but to the moral responsibility of the offender. Could this proposition serve as a basis for a more equitable system of punishment? The answer, needless to say, is a categorical no. This is because the degree of moral responsibility of the offender, which is unique for every accused, can never be quantified or measured. It is therefore, a serious scientific error to advocate a sentencing system which supposedly will dispense varying dosages of punishment on the basis of an abstract notion (moral responsibility) that is neither susceptible to quantification nor measurement (Fattah 1992:78).

Conclusion

Punishment in general and the death penalty in particular can never be applied uniformly. All punishments are randomly and capriciously invoked, and whether punishment is made mandatory or left to the discretion of the sentencer, it will continue to be inflicted in an arbitrary and selective manner.

In the famous USA case of *Furman v. Georgia*, one basic rationale explicitly or implicitly underlying all five majority opinions is that the death penalty has been applied in an arbitrary manner, and thus constitutes cruel and unusual punishment.

Justice Brennan compared the actual execution of those sentenced to death to a lottery system, a system where most of those who are in do not get called.

Arbitrariness is ineradicably inherent in the death penalty. It is not simply a result of standardless, unguided or absolute discretion of juries and judges. Some decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court may give the impression that some new statutes, by making the death penalty mandatory other than at the arbitrary option of the jury and by limiting its application to a narrowly defined offence, have succeeded in eliminating or reducing its arbitrariness. But evidently this is not the case. A mandatory death penalty does not eliminate the prosecutor's decision in charging and in accepting a plea, nor does it eliminate the jury's discretion in finding the defendant guilty of a less-than-capital offence because the prosecutor and the jury practically always retain control.

Half a century ago, Canada went ahead and abolished this archaic and primitive penalty. My recent book published just a few weeks ago: “*Legalized Murder: My Lifelong Crusade Against the Death Penalty*” is meant to commemorate the 50th anniversary of that historic debate in the Canadian Parliament.

But abolition of capital punishment is not enough. A major, fundamental reform is still needed. It is quite incomprehensible to me that in a progressive, religion-free society like Canada imprisonment continues to be used as the primary means of retribution. And this despite the obvious and proven fact that it is totally impossible to rationally or equitably determine what prison term is a fair expiation for an attack on property, or to create an equitable balance between physical and sexual assaults and a given number of days, months or years in prison. Despite the glaring arbitrariness of

such an equation, despite the fact that it is both evident and inevitable, it remains unchallenged as the primary vehicle of achieving justice! Yes, it is possible to grade various offences according to their objective and/or perceived seriousness. However, as mentioned above, to come up with a prison term equivalent to theft or robbery, to assault or rape, is inevitably arbitrary, capricious and despot. And since the inherent problem of equating the amount of deprivation of liberty with the degree of moral guilt of the offender, or with the extent of the harm done, has never been solved, the capricious determination of the length of imprisonment is left either to the arbitrariness of legislators or the discretion of sentencing judges, with all the disparities and inequities that inevitably ensue. That we continue to accept and to apply a punishment that poses such insoluble ethical, fairness and equity problem is, sad to say, a clear indication that we are more committed to the justice principles of the eighteenth century than we are to the egalitarian and human rights principles of the twenty-first century.

To an anti-punishment crusader like myself it seems that the time has come to replace entirely the archaic, antiquated punitive/retributive justice system with a positive, non-destructive, equitable and fair justice system. It is time to admit that as a vehicle for retribution and as an instrument for expiation, imprisonment poses insurmountable problems of justice, fairness and equity. If, as a nation, Canada decides that punishing criminals is the ultimate goal of its criminal justice system, then, as a civilized, humanistic, technologically advanced society, it should be able to find a more humane and less arbitrary way of dealing with criminals and of demonstrating society's disapproval and condemnation, than imprisonment.

Singapore on Friday (July 28, 2023) executed a woman for the first time in almost 20 years, officials confirmed.

By Derek Cai
BBC News, Singapore

Singaporean national Saridewi Djamani, 45, was found guilty of trafficking 30g (1.06oz) of heroin in 2018.

She is the second drug convict to be executed this week, after fellow Singaporean Mohd Aziz bin Hussain, and the 15th since March 2022.

Singapore has some of the world's toughest anti-drug laws, which it says are necessary to protect society.

Singapore law specifies that the death penalty will be imposed on anyone caught trafficking more than 500g of cannabis or 15g of heroin.

Singapore's Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB) said in a statement that Saridewi, who was sentenced to death on 6 July in 2018, was accorded "full due process" under the law. The city's highest court had dismissed the appeal against her conviction on 6 October last year. A petition for presidential pardon was also unsuccessful, authorities said.

Her execution comes just two days after Aziz was hanged on Wednesday, following his conviction of trafficking 50g of heroin in 2017.

In April, another Singaporean, [Tangaraju Suppiah](#), was executed for trafficking 1kg (35oz) of cannabis that he never touched. Authorities say he co-ordinated the sale via mobile phone.

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Movies are back

TOM O'SHEA

It's such a treat to see audiences returning in numbers to movie theatres. The "Barbieheimer" phenomenon this summer was marvellous to behold. My companion and I saw *Oppenheimer* at a full house in the Park Theatre and enjoyed the spontaneous discussions among strangers afterward. Less of a treat was *Barbie* which we saw at my companion's insistence. I gave it two stars out of infinity, one for the opening *2001: A Space Odyssey* parody and one for *Barbie's* final line (you had to be there to get it).



Now on the immediate horizon is the Vancouver International Film Festival, running from September 28 to October 8. This will be the first fully in-person festival since before COVID-19, but the length of the festival has been reduced from 16 days to 11 and the number of films from around 220 to 140. I am looking forward the most to Atom Egoyan's *Seven Veils*,

The promo reads in part "...psychological striptease, revealing taboo and trauma through a fractured mirror of erotic connection, performance, confession and confrontation. ...there are lashings of Strauss and Oscar Wilde here too, butting against very modern ideas around sexual propriety, abuse and catharsis." Whoeee! Irresistible.

Films include a number of 2023 Cannes winners: *Anatomy of a Fall* (Palme d'Or), *The Zone of Interest* (Grand Prix), and *Fallen Leaves* (Jury Prize). VIFF will also screen Hayao Miyazaki's animated film *The Boy and the Heron* which opened the Toronto festival. The most intriguing title goes to the Quebec-based comedy *Humanist Vampire Seeking Consenting Suicidal Person*. For those interested in local themes we have *Union Street* that documents the history of Vancouver's Hogan's Alley, the formerly Black neighbourhood that was destroyed by the construction of the Georgia viaduct in the 1970s. Another local documentary *Mareya Shot, Keetah Goal* [sounds to me like "He shoots, He scores" in Punjabi] follows four South Asian hockey players (including Surrey's Arshdeep Bains who signed with the Vancouver Canucks) as they try to make the NHL. So a wide range of fine films in various venues throughout Vancouver. See <https://viff.org/festival/viff-2023/>.

Autumn is always a good time for films...it's the Oscar season. Potential winners are being touted. The ones I'll look for in mainstream theatres include Martin Scorsese's *Killers of the Flower Moon* (starring Canada's own Tantoo Cardinal and Brendan Fraser, among others). Running time is 3 1/2 hours, a better deal than *Oppenheimer*. *Maestro* is the biopic of Leonard Bernstein starring Bradley Cooper (of the prosthetic nose controversy). *Napoleon* is Ridley Scott's latest. Finally Emma Stone in *Poor Things* has had rave reviews. However, I have reservations about this one; the director is Yorgos Lanthimos whose film *The Lobster* was shown at the 2015 VIFF festival, and I hated it.

