



Chumir Ethics Forum

Sheldon Chumir Foundation for Ethics in Leadership



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Thinking about Ethical Leadership: **“The right thing for the wrong reason”**

The first in a series from our new President, Janet Keeping



Something that both interests and worries me a great deal is how people get “stuck” in their reasoning on ethical issues. There are lots of ways in which our thinking can go wrong, but a major one occurs when we jump from the fact that an action has been taken for ethically wrong reasons to the conclusion that therefore what was done cannot be of any good effect.

The following arose during a discussion on CBC radio of whether the Canadian military presence in Afghanistan could have the effect of improving the lives of people in that country, and in particular women and children. One participant believed this is in fact what is happening, that lives are being improved, albeit very slowly and extremely unevenly across the country. The other refused to accept that conclusion – not because she had a different understanding of what was happening in Afghanistan, but simply because the military intervention was not undertaken for that purpose. Whenever, she reasonably asked, did an army go into a country to rescue the women and children? When pressed on

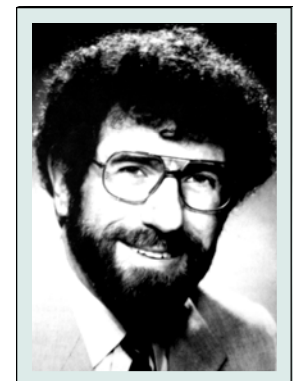
why a suspect motive should preclude the possibility that good be done, no coherent answer was forthcoming.

The same sort of reasoning occurs regularly in other contexts, for example, corporate social responsibility when objections are raised that a company is practicing CSR solely to enhance its own image. One has to acknowledge that improved image is, if not the usual reason for corporate “benevolence”, at least a very common one. But if what is proposed is in fact good for the community – e.g., providing scholarships for needy students – does the tainted motive rob the gesture of all good effect? I think not.

We need to distinguish, it seems to me, between the ethical qualities of the company or person and the rightness or wrongness of what has been done. I suspect that the creation of scholarships is nearly always a good thing, even when the funding is provided for purposes of self-aggrandizement. This is not to say that we should turn a blind eye to motives. For one thing, we are going to trust people who do the right thing for the wrong reason far less than those who have the right reasons for what they do.

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Sheldon M. Chumir

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The logical mistake — going from “the motive is selfish or wrong” to “therefore what has been done cannot have good effect” — is clear enough. But why do these mistakes occur with such frequency? The answer lies, I think, in the very strong emotional response we may have to those who would have us believe they act from pure motives, when they are doing no such thing. This rage cements thinking in an illogical pattern: these people (companies, political or military leaders) are bad, so what they are doing must be too. But this just does not follow and if we are going to be honest, we have to admit this is so.

No matter what the actual motives behind the original mission into Afghanistan after the attacks of September 11, 2001, it is possible that some good *might* come of the Canadian military presence there. Even if companies act in only their own interests (as some argue they must), it does not mean their activities never have good impact.

Janet Keeping

Letter from Lethbridge:

Respect for Islam and the freedom to read

[Ed. note: With this letter we inaugurate a new series of “letters” written by people living or working in parts of Canada from which we do not often hear.]

After suggesting the Danish cartoon issue as a topic for Freedom to Read Week, I received alarmed messages from a staff member at the Lethbridge Public Library. She supported the idea of an anti-censorship event, but not on this topic, which she felt would amount to “Muslim-bashing.” I found this frustrating. Isn’t there a certain contradiction in telling a panelist what *not* to talk about in the name of Freedom to Read? But her reply went in a different direction: I could

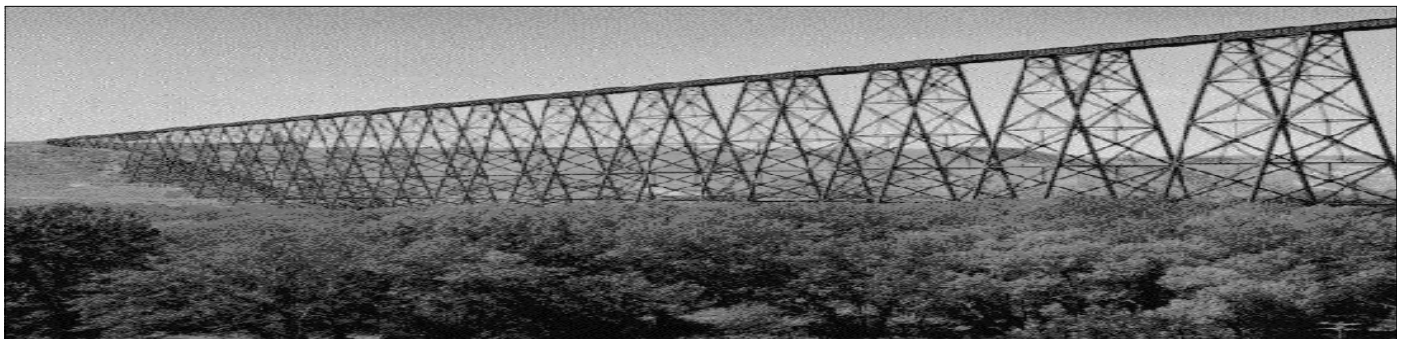
not speak on the freedom to publish these cartoons because, not a Muslim, I am not an expert in the matter. Only Muslims are authorized to discuss this topic? I found this a suspect restriction. Further, if applied in southern Alberta where there are so few Muslims, it would seem to largely preclude public discussion of the issue.

