



# The Bark

Spring 2015

Harold Neth, Editor

## News & Events

- April 28 – [National Day of Mourning](#)
- May 3 – [World Press Freedom Day](#)
- May 8-9 – [Remember lives lost in WW II](#)
- May 15 – [International Day of Families](#)
- May 17 – [International Day Against Homophobia](#)
- May 21 – [World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development](#)
- May 21-24 – [Aboriginal Awareness Week](#)
- May 22 – [International Day for Biological Diversity](#)
- May 29 – [International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers](#)
- May 31 – [World No-Tobacco Day](#)
  
- June 9 – [Aspen Foundation AGM](#)
- June 4 – [Clean Air Day](#)
- June 5 – [World Environment Day](#)
- June 8-14 – [Rivers to Oceans Week](#)
- June 12 – [World Day Against Child Labour](#)
- June 14 – [World Blood Donor Day](#)
- June 20 – [World Refugee Day](#)
- June 21 – [National Aboriginal Day](#)

## Medicare and Trade Unions

*Mr. Finkel has written many articles and books on history and social policy and practice in Canada. We invited him to write several articles on topical issues related to workers and the role of unions in social policy. This article is the second of three that will be posted on the Aspen Foundation website as well.*

The trade union movement played an important role in persuading the Canadian government to implement a universal medicare plan; that is a health insurance program paid for by the government from its general revenues. Medicare meant that an individual needing to see a physician or to receive medical treatment in a hospital paid nothing for that service.

By the 1940s, most Canadians supported a universal medicare plan. But the Canadian Medical Association and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce opposed such plans, claiming that individuals and families should buy private, for-profit health insurance or pay for services out of pocket. By the early 1960s, only six Canadians out of ten could afford any form of private health insurance.

The federal government set up a royal commission to investigate medical services in Canada. Business and doctors' organizations told the commission that the private sector was dealing adequately with Canadians' health needs. The trade union movement demonstrated that this was untrue. Most unions had negotiated health insurance policies with their employers, and the unions argued that private health insurers overcharged, restricted the services that they covered, and usually imposed co-payments for clients seeking services. Meanwhile, social workers provided evidence that Canada's poor rarely sought medical help because they could not afford it. The commission concluded that only a government-run program financed through the tax system would insure that no Canadian avoided going to doctors or hospitals for financial reasons.

A federal Liberal government introduced medicare though that party had failed to introduce such a program during earlier periods in office. The Liberals acted because of the commission report and because they lacked a majority of seats and depended on the votes of the New Democratic Party MPs to remain in office. The NDP was mostly funded by unions and demanded medicare as part of the price to keep the Liberals in power.

Since medicare was introduced in 1968, the union movement has fought for it to cover more medical services, including coverage of



# Aspen Foundation for Labour Education



prescribed medications, visits to dentists, home care and long-term care for seniors and the disabled.

## **Aspen Foundation and Educators for Social Justice Network**

On March 18, 2015, Aspen hosted a meeting of several educators at Barnett House who have a strong interest in forming a group to share ideas and resources on social justice projects. As a result, a working group was established to plan further events where educators can come together and share.

Accordingly, an informal gathering of educators interested in making a difference through their schools and communities through social justice projects will meet on Wednesday, May 13. If you are interested in attending, contact Gary Hansen, Executive Director for Aspen Foundation, at [afle@telus.net](mailto:afle@telus.net).

## **Aspen Foundation's social media survey**

In the Winter 2015 edition of *The Bark*, we invited educators to respond to a survey Aspen was conducting on educator use of various social media. Others were encouraged to respond to the survey at the Aspen Teachers' Conventions presentations.

There were 67 respondents; 31% have taught more than 20 years, and 28% have taught 1 – 5 years. Facebook was ranked as the most used while Twitter and Pinterest were second and third. The platforms most respondents have signed up for are Facebook, Google+, and YouTube. 73% of respondents use social media for personal and professional purposes.

Results indicate that Aspen should become more engaged in social media and plans are underway to do so. Thank you to those who responded and have helped give Aspen direction. A special thank you to Alicia Cappello and Andrea Budac, U of A students in the Community Services Learning Program, who designed the survey, analyzed the results, and made recommendations.

## **Public Interest Alberta Conference**

Aspen sponsored high school students' attendance at the PIA Annual Conference, April 9 – 11. Students indicated they learned much about social justice and enjoyed the speakers and events.

## **Social 30-1 and 30-2 lessons on *Common Ground: Defending the Public Sector***

The video link and lessons for the 42 minute video, *Common Ground* produced by Canadian filmmaker Tom Radford, are on Aspen's website at [www.afle.ca](http://www.afle.ca).

## **Your Support is key to offering Social Justice and Labour Education in our Schools!**

It's friends like you who make Aspen's work possible. You too think it important that schools teach the perspective that allows for youth to change and build a new, fairer, more kind, and more just workplace, community and society,

Thank you to the unions and individuals who have already made a donation this year. If you have not yet donated, please send us your contribution. Aspen Foundation is a registered charity and provides income tax receipts to individual donors.

To donate, see our website and contact information at the bottom of this page or go to: [CanadaHelps.org](http://CanadaHelps.org)

## **Related Links & Info**

- [Morgan Freeman Narrates the Greatest Story of Our Generation](#)
- [To Prison For Poverty](#)
- [AFLE Teaching Resources](#)
- [Social Studies Council](#)
- [Public Interest Alberta](#)
- [Parkland Institute](#)
- [UN Observances](#)

Always review resources before using them in class.



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