So there you are. A taste of things to come. See you at the movies. ❀

Colloquies of crows

**Colloquies of crows
in cedars across the road
compete with workers
who blow dust from walks to street
and the dump trucks kick it back.**

**Dump trucks always kick up dust
as load after load of dirt
climbs up from the hole
and falls into each truck bed as
the driver inches forward.**

**Car drivers inch up
to the light with radio
blasting hip hop tunes,
others play Celine Dion—
they form a heartrending mix.**

**The heartrending mix
of gulls, sirens, horns, and crows
warns of accident
or fire on Capitol Hill—
Burdens cities can't avoid.**

**Burdens cities bear
include highways bursting through
the center of town—
Blessings are beaches and parks
of all sizes and delights.**

© Jared Curtis

NOTE: *I've become enthralled with tanka written in English. The Japanese tanka, a short poem in 31 syllables (sounds) arranged in units 5/7/5/7/7/7, became a dominant form for poetry in Japan about 1300 years ago and continues in popularity through tanka groups or societies. Tanka is a much older form than the haiku, which stemmed from it. Collections of Japanese tanka in English translation did not appear until the late 19th century, and poets writing in English, like Ezra Pound and Kenneth Rexroth, took up the form with some enthusiasm in the early 20th century. Since then, tanka groups have formed in England, Canada, and the United States, meeting regularly to share poems composed by their members. I decided to teach a workshop for my neighbors at Mirabella on "Writing Tanka in English." In preparing for that, I wrote a "Tanka Chain," or five linked tanka in which words in the last line of one tanka are picked up by the first line of the next. Punctuation is minimal in tanka. ❀*

The Lasting Joy of a Bursary

ALBERT E. CURZON

I am so ancient that I was a child in World War Two. One of the weapons used was known colloquially as a Buzz Bomb. When it reached a target in Britain, its noisy engine ceased to operate and it dived earthward, exploded and often killed people. On one occasion a buzz bomb went quiet near my home. It dived earthwards and killed a pig. This event taught me the lesson that life is a lottery. You never know when or how the end of life will come.

My twin brother, my sister and I all won state scholarships to universities, and ended with degrees and no associated debts: rarely the case in the modern world. The Buzz Bomb event taught me that those who are fortunate in life should help those who are less fortunate.

I joined SFU Physics in 1968 and when I became Head of Physics in 1975 I received an increase in salary. I consulted the most important person in my life, Mona, my wife and we immediately agreed that the salary increase should be used to create a bursary for Physics Students. At the time we both wished to remain anonymous and it was called the Digman Bursary, but after I retired in 1999 it became the Curzon-Digman Bursary.

In 2003 there was a strike of secretaries and they lost money. I believe this happened to technicians as well. I did not want to go on strike because I felt an obligation to the students so I put anonymous donations in the mail boxes of the secretaries and technicians. One of the technicians, Scott Wilson, guessed I had made the donation and returned his donation asking me to add it to the Bursary so that “the giving may go on.”

A year later Scott was killed in a car accident and I was amazed to learn that in memory of him it was requested that donations be made to the Curzon-Digman Bursary. At the time Barbara Frisken was Head of Physics and thanks to her help, the



PHOTO: . MICHEILE HENDERSON / JUNSPASH

donations made for Scott were transferred out and other money was added to set up the Scott-Wilson Bursary. Many awards have been made from the two bursaries mentioned above and many happy students have written lovely letters of thanks.

My dear Mona fell ill in 2022 and then I, a mere male, became aware of a 22-year injustice to Mona. From 2000 onwards only our surname appeared in the name of our joint SFU Bursary and she was not mentioned explicitly. While she was still able to think normally I asked her if she would agree to the name of the Bursary being changed to “The Mona and Albert Curzon Bursary” and she eagerly agreed. Once again, Barbara Frisken was Head of Physics and thanks to her help, the requested name change was rapidly accepted and Mona beamed with delight at the news. Sadly Mona is no longer with us, but I’m forever grateful that her generosity will be known to future Bursary recipients.

I end this short article with an apology. Because a chair usually has four legs and human beings only have two it is ridiculous to refer to an individual as a Chair. Anatomically the head is responsible for making important decisions in our lives and the most important person of an organization is responsible for making the important decisions for the organization and so that is why I chose to use the term “Head of Physics”. ❀



Annual Dinner

Please join us for the SFU Retirees Association Fall Dinner and Annual General Meeting on **November 2** at the Italian Cultural Centre. The event will include a full dinner. The meal cost will be subsidized and will be \$40.

To reserve:

<https://SFURA-falldinner-2023.eventbrite.ca>



Simon Fraser University
Retirees Association

Out of Control!

WILDFIRES CONSUME CANADIAN FORESTS IN 2023 / BY JOHN CLAGUE

It's been quite the year for wildfires in Canada, starting in late May when 150 homes were destroyed in suburban Halifax right through August when huge blazes that forced the evacuation of 60% of the residents of Northwest Territories in August and 200 homes were destroyed by the West Kelowna fire. Nearly 200,000 people were placed under a wildfire order this year, and many fires continue to burn as I write this article in mid-September.

Why was 2023 such a bad year for wildfires in Canada? The country has not seen this number of wildfires and the total area they have burned for about 20 years. Fire numbers were declining from 2003 until 2021, but the area of forest consumed in flames in 2023 totaled 16,500,000 hectares (and counting), which is twice the previous high in 1995 and more than seven times the average over the past decade (about 2.5 million hectares, Global Wildfire Information System, GWIS). The 2023 total is equal to 4% of the boreal forest land of Canada.

Sixteen and one-half million hectares seems like a big number, and it is. It is equivalent to 16,500 square kilometres, which itself is an area that is difficult for most of us to comprehend. Perhaps easier to understand is that this area is equivalent to more than five times the area of Vancouver Island!

A considerable chunk of the area burned in Canada was in British Columbia. The province lost over 25000 square kilometres (2,500,000 hectares) of forest to fires, more than twice the previous high (2018) and nearly four times the average of the worst nine previous years going back to 1950 in decreasing order: 2018, 2017, 2021, 1958, 1961, 2014, 1971, 1982, and 1950.



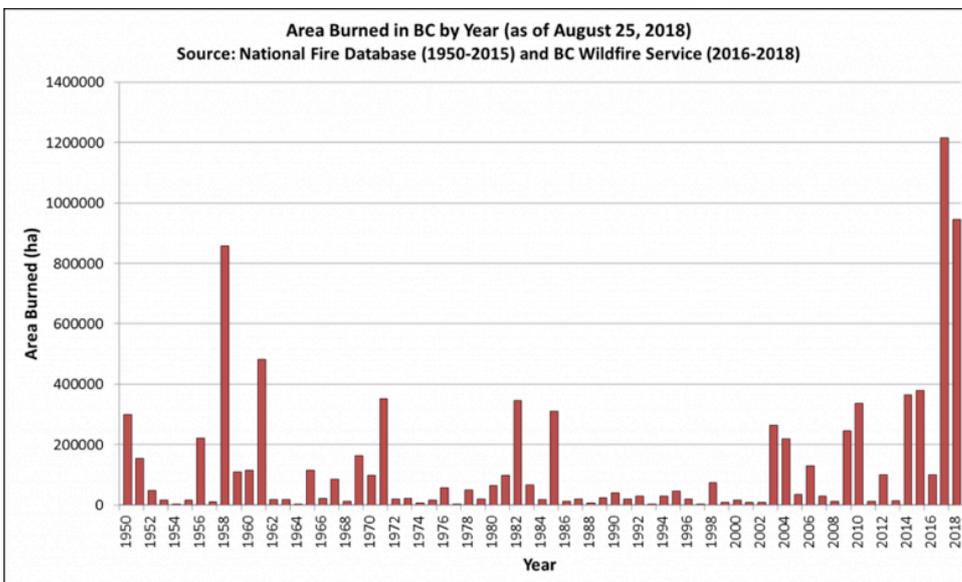
PHOTO: . DARRYL DYCK, THE CANADIAN PRESS, GLOBE AND MAIL / THE MCDUGALL CREEK WILDFIRE BURNS

A question on people's minds that arises from the disastrous wildfire season is: "What made this year so different from past years?" A common belief is that climate change is to blame. In response to climate change as a cause, I would argue: "Yes and no." Specifically, climate change was a factor, but not the only one. Allow me to explain.

Three elements are required for a wildfire to happen. First, of course, there must be a source of fuel. Second, weather has to be "fire-favourable", specifically dry and warm for long enough that vegetation and soils become dry. Third, there must be a trigger, specifically a source of ignition (typically lightning or human carelessness). Once a fire is started in a dry forest or grassland, winds may cause it to grow rapidly and accelerate across the land.

So let's examine the three fire elements in terms of what happened in our forests this year.