Eventually it was decided that I should participate, but speak abstractly about Respect and Freedom of Expression — not cartoons, riots, stereotyping, boycotts, embassy burnings, or radical Islam. If questions about the cartoons should arise, it would be all right because she herself would be there — a Muslim and (by implication) an expert.

What happened at this event? People agreed that Madame Bovary should not have been censored in nineteenth century France and the Chinese government should not censor the Internet. Little time was left for my presentation, which was put last. But eventually there were some satisfactions. Those who stayed for the whole event seemed to appreciate that demanding respect was a self-defeating exercise, and there was a useful discussion of related themes.

In contrast, a University group arranged an event for the previous evening, under the auspices of the Southern Alberta Council on Public Affairs. Panelists agreed that we cannot restrict our expression so as never to offend anyone and generally thought the cartoons had been deliberately exploited by some Muslim clerics so as to incite anti-Western feeling. There was also consensus that respect for a person or tradition does not require refraining from criticism. And furthermore, genuine respect cannot emerge from intimidation of any form — including efforts to inhibit public discussion.

Trudy Govier teaches philosophy in Lethbridge.



A railway bridge in Lethbridge, Alberta

Human Rights in British Columbia: Exploring New Approaches

Until 2003, British Columbia (B.C.), like all other provinces, dealt with human rights complaints — such as allegations of racism, or discrimination in the work place — through the Justice Department and the Human Rights Commission. Following a 2003 provincial election, the new government called for reviews of all Departments including Justice, leading to an examination of the B.C. Human Rights Commission. The government identified three major problems with the BC Commission and called for restructuring.

The primary concern was the delay in complaint processing; evidence showed that the entire process could take upwards of three years to resolve or reject. Secondly the Commission's screening process was problematic in that only 20% of complainants were being referred to the Tribunal following investigation. The third concern stemmed from an apparent duplication of services: mediation occurred at both the Commission and Tribunal level.

Accordingly, the administrative justice review invited input from the public as well as groups and organizations about which system they should implement as a replacement. The result was the institution of a new system which has three components:

- The B.C. Human Rights Tribunal
- The B.C. Human Rights Coalition
- Community Legal Assistance Society (CLAS)

The B.C. Human Rights Coalition together with CLAS operate the Human Rights Clinic which provides services to the public and legal aid to clients whose complaints have been accepted by the B.C. Human Rights Tribunal. This model is also employed in some European and Australian jurisdictions. In Canada, Nunavut has also adopted this system through their Nunavut Fair Practices Office, and Ontario is currently considering somewhat similar structure.

As it stands in B.C., the Tribunal is a statutory body under the Ministry of the Attorney General, and although the Human Rights Clinic is not, it is endorsed and partially funded by the government.

Beyond dealing with complaints, the B.C. Human Rights Clinic is responsible for providing legal education and monitoring human rights in the province. In their contract with the provincial government, the Human Rights Coalition is obliged to provide thirty-seven days of public education workshops. CLAS also runs a public resource centre for individuals interested in researching the law.

Since being implemented, the new B.C. Human Rights system has seen an increase in the number of settlements reached. According to Susan O'Donnell, Executive Director of the B.C. Human Rights Coalition, the rate of settlement is now reaching 85%, either through early mediation or through litigation before the Tribunal. Only 20% of cases were being settled under the former process in B.C.

Although these numbers suggest a vast improvement, there is also criticism of this system. Former B.C. Chief Human Rights Commissioner, Mary Woo Sims, spoke against the new model in a letter to the editor in the Toronto Star, warning that the "gate-keeper" function was merely being shifted from the Commission to the Tribunal, and that the litigation style approach minimized investigation and failed to deal with more substantive human rights issues.

