

THE PPA*LITICUS*

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE POLITICS AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION (PPA) ALUMNI

RYERSON UNIVERSITY

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POSTCARD FROM THE FIELD: MEGHAN MACLENNAN

After graduating from the MA-PPA program in the fall of 2006, I was all excited about getting a job in government and working. My hope was to work on something related to renewable energy policy. As the cliché goes: things did not exactly work out the way I planned.

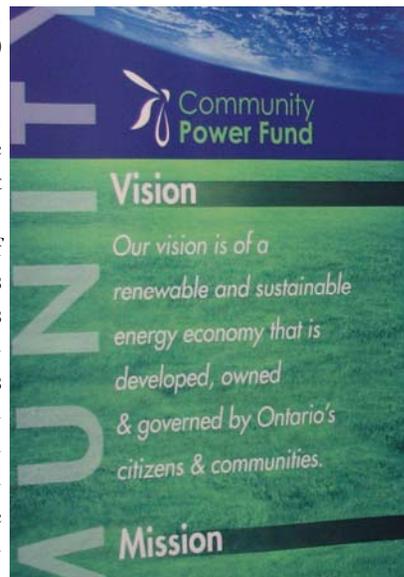
Actually, I think they worked out better.

I didn't get a job in government, but I did get one in renewable energy. After a very unsatisfying part-time job at Blockbuster and a fascinating internship with the Ontario Sustainable Energy Association, I started a full time position as the Office and Communications Manager for a non-profit organization called the Community Power Fund.

I love my job. The renewable energy sector is such a fascinating place to be right now, especially our little corner of it. The CPFund provides support for community ownership of renewable energy resources by providing grants for the early stages of pro-

ject development, which for a 10 MW wind farm (5 to 10 turbines, depending on the size) can cost \$750,000 to \$1 million. Many of the organizations that come to us wouldn't otherwise have access to sufficient funding for their projects. A good example of the type of project we support is the Exhibition Place turbine in downtown Toronto, which is 50% owned by a co-operative of local citizens.

One of the best things about my job is the opportunity to learn about the other community projects in the works throughout Ontario. As the main contact for all applicants, I have the opportunity to talk with any number of people on a day-to-day basis on how their projects are progressing. Our applicants are from all across the province, and from all sorts of organizations,



including non-profits, co-operatives, farming associations and First Nations bands. We have also received applications for a variety of different project technologies, including wind, solar, geothermal, small hydro and biomass. Just this week, I was lucky enough to have the chance to visit the future site of a 20 MW wind project being undertaken by the Chippewas of Georgina Island and the Windfall Ecology Centre.

The other great thing about my job is my proximity to some major policy issues affecting our sector. Although not directly involved myself,

our executive director is actively engaged in a campaign advocating a Green Energy Act for Ontario that would alleviate many of the problems facing renewable energy projects in the province. I will certainly be following the campaign closely to see how effective our advocacy will be at changing policy.

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INTRODUCING THE (GOOD CAUSE) PPA MUG!



Have you ever been in a situation when you craved both a good hot drink and a fine political quotation? The Ryerson Politics and Public Administration Mug will fulfill both purposes, AND help you contribute to a good cause. For only \$10, your purchase will add dollars to the David Crombie Scholarship Fund. Together with the Faculty of Arts, the department is hoping to raise enough money to endow a fund that would help needy students each year. To get your own mug, contact Viola Ing at Ving@ryerson.ca. John Shields says coffee never tasted so good.



MEET THE NEW CHAIR: REBEKAH BRANNEN

THE *PAALITICUS*
TAKES ITS NAME
FROM PLATO'S
"THE
STATESMAN"
WHICH WAS
ORIGINALLY
TITLED
POLITIKOS

Surely the mark of a successful organization is the peaceful turnover of power. This was done at the September meeting of the alumni association's executive group as Rebekah Brannen assumed the chair. A warm thank you to Jane Weber, the first chair, for her enthusiasm and commitment to the association. Her leadership in organizing the first "speed-networking" event on Valentine's day was keenly appreciated.

Brannen was raised in the small fishing village of Charlesville, Nova Scotia. She attended Dalhousie University and obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree in International Development Studies and Spanish, graduating in 2003.

While studying international development, Rebekah traveled to a number of countries, including

Mexico, Cuba and Malawi. She realized that, although she didn't necessarily want to return to Charlesville, Canada was the place she wanted to call home. This decision, combined with a desire to make a difference at the local level, led her to pursue a Bachelor of Social Work at Dalhousie. She graduated in 2005.

Rebekah worked as a Counselor at a group home and as a Constituency Assistant to a Member of Legislative Assembly. Social work was interesting, but creating social policy was becoming more and more appealing. She and her partner Fen looked into various graduate programs around the country and concluded that Toronto was the

place to be and Ryerson would be the school they would attend.

In September 2006, Rebekah, Fen and the cat packed their bags and moved to Toronto. Rebekah completed the Masters degree in Public Policy and Administration at Ryerson in October, 2007 then 'got her foot in the door' of the Ontario Public Service even before the convocation ceremony. She began at the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, working on Aboriginal issues, affordable housing initiatives and municipal performance measurement.

Recently, Rebekah moved to the Ministry of Community and Social Services, where she is applying all of her education background while working on social assistance policy.

In her free time Rebekah enjoys traveling and has been taking the opportunity to explore Ontario. She currently volunteers on many committees of the Heath Street Housing Co-op in Toronto and is taking a French class at Glendon College.