Source of fuel. For more than a century, wildfire management in Canada and the United States has





ON THE MOUNTAIN SIDE ABOVE A LAKEFRONT HOME, IN WEST KELOWNA, B.C., ON AUG. 18.

relied on a ‘Smokey the Bear’ mentality, that is to suppress wildfires aggressively whenever and wherever they happen. This policy has allowed fuel loads on most forest floors to increase to a dangerous level. Forest managers have generally ignored what Indigenous people knew well. Controlled burns reduce unsustainable build-ups of woody litter on forest floors and are part of natural forest regeneration, also providing habitat for numerous plants and animals that rely on open spaces in the boreal forest. Past fire suppression management has led to an unnatural build-up of fuel in most forest lands in British Columbia and the rest of Canada and we are paying a price for that now.

Weather. Canada experienced unusual weather in 2023. Nova Scotia had a warm dry spring that led to the conditions that caused the disastrous fires in that province (one of the wettest in the country!) to happen in the spring.

Unusually dry and warm weather persisted through the spring and summer over much of the country. Vancouver experienced a remarkable drought, with only 96 mm of rain over the four-month period between May 1 and September 16. Don’t worry or perhaps do worry, the fall monsoons will return!. These unusual warm and dry conditions primed our forests for fires. When they did occur, they were very aggressive. Seasoned fire fighters commented that many of the forest canopy fires this summer were exceptionally dangerous, burning faster and stronger than any they had experienced in

their careers. With fire fronts in some cases tens of kilometres wide and advancing at rates of up to kilometres per day, they were impossible to control. One example of this is the West Kelowna wildfire, which ‘jumped’ Okanagan Lake, a distance of 2.5 km, and triggered secondary fires that destroyed many homes on the east side of the lake. Airborne embers were responsible. Under such conditions, traditional ‘firebreaks’ are nearly useless.

Ignition. The vast majority of wildfires in the Canadian North, including Northwest Territories, as well as 60% of those in British Columbia, are triggered by lightning. The remainder are caused by careless people, those who discard cigarettes on the ground such as the 2003 Maclure wildfire north of Kamloops and those who do not extinguish campfires. Off-road vehicles can also trigger fires and, in rare cases, there are pyromaniacs who purposely set fires. There is not much we can do about lightning strikes, but we have it within our power to prevent human-triggered wildfires.

So, returning to the question I posed above, what role did climate change have on the 2023 wildfire season. As I mentioned above, weather in Canada over the spring and summer was anomalously warm and dry. That alone does not implicate climate change, but such conditions are fully consistent with what expert climate scientists have been forecasting for more than a decade. We can expect more unusual and extreme weather due to the impacts of a warmer atmosphere and oceans on continental- and even global - scale atmosphere and ocean circulation. Canada was not the only country that experienced record wildfires in 2023. The United States, Greece, Spain, Italy, Algeria, Tenerife, and Chile also experienced disastrous fires.

It is likely that we will see bad fire seasons in Canada in the future, although not necessarily as bad as that of 2023. So, I will close this essay by offering some suggestions to deal with the problem. First, we have to appreciate that fire is a natural and commonly beneficial forest process and so we need to ditch ‘Smokey the Bear!’ Carefully planned and ecologically sound controlled burns during the cool and wet fall and spring seasons will gradually reduce fuel loads in forests. Forest management policies that are based on ecological principles and not solely on industrial-scale logging by huge forest companies would help. Forest thinning in the urban-forest transition around towns and cities (as has been done locally near Whistler village) also would help. Encouraging homeowners living on forest lands to fireproof their houses and immediate surroundings would help. In my opinion, the BC Government should legislate approved roofing materials in forested areas. No more cedar shingle roofs! The BC Government has been delinquent on this issue. If it continues to fail to take action, there will be private-sector remedies, specifically insurance companies will increase premiums for, or even deny insurance to, owners who live in forest lands and do not fireproof their houses. ✨

*John J. Clague
Centre for Natural Hazard Research
Emeritus Professor, Department of Earth Sciences*

On public affirmations of beliefs

MARILYN BOWMAN

In recent months I have noticed some faculty members and university leaders adding affirmations under their signatures on emails relating to their political views, or instructions on which pronouns people must use with them in recognition of sexual identity. While individuals are free to publicize their views about such matters, these automated written affirmations arouse a certain apprehension in me. This derives from the repulsive attempts in the United States starting in 1950, to require university faculty to sign public affirmations of their loyalty to certain public ideas. These McCarthy era loyalty oaths generated “refuseniks” who included a famous psychologist Edward Tolman at the University of California Berkeley, and psychologist Erik Erikson, himself a Jewish refugee from the Nazis. They refused to sign the formulaic oath and were fired along with 29 others. They sued against their dismissal and ultimately were re-hired when the University of California decided not to pursue its case against them. The UC system recognized that the powerful idea of freedom of speech also protected freedom “not to speak”.

WE SHOULD BE FREE NOT ONLY TO SPEAK, BUT ALSO TO REFRAIN FROM PRODUCING CERTAIN WORDS OR IDEAS.

I fear that we are heading in the direction of similar requirements for public affirmations of ‘righteous-thinking’ in our university’s expansion of

administrators, procedures, and rules about diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). On September 14 this year an outstanding U of T Professor, Yoel Inbar, suddenly had a job offer from UCLA retracted when he refused to sign a long statement outlining his DEI beliefs as prelude to his appointment. These statements now appear to function as a modern version of those old McCarthy loyalty oaths, and now nearly half the large universities in the US require such belief affirmation statements from academic job applicants, although an eminent historian has described them as “performative dishonesty”.

I have written before that no demographic descriptors, neither sex/gender, colour, religion, or ethnicity, should be the basis for decisions at a university. We should not put ourselves in the ugly situation of requiring genetic proof of indigeneity or personal affirmations about ‘sex’ before we can make an academic decision about a person. We know that high-profile frauds have been uncovered under exactly these conditions, including at our university.

Affirmations of personal beliefs should be under free speech protection at universities and not subject to inspection for forbidden views by some kind of vetting system that echoes the traditional Roman Catholic “Index” of forbidden ideas/books. Instead, universities should consider individuals solely on the basis of intellectual and technical skills, accomplishments, and capabilities for a position, whether decisions concern students, faculty, or staff. Where access to

special help is crucial for talented individuals facing unusual financial or physical barriers, useful accommodations are clearly a good thing. But building a substantial university administrative structure around requirements or coercive expectations that employees at any level should publicly assert certain virtuous beliefs, will be fraught with problems arising from our rights to privacy and freedom of speech. We should be free not only to speak, but also to refrain from producing certain words or ideas. I hope that this recent adoption of these formulaic virtue-affirming statements by many in the US does not eventually become institutionalized and required in our university life. ❖

SFURA Luncheon at the Admiral Pub and Grill, September 7



Great turnout for the lunch event at the Admiral. It was great to see so many of you there. The opportunity to see colleagues, socialize and catch up generated energy and smiling faces. We look forward for more successful events and your participation.



The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, August 1963

BOB ANDERSON

I can't recall how much I knew about this march before I left home. It may have been mentioned on the CBC Radio or in *The Vancouver Sun*, but just mentioned. On July 31st my research job doing interviews among international students at UBC ended, and the next day I moved out of my basement room in Point Grey to save a month's rent. I was determined to travel for a month and to see and learn about Montreal and the FLQ movement, and maybe see New York or Philadelphia. I had to grow up, I thought, this is what big kids do. Besides, I just got paid. I advised my parents I was doing this but didn't ask for consent. They gave it anyway.

I got the Greyhound Bus to Hope and began to hitch-hike, getting a ride up the canyon to Cache Creek, the beginning of the journey east for me (no Coquihalla in those days). Someone else had the first position ahead of me, but I had made a big sign "Montreal" and a guy with a huge Lincoln stopped, and asked "Can you drive, too?"

That was it, Cache Creek to downtown Montreal, non-stop, driving in tandem. His name was Real, he was a well-paid welder rushing home to Montreal because his mother was very ill. I didn't mention the FLQ and Quebec's independence. We passed through Saskatchewan on my 21st birthday, on August 2nd.

I hung out in Montreal for a week. No, there was no girl on this trip. I had a friend in Montreal - at McGill - with whom I'd been studying in university in India, and had no idea how wealthy his family was. He was a modest guy. He joked that: "If you don't stay I'll have no proof for my parents that I made any friends in India." So, I stayed for a few days. He had no idea about the FLQ either and his French was good enough, so we poked around in the East End where the group had exploded a postal box in a park, where McGill boys from Westmount don't usually go.