The Executive Director and Communications Officer of the B.C. Human Rights Coalition both express satisfaction with many of the system changes, such as the differentiation between education funding and funding used for the complaints process. They both agree, however, that there are still challenges; under-staffing and an overwhelming workload still persist. Funding is also a challenge — as a non-profit community organization, the Human Rights Clinic does not receive full government funding. On the whole, however, the staff are seeing results that remedy problems that formally existed, and they are excited about being part of what they regard as the new direction of Human Rights work in Canada.

Jamie Marie Taylor

For more information on the B.C. Human Rights Tribunal and the *Human Rights Clinic*, visit their websites:

www.bchrcoalition.org

www2.povnet.org/clas

www.bchrt.bc.ca

A More Democratic Alberta – How Do We Get There?

Is democracy in Alberta in trouble? If this is a serious political question – and not a partisan one – then those of us concerned with ethical leadership and an engaged citizenry need to take a hard look at the health of our democracy.

“*A More Democratic Alberta*” was the name of a May 12th conference in Edmonton, organised by the John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights and supported in part by the Sheldon Chumir Foundation. In researching my session on “democratic participation”, which I was facilitating, I found some statistics which raised concerns.

Worrisome Trends:

- In Alberta, 2004 provincial elections hit an all-time low voter turnout: 45%.
- Calgary municipal 2004 elections also recorded their lowest voter turnout: 20%.
- Alberta MLAs sat only 44 days in 2005; by contrast PEI legislature sat 78 days and Parliament sat 158.
- Only 15% of Alberta MLAs are women.

Perhaps the most common critique of democracy in Alberta is faced by all provinces – that our current “first past the post” system does not adequately represent voters’ views. Recently BC and PEI held referenda on some alternative models which were defeated, but PEI plans to hold a second vote in 2008. A shift to some proportional representation clearly would disadvantage majority parties in power and it remains a controversial topic across the country.

However, some aspects of democracy in Alberta seem relatively robust.

Encouraging Trends:

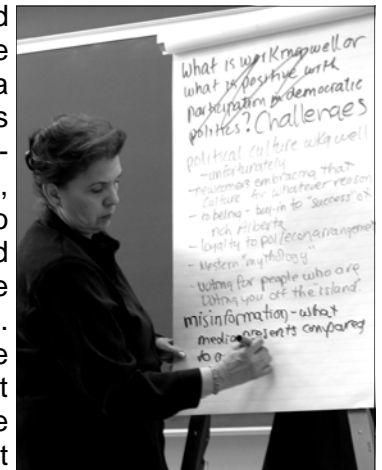
- Edmonton elections in 2004 saw 42% turnout, with a closely contested mayoral race.
- A healthy 62% of Albertans went to the polls for federal elections in 2006.
- Women are in key provincial positions, such as Finance and Health.
- In the 2006 federal election the oldest candidate (91, Independent, Lethbridge) and youngest candidate (18, Green Party, Calgary – Nose Hill) were from Alberta.

Democracy in Alberta needs to be understood in historical context. The province has had substantial political stability, with large, long-term majority governments, 36 years for Social Credit and a tradition of small opposition. For 38 of the past 100 years, opposition members have accounted for 15% of the seats or fewer, and majority governments for 85% or more.

Should we be concerned? Some would argue that current trends reflect the political culture of the province and values of the voters. Factors like declining youth vote, decreasing public debate on key government policies, and concern for proportional representation, however, cannot be ignored.

Albertans have a rich tradition of critiquing the national government and proposing innovative approaches to federal democratic renewal, such as the “Triple E Senate”. These insights are not widely applied to the provincial setting.

As noted by speakers Lisa Young and Steve Patten at the May 12th event, a healthy democracy is one that includes debate, transparency, and accountability to the public. It should represent fairly the choices of voters. And it should not be stagnant, represent only the elite, or be perceived as distant from the people.



Karen Doyle facilitates discussion

Keynote speaker and journalist Judy Rebick highlighted democratic renewal in Latin America. Calls for increasing citizenship education in the schools, electoral financing reform, and even new models of participatory democracy were raised at the conference in Edmonton. Are these proposals enough to rejuvenate flagging citizen engagement, increase transparency, and combat youth cynicism of our processes? We hope that they will be a start. The Sheldon Chumir Foundation for Ethics in Leadership is committed to the ongoing pursuit of a more democratic Alberta.

Heather MacIntosh

Finding Information on Human Rights in Alberta

As part of the Human Rights Project, the Foundation has compiled a list of key sources of information about human rights in Alberta, noting some trends and gaps. We reviewed: human rights content; geographic focus; types of materials; intended audience; accessibility; and cost.