MY BOOKSHELF...A SUMMER'S READING

PROF. MITU SENGUPTA

July and August were to be spent in India, finishing up a paper I'd been writing for months. By mid-May I could think of nothing else, and indulged myself with Pankaj Mishra's appropriately-titled *India in Mind*, a careful selection of passages from essays and novels by a constellation of eminent writers whose eyes and sensibilities had been shaped by the West (Malraux, Naipaul, Orwell, to name a few), but for whom India had seeped into the skin.

The two pieces that stuck in my mind were by Mark Twain (from his 1897 travelogue, *Following the Equator*) and George Orwell (from his 1936 essay, *Shooting An Elephant*). Both had recorded their sense of difference, displacement and bafflement with their usual candour and irreverence, but had also conveyed feelings of rejection and repulsion that I'd found all too common in colonial writing.

The thought made me bristle, even as I noted that (particularly) Orwell's savagery of judgment was as much about his part in the colonial story as it was about India. I wondered if I should be reading more in Bengali or Hindi, or perhaps a less masculine prose. But when I finally found myself in India at the beginning of July – after various baggage mishaps along the way – these unsettling feelings of self-doubt had all but evaporated. I'd arrived annoyed and in somewhat of a panic, considerably behind the writing schedule I'd set for myself. Determined to pick up

the pace, I went at it furiously, mixing up days and nights, until on one unexceptional morning, the paper seemed finished. I began to feel Delhi's tremendous heat almost immediately. The thought of six more weeks of this was crippling.

I'd come to India to complete the old paper, but also to push forward a newer project of assessing the fate of the country's labour movement under the weight of liberalization. I'd been discussing the issue with various journalist friends and a few opinionated (and unavoidable) relatives. None of it was encouraging. The unsympathetic said the unions were relics of the past, and slated for elimination in India's rapidly globalizing economy. The sympathetic argued that unions had failed to organize the poor effectively, and that liberalization was the very least of their problems. I felt stuck and demoralized. The whole project looked horribly skeletal, and the wet, monsoon heat increasingly unbearable.

With labour (and perhaps the West) in mind I went fiction-hunting. I burrowed through the city's many English-language bookshops, at least a few of which had escaped the smart lighting, tiled floors and ugly orderliness of middle-class affluence. In one, the books were in a particularly mad heap and I emerged, after several hours on precariously positioned ladders, with two dusty volumes: Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, which had first appeared serially in 1906 in the socialist weekly *Appeal to Rea-*

son, and Jack London's dark, soft science fiction novel, *The Iron Heel*. I'd been force-fed both by my high-school English teacher, when I'd read them as samples of great American literature, not as the proletarian novels my college professor later portrayed them to be.

The books were consumed in less than a week, washed down by many cups of hot, sugary tea, a strangely suitable choice for the sticky weather. Sinclair's somewhat overwrought portrayal of the misery of immigrant working-class life in Chicago's meat-packing industry was meant to inspire revolution (indeed, London had thought it would), and not simply the passage of meat-inspection legislation (which it is widely thought to have influenced). London's dystopic vision of an America ruled by a tiny Oligarchy, eventually displaced, through a Revolution, by the Brotherhood of Man, made me chuckle.

The books provided something like inspiration – the flesh and blood of the genesis of labour movements, no pun intended – though I couldn't help feel a bit ridiculous about mining Sinclair and London for motivation, and that too, in Delhi ("no-one's asked for these in years," the bookshop owner had informed me, rather condescendingly).

Nevertheless, they had gotten under my skin. For the rest of the summer, I steered determinedly away from writings red of tooth and claw, and read more methodical though sterile accounts of the origins



Dr. Mitu Sengupta is Assistant Professor in the Department of Politics and Public Administration at Ryerson University.

She received her PhD in Political Science from the University of Toronto and her Master of Arts and Bachelor of Arts, both in Political Science, from McGill University.

Professor Sengupta's Ph.D. dissertation examined the World Bank's impact on the politics of market reform in India. It was one among three short-listed for the Canadian Political Science Association's "Vincent Lemieux Prize" in 2005. Her areas of research specialism are the politics of development and foreign aid, and the politics of globalization and of resistance to globalization, particularly from labour.

She teaches POG 100, "Introduction to Politics"; POG540, "Third World Politics"; POG323, "Politics of Development" and, at the MA level, PA8208, "Comparative Public Policy".

and dynamics of the Indian labour movement. The scholars managed to tempt me into a somewhat shallow conclusion that my project is, indeed, worthwhile.

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UPCOMING EVENTS FOR YOUR CALENDAR

27 OCTOBER: Alumni Wine and Cheese (International Learning Centre, 5-6:30 pm)

30 OCTOBER: 2nd Annual Ryerson University Public Administration Workshop, 1pm-4:30 (@ Eric Palin Hall, Room207, 87 Gerrard Street East. See the department website for details)

2 DECEMBER: Politics and Public Administration Alumni Association Executive Committee (please join us!) @ Jorgenson Hall, 6 pm, 7th floor Boardroom.

3 FEBRUARY: Politics and Public Administration Alumni Association Executive Committee (please join us!) @ Jorgenson Hall, 6 pm, 7th floor Boardroom.

FEBRUARY 2009: (date and pub to be confirmed); the Alumni Speed-Networking Event (back by popular demand)

JUNE 2009: (date to be confirmed): The 3rd annual MA MRP Workshop/Conference (in the pod)



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