Next, I took the overnight train to New York, poked around the city, trying not to lose my money. I think I had traveler's cheques. And then, because I had an invitation, I took the train to Philadelphia. Reading the NY Times on about August 25th, I learned of debates about the march among the big names in the civil rights movements, the usual tensions between the old guard at the NAACP and young warriors (so to speak). The Black Panther Party had not appeared yet, though I'd heard about Malcolm X in Chicago. It did not occur to me to go. I knew quite a lot about the Vietnam War, but in August 1963, draftees were not yet sent to Vietnam. Vietnam was hardly mentioned in the news. As for the upcoming march, no one said "you ought to go to this." I thought it was for young black men (and women) and surely about the south, where I'd not been yet either.

I stayed in Philadelphia with profs at the U of Penn, people I knew from India, well known teachers and researchers of

Indian classical dance. We were standing near their office and one of their students came by to explain why she couldn't come to rehearsal two days from then: "I'm going to the march" she explained. Now I was curious, and asked how she'd do that. Click. I bought a ticket on the NAACP bus, \$9 return [quite a bit less than the Greyhound, I guess] and got myself to a building of the U of Penn at 7:30am the next morning. So it was hardly a planned journey, it was a last minute opportunity for which I had no expectations.

I had a sandwich and glass water bottle in my bag, and a book ("just in case") and sat quietly on the bus to listen to the instructions which made sense if you knew DC was laid out in an alphabet grid. I didn't. My dancer companion had been to DC and said: "We'll be fine". Two of her dance class members were young black men and they all knew each other, they seemed to be forming a chapter of the NAACP or CORE on the campus, it was a quiet assertion of their rights, too. I was 21 and it seemed 'hip.' I felt comfortable.

When the bus parked I memorized the place and wrote it down. There were a hundred other buses, licensed in Alabama, Georgia, even Illinois. I never imagined that in two years I would be a student at the University of Chicago. It was a warm, dry day and we began walking, and walking, and walking. The march organizers had made signs "Jobs + Freedom" and I carried one. If I had had a little sticker I'd have put the Canadian flag on it, although there was no maple leaf flag yet.

The organizers had not mentioned the possibility of individual or crowd violence, no whisper of organized white-rights militias. Those were active far away in the South, at least in my mind. I did not think about it. Of course I'd heard about police confrontations with young black men in Philadelphia, but my companion whispered 'that can't happen in DC where this march will have hundreds of thousands in it.' Well, we hadn't seen the police and Vietnam demonstrations, not yet. So the vibes that day were collective and peaceful. I saw police in the street on my walk back to the bus, but that was it.

There was endless warmup, emergency messages, and display of little flags - CORE (Congress of Racial Equality), NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), SNCC (Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (ML King's organization), and all the unions and religious organizations: a rainbow coalition across the USA, despite what we learned much later about back-stage disagreements about the theatrical elements of the stage in front of the Lincoln Memorial.

The music was powerful, and we swayed, shuffled, and bounced beside the Reflecting Pool. We heard Mighty Clouds of Joy, Odetta, and Mahalia Jackson: strange how one remembers little things and not others. Joan Baez was there. See the pool in the picture below? Gospel songs full of the future and hope. I was close enough to see if others would sit down. I was sitting/standing next to a big noisy group from Tennessee, many of whom wore farm workers' dungarees and big sun hats. It was crowded but a good crowd. See the photo below?

I think it was Mahalia Jackson who said firmly, in a moment of quiet half way through King’s speech, “tell us about the dream Martin.” I heard that, but I did not have a clue what she was talking about, what dream? We have all seen it and heard the speech now, more than once. In the raw, however, it was very evocative, very poetic, “in the red hills of Georgia”. It had been a long day and we were tired. And there were more speeches, and more signing. All interspersed with mentions of the movie and singing stars in the audience. But when I began to hear it again, say ten years later, the speech drove into me again. I even heard/imagined? the soft “aymen” of some of the people around me, when King came to a pause for breath. That too was recorded.

I don’t know if I knew that afternoon that he had used some of those phrases, those lines, in his preaching in the preceding years. That has all long since been documented. His speech rolled forth in a way that showed familiarity with its poetry, but it felt fresh and spontaneous, he was ‘making it up’. Or so I preferred to think. He certainly wasn’t reading – I could see his head up and hands were up. And it resonated with everyone else, and showed up in the morning editions of the NY Times and Philadelphia Enquirer, and everywhere else. The poet in me was deeply satisfied, those linked phrases, that true feeling, perfect rhythm and pause, very graphic, very measured.

Yes, we looked at night in Philadelphia for TV news treatments of the march, our jaws dropped that we had been among 500,000 people, the most I’d ever seen in one place, except for PM Nehru’s speech on the beach in Madras/Chennai which I attended in November 1962, with about 150,000. It was becoming an event, a ‘were you really there?’ in the culture, a theme and now a meme. Later marches were compared to it. Even at UBC, after I hitchhiked back and returned to classes after Labour Day, if it came up, others had heard or incorporated some of it. When James Baldwin later visited UBC I was able to get him off script by asking to talk about the March on Washington with him, and he did, puzzled that anyone at UBC could have been there. ✿



PHOTO: MARCH ON WASHINGTON 28 AUGUST 1963,/ WASHINGTON POST 29 AUGUST 1963 EDITION



SFU RETIREES ASSOCIATION

The SFU Retirees Association (SFURA) thrives on the energy and expertise of its members

All SFU retirees automatically become members of the SFU Retirees Association. There is no membership fee.

GET INVOLVED

Several volunteer opportunities are available:

- Benefits committee
- Planning SFURA social events
- Advisors to, or members of the Board
- SFU 60th Anniversary planning group
- Communications and newsletter support

EMAIL LISTS

There are three SFURA email lists. To join the optional lists, please email retirees@sfu.ca:

- retirees-forum@sfu.ca — a conversational group with 5–25 emails a month. *Optional membership.*
- sfura-activities@sfu.ca — for notices of upcoming events, about 2–5 emails a month. Spouses/partners can also join. *Optional membership.*
- sfu-retirees-info@sfu.ca — includes all SFU retirees, and only the SFURA board can email this list. About 3–5 emails a year with updates from SFU HR and the SFURA.

CONTACT

Email retirees@sfu.ca

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Sending Your Heart on Before. Waiting on Your Spirit to Catch Up

MEGUIDO ZOLA

Turn left at the signpost, ‘ELEPHANTS HAVE RIGHT OF WAY.’ Straight on, through the phantom lake that is a shimmering mirror image of the empty sky. Up into the forest that skirts ‘The Mountain with its Head in the Clouds.’

My teaching buddy, Norman, and I are taking a school expedition to the rooftop of Africa—Mount Kilimanjaro.

One afternoon, as we pause to catch our breaths after fording the last stream, I watch a lone figure emerge from the trailing fronds of liana: a frail, old woman, balancing on her head what looks like all her worldly possessions.

Catching sight of the children stretched out on the hillside, as she nears us, she lets out a gasp of surprise.

“Oo-ooh!...So many children!” she gazes in wonder. “*Watoto wengi!*”

“Yes, Mama,” I say. “Forty children.”

“Forty?” her eyes widen. “God has truly blessed you.”

“Yes . . . Though they’re not mine.”

“But you hold them in your hand . . .”

“True, Mama. And I see God has blessed you, too—with years.”

“Twice forty years,” she laughs, volunteering where she has come from, which is a township several days away by foot. And where she is going, which is a village, several days away in the opposite direction.



PHOTO: . SHIMO YANN / JUNSPASH

And I say, so as not to ask a direct question, which is thought intrusive: “You must be on an important safari.”

“Yes . . .” she says: “the safari of once in a lifetime.”

And she explains that she’s left the village where she’s lived her adult life and married and brought up children and grandchildren. And she’s returning to the hamlet where, eighty years before, she was born.

Coming home—“God willing”—to die.

“‘God willing’, indeed,

Mama,” I say. “For the distance is great. And the terrain is difficult. And you are full in years.”

“*Qweli kabisa*: very true,” the old woman chuckles:

“Though it won’t be so difficult perhaps. You see, a long time ago, my heart got there first—before me. I sent my heart on before. So now it will be easy enough for the rest of me to follow!”