Alberta Human Rights Commission: The key source of general information, the Commission deals with all human rights grounds in Alberta. Disability and gender discrimination are well covered, while marital status, sexual orientation, source of income and family status are not included in case studies online. Materials are mainly free, in 'plain language', and include human rights legislation links, updates, guidelines, workshop materials and videos. Intended audiences are the general public, employers, and some affected groups.

Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre: The ACLRC human rights content is broad, with some focus on children's rights, natural resources, and civil liberties. Curricula and bibliographies of human rights materials are targeted at youth and teachers, and a wide range of papers and studies are for an educated adult audience and researchers. Materials offer detailed approaches to specific human rights issues. Accessibility of materials is quite good, though not all of the Centre's documents are available online or for free.

Prairie Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Integration: The Prairie Centre concentrates on immigrant rights. Most of the reports, papers and the newsletter are academic and accessible online through the Centre's virtual library, at no cost.

The Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities: The SACSC programs are intended for teachers and school-aged children. They offer anti-discrimination and anti-bullying

curriculum for Alberta, plus workshops and multi-media materials. Language is widely accessible and interactive. Many of the materials are available for free online.

The Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women (IAAW) publishes a booklet entitled "The Rights Path" which we were unable to review but can be requested.

The Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations (NAARR) provides some materials online, such as a report on equity in the school system, however it is Edmonton-focused.

Other groups also provide human rights information and materials relevant to Alberta. The Canadian Human Rights Commission and Canadian Heritage have human rights legislation, developments, cases, international commitments, and public education materials. The Commission allows for a search of their website by province. Égale Canada provides newsletters on advancing equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans-identified people some with province-specific information. Amnesty International has some Alberta-specific concerns, such as the Lubicon Cree case, available online to a general audience. The John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights has national youth education materials on the Canadian Charter as well as school curricula for Alberta. The Human Rights Reporter provides monthly summaries of labour law cases for a fee, available by province and territory. Historica offers human rights historical information that encompasses Alberta at no cost, on-line at Encyclopedia and Youthlinks.

General Analysis: The majority of information on human rights in Alberta focuses on workplace related discrimination, followed by youth education materials. There is a fairly good mix of targeting toward academic, legal, youth, employer, immigrant, disability community and general audiences. A fair number of sources concentrate on legal, academic and youth audiences, indicating a possible need for more information targeted toward the public at large. It appears that additional human rights information for Alberta is needed on aboriginal rights, environmental, sexual orientation, and source of income. There is little information available on emerging human rights areas, such as economic, social and cultural rights as outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This is another area for further development. Materials are widely available and generally free or at minimal cost. All major sources listed have good online materials with fairly up-to-date websites, providing for equality of access.

Nicole Bernhardt and Heather MacIntosh

Ethical Leadership in the Academy: The Need for Fresh Ideas

This past March the Foundation's Public Policy Fellow Dr. Deborah Poff spoke at both York University and the University of Calgary on "Ethical Leadership in the Academy: The Need for Fresh Ideas." Following these sessions I conducted a phone interview with Dr. Poff to further discuss these ideas.

Q: What first inspired you to explore questions of ethical leadership within the academic community?

A: I was one of the founding deans and subsequently a Vice President of the University of Northern British Columbia. As someone with a background in ethical theory, I became interested in the leadership roles which emerge when setting up a new university.

Q: What should the role of universities be in the 21st century?

A: Universities are currently too often engaged in skill training rather than the nobler original goal which was creating good people through education. An appreciation of good for good's sake ought to be the most important value that you get from an academic institution. Some people would claim that this is naïveté, but I say that these concerns and goals are not naïve but critically important for educated citizenship.

Q: In your research, you outline some of the most popular approaches to ethical leadership. What do you identify to be the fundamental difficulties inherent to these approaches?

A: Contemporary leadership theory includes the argument, if you are an ethical leader, it will 'pay off for you.' The difficulty with this style of argument is that it seeks to provide a non-moral justification for moral behaviour. It is an empirical question, not a philosophical question, whether or not moral behaviour yields economic benefits and, if this justification turns out to be false, then we have a problem convincing leaders to behave ethically.

Q: In your talks you described Hitler as an "effective leader" but not an "ethical leader." What is the difficulty in including the concepts 'ethical' and 'good' in our definition of leadership?

A: Everyone raises Hitler as the 20th century example of a powerful leader who was highly successful for a period of time but also morally repugnant. Thus some philosophers have attempted to conflate ethical and effective by claiming that in order to be a strong leader you must also be ethical. This is a slight of hand which is also empirically false. Instead we need to provide an independent argument for why people need to be ethical.