“Voices die, words live on,” goes an African proverb. Now, more than half a century later and halfway across the world, the old woman’s words come back to me. That your feet follow your heart. That what you love, what you value, what you desire, you will surely make it come to pass. If you send your heart on before.



PHOTO: . SETH DOYLE / JUNSPASH

But this doesn’t happen without a lot of work. And it can’t be rushed. Now and then, it can happen, you may get stuck; stall; come to a stop.

After our making it to the summit, Norman, a relentless taskmaster, has been hurrying us down the mountain to make up three days we’ve lost waiting for some of the children to get acclimated to the thin air before the final ascent to 5,896 metres. He races ahead to base, alone, to radio for a bus to take us back home.

But no sooner is his back turned than the porters—carrying the heavy, bulky equipment the students can’t fit in their backpacks—cast down their loads and refuse to budge another step.

Faces set like flint. Ears shut to entreaty, threat, or promise.

Something about the spirit. Or spirits. Or the Spirit.

The porters are local Chagga, but we are from up-country. Understanding each other is unreliable, even in the *lingua franca*, Kiswahili.

“They’re waiting on the Spirit,” concludes one of our students, Solomon, son of a Baptist preacher.

“No, they’re waiting to hear from the spirits of their ancestors,” corrects Njoroge, descended from a distinguished line of witch doctors.

“But *pepo*, ‘spirit,’ also means ‘wind,’” argues Kip, progressive and not given to metaphysical speculation. “It’s a change in the wind they’re waiting for—waiting out the hot, muggy weather.”

Whatever the interpretation, there’s little we can do but humour the mood of the porters. And wait.

One night. Two nights . . .

In the middle of the third night, Norman, back from base, bursts into my tent, madder than a warthog in heat: “Still here?!”

He clatters off in search of the porters.

Let him sort it all out if he can. Hasn’t he been—after coming down from Oxford with his M.A. in Divinity—a local government administrator in Ujiji (where Stanley found Livingstone)? After that, a court assessor in Nyeri (where Baden-Powell’s heart is buried)?

In the event, what Norman brings to the impasse is not his finesse in the arcane arts of administration, or the subtler points of hermeneutics. More an intuition into the mysteries of the human spirit.

“Spirits!” Norman shakes me awake some hours later.

“They’re waiting on their spirits to catch up!”

Sometimes your life, your circumstances, outrun your spirit. The vital force inside you, the animating pulse—gets out of harmony with the rest of you; you’re not together; not whole. You lose your inner connection to self, your outer connection to the world.

Waiting on your spirit to catch up offers us a serene pause to heal and nurture, inviting us to take stock, to make meaning.

Waiting on your spirit to catch up acts as a balance check to sending your heart on before. ✿

The March on Washington Against the War in Vietnam

BRIAN HAYDEN

In 1967 I was in a hippy-painted bus from Boulder, Colorado to confront the US administration over its war in Vietnam. As we neared Washington D.C. on the big day, the traffic became intense. We were hardly moving in the congestion. Tension increased for all of us. We were missing some of the opening events. When we finally got within walking distance of the reflecting pool behind the Lincoln Memorial, we hastily made arrangements for meeting up later in the evening, and then we flew out of the bus to join the rivers of people heading into the park area around the reflecting pool.

I had never seen so many people in my life. The crowd estimators at the event put the total at around 100,000 (some said 500,000), although the reports that we saw later tried to put the number much lower (20,000-30,000) probably in order to diminish the extent of the protest. Between the placards, the colors, and the chants, it was a pretty incredible scene. Hard to get photos to take it all in, but I did my best. I tried standing on things to get better panoramic shots for the newspaper.

I don't remember how we got to the Pentagon; I think we marched. But the huge congregation of people eventually ended up pressed against the chain link fence around the Pentagon and on its front steps confronting armed guards. Lots more jeering and cheering and chanting of slogans. "Hey, hey, LBJ. How many kids have you killed today?" Lots of placards and signs. A number of people burning draft cards. Then a roar came up from the crowd as some of the protestors broke down a section of the chain link fence and made a dash for the building. And another roar as the same thing happened in another area. I was near the steps, and the crowd was getting noisier, encouraged by the breaches in the fence.

Dusk happens earlier in the autumn. And as twilight turned to darker evening shades – as actions became more difficult for reporters or others to see or photograph – the guards became more aggressive and started pushing protestors down the steps. The guards were wielding bludgeons and often aiming for people's heads. I was near enough to the front to hear skulls cracking and even popping. It was the worst thing that I had ever seen. We tried to hold our ground, but people in the front were disappearing. When the blood started flowing, many tried to get away.

For a while, it seemed something like a standoff, but the protestors gradually dwindled leaving only the hard core martyrs and antagonists at the front. I, too, decided that I had had enough. It was getting late, and I began to make my way toward the back of the reduced throng, passing long haired men on the ground crying out, renouncing their allegiance to the United States and vowing to leave. I stopped by a group gathered around an expedient fire. I needed to digest everything I'd witnessed and try to process everything swirling

around in my mind. Standing around the fire with others in the night let all the events, the moods, the feelings, the place, the people gradually find their places and settle in. It helped.

Suddenly, someone was leaping on my back, yelling "Gotcha!" I whirled around to see who had grabbed me. It was my sister, Arlene. I couldn't believe it! We hugged each other for the longest time. "What are you doing here?" I finally asked. She was supposed to be attending the Philadelphia University of the Arts, and she was about as non-political as anyone I knew. I couldn't believe that she was at the protest.



PHOTO: "MORATORIUM-MARCH-ON-WASHINGTON"

Arlene explained: "My 'buddies' had convinced me to come along on a trip to DC. They said it would be a fantastic photojournalism experience for my course. So I joined them in a VW van. When we arrived, my buddies began to go in different directions. All of a sudden, I realized . . . "I was alone in the middle of hundreds of thousands of people."

My sister had moved toward the front to get some pictures and somehow found herself, locked in arms, on the front of the Pentagon steps, too close to the soldiers with bayonets poking at them. The soldiers began hauling people off to the paddy wagons and she was in row three. Then, all of a sudden, she was in row two. So, she unlocked herself from the people at her sides and leaped over bodies. She was making her way down the steps when she saw a large bonfire and headed over to it. When she saw my silhouette from the back she slowed, almost to a stop. She was sure that it was me. "And . . . it was!"

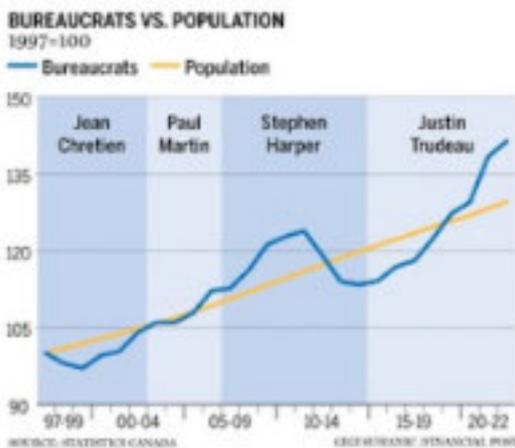
Even if we had known that we would both be at the protest, what were the chances that our paths would ever cross in that vast sea of people? We hugged again and told each other how incredible the whole event was, and we stayed together until we had to leave late in the evening. I don't remember how we ever got back to the places we were staying or joined up again with our buddies, but we both got some stunning photographs. ❀

Opinion: The One Big Growth Industry of the Trudeau Years has been Bureaucracy

HERBERT GRUBEL

Historically, Federal employment has had its ups and downs, but under Trudeau, the direction has only been up.

In the 1980s, Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan successfully combatted their countries' large fiscal deficits with policies that included cuts to the number of bureaucrats employed by their respective governments. Recent Canadian governments also used these policies to deal with fiscal deficits, as the chart shows. It tracks the number of federal civil servants against [population](#) from the late 1990s until now, with 1997=100 for both series.



When Jean Chrétien became prime minister in 1993 the federal deficit was at record peacetime levels. His government's 1995 budget cut spending sharply and reduced the number of bureaucrats. As the chart shows, from 1997 to 1999

their number fell three per cent, even as the population rose two per cent. Restrictive fiscal policy worked and, in fact, led to a modest increase in the bureaucracy during the next four years. By 2003 the growth rates of population and bureaucrats were the same. That continued for the first two years of Paul Martin's prime ministry (2004-05) though the bureaucracy then proceeded to grow two percentage points faster than population.

The Harper government's economic policies were greatly influenced by the severe global financial crisis that started in 2008. In large part to deal with the problems the crisis caused, the bureaucracy grew rapidly until 2011, exceeding population growth by eight percentage points.

After the crisis abated, however, the Harper government shrank the bureaucracy by a record-setting ten percentage points, which more than made up for the large increases during the preceding four years. After that the number of bureaucrats levelled off. But in 2015 their cumulative growth since 1997 was seven percentage points below that of the population.

With the election of [Justin Trudeau](#) in 2015, however, the federal bureaucracy started to grow very rapidly. By 2022 it had grown 27 percentage points, which put it nine percentage points ahead of population growth. Note that this rapid growth of the bureaucracy started well before COVID struck in 2020. Under Justin Trudeau, Canada has faced [large and growing fiscal deficits](#). The [2023 federal budget](#) was supposed to address that with a wide range of policies, but none mandates reductions in the size of the bureaucracy.

Anyone who has lived through the last three decades, as the prime minister has, should know about the important role reductions in government employment have played in eliminating the deficits of the governments of Jean Chrétien, Paul Martin and Stephen Harper, not to mention Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. The credibility and likely the success of Trudeau's own policies suffer by the absence of such reductions.

Reducing the size of the bureaucracy has at least two beneficial effects. Most obvious is the saving of bureaucrats' salaries and benefits, which in 2021, according to a study by the Fraser Institute, were 8.5 per cent higher than those of their private-sector counterparts.

But there are also important non-fiscal benefits from cutting bureaucracy. The remaining staff must deal with the public by applying regulations more flexibly and using less paperwork, changes that would be welcomed by most Canadians. In addition, some functions will be carried out with fewer staff or terminated completely, reversing the growth in numbers that bureaucrats have been able to attain when fiscal conditions were normal. As Oscar Wilde put it: "The bureaucracy is expanding to meet the needs of the expanding bureaucracy."

Whenever the opportunity to cut bureaucracy arises, we should take it, for as Thomas Sowell has written, "A government bureau is the nearest thing to eternal life we'll ever see on this earth!" ❖

Herbert Grubel, emeritus professor of economics at Simon Fraser University, is a senior fellow at the Fraser Institute. Previously published in the Financial Post.

Bull's Heart Tomatoes

WALTER PIOVESAN

Bull's Heart tends to be the biggest and earliest fruit to ripen. The earliness is a big plus for a short growing season. And this season has been an extra good growing season, producing an abundant crop by



mid July and has lasted to mid September.

This is a very old Russian variety bearing large pink oxheart-type tomatoes with excellent, sweet flavor. They can grow as big as 1.5kg. We buy the seedlings in 4 liter planters from Wing Wong's Nursery, on SE Marine Drive in Burnaby.



PHOTOS: WALTER PIOVESAN

Solar Power in Vancouver is Worth It

BARRY SHELL

There's nothing better old folks can do for the next generation these days than to allocate a bit of their nest egg to solar panels on the roofs of their houses. Let me explain.

About a year and a half ago, on January 27, 2022 we had a 7.74kW system of solar panels installed on our garage roof. It took three men only six hours to do it and by 3:00 pm on that particularly gorgeous winter day, our BC Hydro meter was running backwards. (See graph.)



A year later our Hydro bill was -\$106. Yes, that's a negative sign. Big letters on the bill say "Do Not Pay." Consider that we also have a Tesla, and for the last year we have been charging the car at home as well as drying our clothes, heating the garage with base-board heaters, using central air conditioning on hot days, and running all the electric lights and appliances in our house. We still use natural gas for heat, hot water and cooking, but now we're looking at converting some of that to electric as well.

Indeed, \$100 of that negative BC Hydro bill was the NDP cost-of-living credit, but over the last year our electric bills have been \$15 or less just to cover the basic connection charge. In 2011 BC Hydro changed all their electric meters to smart meters, which now allow people to install "Grid Tied Solar Systems" so when your house creates more energy than it consumes, your hydro meter runs backwards. BC Hydro keeps track of the amount of electricity your solar panels generate and it remains in your account as a credit.

Over the summer of 2022 we socked away almost six megawatts of electric power, literally making hay when the sun shined. Then during the dark dreary months of November, December and January we used up most of those watts. Indeed, on snowy days, when the panels are completely covered in the white stuff you get zero electricity from them. Same with those super dark wet Vancouver winter days. But on a bright sunny day in December or January our solar panels

provide up to 15kWh of power. This is basically enough to run the whole house. Interestingly the panels are somewhat more efficient when they are cold. Nevertheless on a hot July day they can generate 50kWh of power, most of which is stored by BC Hydro as a credit.

People often ask, "How many years does it take to pay for itself?" I find this to be an odd question because the panels, like a new fridge or a new roof, add value to a house, which is recouped when the house is sold. But the answer these days is about 5 or 6 years.

Consider that we don't have to buy expensive gasoline for our electric car as well. There's something absolutely magical about driving around town in a car fuelled by sunshine. Couple this with essentially zero electricity bills for the house and the solar panels "pay back" in a very short time.

Solar panels are a far better investment than putting money into a GIC or a mutual fund. And this does not even include the larger societal benefit of oil and gas NOT being burned, or new hydro dams NOT being built and valleys NOT being flooded.

Our system cost about \$16,000 installed after taxes (late 2021), but nowadays you can get a \$5000 grant from the federal [GreenerHomes program](#) if you put solar panels on your house.

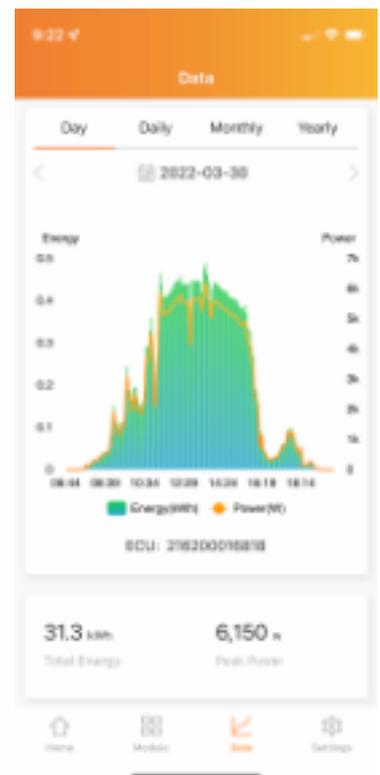
<https://natural-resources.canada.ca/energy-efficiency/homes/canada-greener-homes-initiative/canada-greener-homes-grant/canada-greener-homes-grant/23441>

In addition, interest-free loans of up to \$40,000 for solar panel installations are available from CMHC. Also in BC there is no PST on solar panels.

If you work it out, after subtracting the \$5000 grant, our system generates energy at a capital cost of just \$1.42 per watt. For comparison, the site C dam, now at \$16 billion for 1,100 Megawatts, comes out at a cost of \$14.55 per watt. Ten times more!! Think about it.

Weird that solar panels are not more common on all BC roofs. Try to imagine how many years the Site C dam will take to "pay back." You will not be alive. Personally, I feel solar panels should be legislated and mandatory for all new buildings. They should be natural, accepted and commonplace like toilets.

Here's something else that nobody thinks of: the electricity you make in your



own backyard (or roof) is yours. Not only are the electrons “fresher,” but they are tax free and far more efficient because they don’t have to travel through expensive infrastructure like high-tension wires or substations and transformers. It’s like home grown organic vegetables because you know where it came from. You made it yourself. That feels amazing.

We have had zero problems with our solar panels. They have no moving parts. In summer during long periods of no rain they get a little dusty so a window cleaning company came and gave them a wash. Power went up 10%. Impressive! Other than that, nothing. The panels send information via Wi-Fi to our home internet and you can see how much energy they are creating on a Smartphone app (see previous page). Energy and power are on the vertical axis and time is on the horizontal access for the day shown, March 30.

In this way the panels act as a kind of sun-meter. You can always tell how sunny it is at a given moment. Plus the data is stored forever in a database and can be accessed over months and years to see what days in the past were sunny, or relatively how much sun we’ve been getting over time. It’s useful and fascinating to have access to your own local weather data and surprising how often this information comes in handy.

The most poorly understood fact about solar panels is that energy is real. Solar panels are not like anything else you can buy. Nothing you own creates energy— appliances, computers, heaters, lights, cars, and so on— they all use energy. And yet solar panels make energy. From sunshine. Compare it to real estate. Real estate is worth something because it is real. Energy is also real in the same sense. Einstein showed that Energy equals Mass; hence it is essentially like real estate. You can use it, you can save it, and you can trade it. And with solar panels you get more of it for free every day. People don’t comprehend this uncanny fact about solar panels. It’s as if each day you were to magically obtain a bit more real estate. Something you can use. In other words these things “pay back” the second they are installed.

If you have around 400 square feet of un-shaded south facing roof area there’s no better investment you can make today than taking around \$20,000 from a RRIF or a TFSA and putting it into solar panels on your roof. For you. For your kids. And for the planet. Do it!

The argument is often made that “going green is expensive.” That it’s going to cost us to change to renewable energy. In fact my experience shows that the exact opposite is true. In fact it’s more expensive to keep burning oil and gas! It’s much much cheaper to put solar panels on every roof. Even in cold, dark, rainy, cloudy Vancouver.

Canada is unique among countries in that most of our existing electricity comes from hydropower, which can be spun up or down as needed. When you don’t need the power, the water just flows over the dam instead of through the electric generators. This is ideal for solar energy, because the generators can be spun up when needed on dark days, or overnight. Not many countries have this tremendous advantage.

No jobs need be lost. It takes a lot of manpower to put solar panels on roofs. Also, Canada would be smart to start making

Canadian solar panels in factories here. Ours were manufactured in Malaysia, and designed in Germany. Why are we not doing that here? We could. It would be far better to spend \$30B setting up solar panel factories in Canada instead of a new pipeline to the tar sands, as we are actually doing with the Trans Mountain Pipeline. That’s insane, frankly, all things considered.

Then there is the task of setting up huge banks of batteries to store the excess solar power that will likely be generated when most roofs have solar panels. They are already doing this in Australia, Hawaii, and a few island nations that have no oil, and it’s working great. Our electric utilities could shift from dam builders and high tension power line distribution networks to managing and moderating a huge distributed network of solar panels generating electricity cheaply on millions of rooftops. Lots of room for employment in that task. And we must build battery factories in Canada as well.



But the key point is that going solar is cheaper than not going solar. Staying on oil costs us. It’s the exact opposite of what “they” want you to think. If you’ve noticed over one hundred thousand Tesla electric cars multiplying like bunnies on our streets it’s because it’s ten times cheaper to drive an electric car compared to a gas or diesel car.

Spending money on oil and gas development in the 2020s, as the government is currently doing, is like in 1920s spending billions on horseshoe factories and horse stables, etc. It’s backward thinking and doomed to fail.

I wish the NDP provincial government would look to the future and start building infrastructure for a future based on solar energy that is sure to happen. Why? Because it’s much cheaper than burning oil and gas. This is the key point. It’s cheap cheap cheap. Simple plain economics is going to force this change, as it is already doing in cars. It will happen for homes, too. A day will come in our grandchildren’s lives when the notion of building a house without solar panels will be as strange as building a house without a toilet. ❀

(If you want more information or to talk about solar panels or electric cars, feel free to contact me at shell@sfu.ca).

Member Doings

EVELYN PALMER

In response to my request for personal items for this newsletter, SFURA Past President **Jim Boyd** responded with reports of two joyous events. His wife, **Sharon Lord**, retired from her dental practice in Langley in May. After many years of commuting she has sold her practice and is now a retiree. And Jim writes about *The Wedding*:

My stepdaughter **Sarah Lord Feguson**, Board of Governors student member for several years and previous student member of the SFU Senate is finishing her Ph.D thesis in



business at SFU. More importantly she was married this past August in a destination wedding on Catalina Island near Los Angeles on a four day cruise with Royal Caribbean. Her now husband, **William Hall** who just completed his Ph.D last November is the son of the late **Gary Hall**, a

previous president of APSA. My three grandchildren, 6 years old fraternal twins and 4 1/2 years old sister, were in the wedding party. All 65 guests managed to fly out of LA the day before the storm hit LA and also the day before 4,000 residents of Catalina Island were evacuated!

Congratulations to **Milt McLaren** who was named to the Order of Canada in 2022 for his pioneering work in the field of Environmental Education. This honour recognizes civilians who make extraordinary contributions to the nation. <https://www.sfu.ca/dashboard/faculty-staff/news/2022/08/sfu-professor-named-to-order-of-canada-for-innovation-in-enviro.html>

Milt came to SFU in 1967 with a joint appointment between the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Science, in the Department of Biological Sciences. He has won many additional awards and honours, and his biography takes us through 55+ years of SFU and BC environmental education history.

Read all about him at; <https://www.sfu.ca/education-research-hub/research-in-focus/spotlight-series/retiree-research/milton-mcclaren.html>

Dave Huntley is aging in place like many of us, and enjoys reading from his living room and his porch which looks out over Burrard Inlet. He writes;

For as long as I can remember now, which is not very long, given a choice of reading or doing something else I will usually choose reading. Occasionally when I particularly like a book I will read it twice. Herewith two very different books that I read twice and are easy to read.

Polly Toynbee's *An Uneasy Inheritance* is a biography of her and her ancestors who include the famous historian Arnold Toynbee and the classicist and intellectual Gilbert Murray. It is also about social class and her failed attempt to find working class ancestors. A remarkable number of her forebears spent their lives trying to make the world a better place. It seems that there is an interesting story on every page. Amongst other things you will find the origins of the National Health Service. I am wondering if I liked the book so much because I come from the same social class in England and share the same sympathies as Polly.

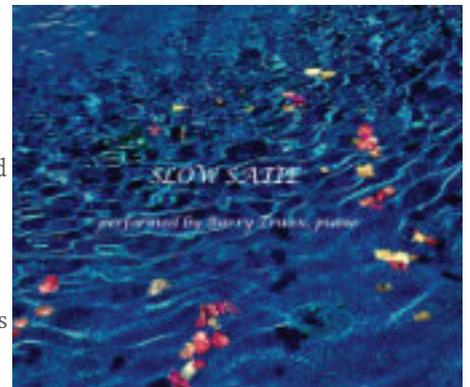
And, *How Big Things get Done* by Bent Flyvbjerg with Dan Gardner. Bent has studied 16,000 projects, and determined their cost overruns by category. The least cost overruns occur with solar power, electrical transmission lines, wind power, and pipelines. The largest overruns occur with nuclear storage, Olympic Games, nuclear power and hydroelectric dams. On the way we learn about such iconic buildings such as the Empire State Building in New York, the Sydney Opera House, and the little-known construction of schools in Nepal. The Trans Mountain pipeline with an overrun cost at present of 317 % does not fit, and is in a class of its own. Flyvbjerg describes techniques that should be used to limit cost overruns.

Emeritus Professor **Barry Truax** continues to be active after 50+ years. He will be visiting Harvard University in Boston this fall to give a lecture, class and small concert at the Music Department. He will present a program of 8-channel soundscape compositions, several of which have been played at various international conferences over the summer. Barry has also launched a new YouTube channel with 21 videos, mostly of his audio-visual artistic works, but also 3 of his piano streams.

The newest one – which so far has the most views – is titled “Slow Satie” which accompanies the music with mainly Impressionist paintings that he has photographed in galleries across Europe and the U.S

He writes; “*Slow Satie*” can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ULZbmArSqm0> or else you can search under my name, but only choose the ones with my photo in a circle – that’s my channel – the others having been uploaded by others, with lesser quality. And, of course, please subscribe! The Satie one is over an hour long and is very relaxing.

Barry’s website is at; www.sfu.ca/~truax



This issue’s bonus feature is the SFURA Newsletter from November 1999: http://www.sfu.ca/retirees/Newsletters/1999/1999_4_Nov.pdf See what the retirees were doing that month. ❀

In Memoriam

We ask any of you who have further information about any deceased SFU retirees to submit obituaries to the SFURA Webmaster on the link provided on our website at: https://www.sfu.ca/retirees/in-memoriam/a_g.html. We post names of all deceased SFU retirees of whom we are aware, not only those who were SFURA members. We welcome tributes to your former colleagues. We will place them with their obituaries on the website.

Cecile Davis (September 17, 1936 - May 5, 2023)

See: http://www.sfu.ca/retirees/in-memoriam/a_g.html

Eija-Ritta Fransilla (March 13, 1949 - May 11, 2023)

See: <https://ritaandti.com/Slideshow%20Embed/Eija%20Riita%20Fransila.html>

Eberhard Kiehlmann born February 9, 1937 - passed away on September 6, 2023 at age 86. He taught Organic Chemistry at SFU from 1966 to 2002. He was devoted to students and was the Undergraduate Advisor for many years. He established an Awards ceremony recognising undergraduate and graduate students who won competitions, scholarships, bursaries and awards. Long after his retirement he had an office in Chemistry and participated in tutoring and in departmental events. He was a member of the Chemsemble Choir for several years and was a music lover. See: https://www.sfu.ca/retirees/in-memoriam/h_m.html

Beatrice Linden (January 26, 1931 - May 3, 2023)

See: <https://vancouver.sunandprovince.remembering.ca/obituary/beatrice-linden-1088218633>

Tony Patrick (June 14, 1948 - June 22, 2023) was Director, Applications and Technology then Director, Administrative Systems at SFU. His good friend **Jim Boyd** has written the entry for this column:

Tony was always very professional, pleasant and quite easy to work with on a system issue or project within the Financial Services Dept. It was also helpful that his unit was a group that was specifically dedicated to the SFU financial systems so that requirements and projects were not delayed or in conflict with any greater IT projects around the University.

On a personal anecdotal basis, I always got a chuckle that he used to take his whole family to Disneyland EVERY year as their main vacation choice. When Tony retired around the same time as myself in 2009 in the midst of the Great Recession of 2008-09, he took his Administrative Plan pension out as a lump sum and laughingly joked that he just put it into S & P ETF's (passive exchange traded funds) and made about \$100,000 per month in the first two months of retirement thus doing better than me as SFU Treasurer.

His obituary is at: <https://vancouver.sunandprovince.remembering.ca/obituary/>

anthony-patrick-1088477371

Simon Verdun-Jones passed away on August 21, 2023. He was a founding member of SFU's School of Criminology and instrumental in its development and expansion. He dedicated his research to the connection between crime and mental health. He was known for his exceptional teaching ability, his kindness, wit, and courage. The School of Criminology has posted his obituary on their website. Read it and the comments from his colleagues and students at: <https://www.sfu.ca/criminology/community/news/2023/in-memory-of-professor-emeritus-simon-verdun-jones.html>

Marvin Wideen passed away on September 7, 2023. He came to SFU from Saskatoon in 1974 to teach in the Faculty of Education. He was highly involved in the Professional Development Program, working with beginning teachers along with School Associates and Faculty Associates, a program unique to SFU. He described it in our 50th anniversary book, Remembering SFU. Marv was an early member of the SFURA and served on the Executive Board from 2001-2008, serving as Vice President 2003 - 2005 and President 2005 - 2007. The first four of our Oral History DVDs were produced during this time. He describes that process and the forming of the Financial Interest Group in Presidential Reflections in our 20th Anniversary Booklet; <http://www.sfu.ca/retirees/history/20thAnniversary.html>

Upon Marv's retirement in 1999, he and his wife Loretta took a bicycle trip across Canada. Their story is in their book *Retired and Still Rolling*. They attended all the SFURA social events as long as they were able to, and he organised groups to attend the annual BC Lions vs the Saskatchewan Roughriders football games. He organised a very well-attended tour of Electronic Arts through his son Brian.

See his obituary at: http://www.sfu.ca/retirees/in-memoriam/t_z.html

The Department of Chemistry is in the process of adding an In Memoriam section to their website which will include faculty and staff who died before the SFURA and our website were founded in 1998. Four faculty members, **Sam Aronoff**, **Abe Unruh**, **Ted Wells** and **Saul Wolfe** have now been added to the SFURA website. See: http://www.sfu.ca/retirees/in-memoriam/a_g.html ❀



PHOTO: RON LONG

MARCIA TOMS

Walter Piovesan and I are delighted to present the fall 2023 edition of *Simon Says*. After a few glitches at the start, we have another excellent, substantive and thought-provoking issue. That result is entirely thanks to our contributors who once again have come through with work that is varied, engaging and informative.

It has been a very long, very warm and very dry summer here in Vancouver: no longer the Wet Coast that my Dad ("You don't have to shovel it.") loved so much. The rest of the province and indeed, much of the nation have endured months of weird weather. Ever responsive to current conditions, John Clague offers his descriptions, explanations and advice for the future - complete with a graph - in a weather and climate uncertain world. On a similar topic, solar power, Barry Shell is right on the money, and in it, too. He has me convinced!

It may come as a shock to many, it certainly does to me, that 1968 was 55 years ago. Put another way, that's more than half a century. It was, as journalist Mark Kurlansky observes in his book of the same name, *The year that rocked the world*. Its worldwide events from Paris to Prague, Mexico City to New York City, Tokyo to Rome and even SFU in Burnaby BC, put young people, their grievances about war, in loco parentis, racism, and sexism (the last two both newly coined terms for old injustices) front and centre.

1968 was built on earlier foundations, including the modern civil rights movement in the USA, which mounted the 1963 March on Washington led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr and others. Now iconic, at the time the event gained immediate global attention. The relatively new medium of television brought news to homes as it happened. From sheriffs, dogs and water cannons assaulting young Black anti-segregationists to Dr. King speaking about his dream. Uncensored. Bob Anderson was there that day in Washington DC and shares his experiences with us.

In 1967, just four years after that giant civil rights rally, and in the wake of hundreds of demonstrations against the War in Vietnam, particularly in Canada, the

USA and Europe which had ramped up after 1965, Brian Hayden attended a big one, also in Washington DC. He writes about his memories here. That was at the end of a short but fierce era of rebelliousness, creativity, and yes, of optimism. Half a century on, we need more of each of these. As the 1968 Paris graffiti urged, we need to "Be realistic," and "demand the impossible."

Heribert Adam has recently returned from an extended stay in South Africa and his keen observations put in context problems, trials and challenges decades in the making. One minute, my History 12 students in Vancouver were singing along to the lyrics of the Special AKA's "Free Nelson Mandela," shouting out: "21 years in captivity." (The number changed yearly.) The next moment, Mandela was free and the ANC was in power. And then ... Heribert's article helps interested observers make sense of the current uncomfortable reality.

We are fortunate to have a retrospective by the ever-energetic Ezzat Fattah, who has spent decades arguing in favour of a restorative rather than a punitive justice system. His article is a potent marriage of data and philosophy. Speaking of data, Herbert Grubel lays down the details of growing government bureaucracy. He has the numbers. And, more philosophically, Meguido Zola offers a piece that begins with elephants - always a good idea - and gently advises us to wait for our feet to follow our hearts.

Our regular columnists Marilyn Bowman, Sheila Delany and Tom O'Shea prove to be thoughtful anchors: they bring to us prescriptive language and its foibles, the joy of neighbourliness and current films. The latter article convinced me. I won't be going to see "Barbie:" never wanted one, never got one, but did help my younger sister give hers a shag haircut with dull nail scissors and wild tattoos using potassium permanganate from my chemistry set. Punk rock Barbie in the early 1960s: well ahead of the times.

Albert Curzon expands his story of his late wife Mona's kindness and generosity in an anecdote that shifts the focus to his own childhood. And Jared Curtis again offers us the wisdom of his poetry.

On the topic of mortality, you will read elsewhere in *Simon Says* that long time SFU RA stalwart Marv Wideen has passed away. I came to know Marv very well in the late 1980s and early 1990s when I worked with him in the Faculty of Education's Professional Development Program. He was an open-minded, affable colleague whose ideas about pedagogy favoured the student experience. Marv always insisted on "going to the wall for the squirrels:" by that he meant paying attention to those future teachers who wanted to shake things up. He also supported and acknowledged the wisdom of seconded Faculty Associates and Coordinators, encouraging and advising many of us as we pursued research and presented papers at conferences from Ottawa to San Diego and Victoria.

Marv had a wicked sense of humour, and jokes and little anecdotes were delivered with a sly smile and at least one winking eye. Favourite recollections were of his time as a superintendent of schools back in Saskatchewan. "In those days," he would say, with a straight face, "anyone with a pulse could become a teacher." It was obviously not true, but it made the point. Be a real live wire, or else. It remains the very best advice. ❖