Q: You have identified four C's as being necessary to ethical leadership: Calling, Competence, Character and Courage; how do these attributes ensure ethical leadership?

A: These attributes ensure ethical leadership by asking leaders to think of leadership roles not as jobs but as vocations, in the old fashioned sense. The notion of 'Calling' introduces a sense of higher purpose. The second C, 'Competence', is to be understood as the need for effectiveness. The third C, 'Character', is needed because as a leader you are continually challenged, you can be vilified for doing what you believe to be right. Finally, 'Courage' is essential; courage is required when you are doing something which you

believe to be right, especially when your choice to act may be harmful to your career or your economic wellbeing.

Q: You have argued that there is currently a lack of courage in the academy. Can you expand?

A: There is currently a self-interested, tentativeness in the academy, although there are some counter-examples. Universities have lost their moral authority. In order to promote courageousness in the academy, more of us need to engage in reflective discussion about what is needed in a university. Especially in light of all the amazingly troubling issues which we are currently facing in the world, members of universities need to be courageous in order to add an ethical and informed voice to the discussion.



Dr. Deborah Poff,
2005 Sheldon Chumir Fellow

Rejecting the Colour-Blind Ideal

The supposed virtue of colour-blindness is that by de-emphasizing racial difference, one erases a central source of conflict and discrimination. For this reason many Canadians believe they can avoid accusations of racism by claiming that they are not even aware of racial differences. However, in my view professing colour-blindness does not combat racial discrimination, but instead allows racist practices to flourish undetected.

As an intern with the Foundation I had the opportunity last month to present a paper at the fifth annual *Canadian Critical Race Conference*, entitled "Rejecting the Colour-Blind Ideal." In this paper I argue that colour-blindness does not combat racism but, because Canadian racism is often systemic, rather shields it from view. As identified by the Ontario Human Rights Commission systemic racism is "patterns of behaviour, policies or practices that are part of the social or administrative structures of an organization . . . which create or perpetuate a position of relative disadvantage for racialized persons."¹ These patterns of behaviour or policies may appear on the surface to be racially neutral, yet they constitute systemic racism since they disproportionately prevent people of colour and aboriginal people from succeeding within an organization.

The difficulty of combating, or even identifying, systemic racism was brought to light by the recent disputes over Frances Henry's report on systemic racism at Queen's University. As a proud graduate of Queen's I was interested to read Henry's report in which she claims that colour-blindness is used by faculty and administrators at the University to "cover for the persistence of racial bias and differential treatment."² While it is beyond the scope of this discussion to evaluate the merit of Henry's report, what is of interest is the heated debate which

was sparked by the release of it. While the current Vice-Principal (Academic) of Queen's University, Patrick Deane, focused on the importance of discussing and reviewing the concerns identified within the report, others expressed the view that the report and the issues are not worthy of consideration.



Intern Nicole Bernhardt presents at the 5th Annual R.A.C.E. Conference in Regina

In her article, dismissively entitled "A 'culture of Whiteness' in the ivory tower? Not" columnist Margaret Wentz maintains that excellence, not race, ought to be the sole concern of a university. What Wentz does not explicitly state, but appears to imply, is that if the pursuit of excellence results in racial discrimination, so be it. I think we ought to be critical of any notion of excellence which allows for racial exclusion. Wentz also expresses direct hostility towards

Frances Henry, claiming that she has made a career of exposing racism "even when it is invisible to the naked eye."³ That racism can remain 'invisible to the naked eye', because it is systemic, is precisely my concern. Without reports such as Henry's, elite institutions in Canada are able to profess a commitment to colour-blindness which consistently amounts to White privilege.

We need to reject colour-blindness because, without an awareness of racial differences, it is impossible to address the continuing exclusion and deprivation experienced by people of colour and aboriginal people in this country. The terminology of race is essential in identifying where people of colour and aboriginal people continue to be victims of systemic discrimination.

Nicole Bernhardt

¹ Ontario Human Rights Commission. *Policy and Guidelines on Racism and Racial Discrimination*. (Available at: www.ohrc.on.ca/english/publications/racism-and-racial-discrimination-policy.shtml ; Approved by Commission June 9th 2005), 4.0.

² Henry, Frances. "Systemic Racism Towards Faculty of Colour and Aboriginal Faculty at Queen's University: Report on the 2003 study, Understanding the Experiences of Visible Minority and Aboriginal Faculty Members at Queen's University" For the Queen's Senate Educational Equity Committee and Suzanne Fortier, Vice Principal Academic, April 2004.

³ Wentz, Margaret. "A 'culture of Whiteness' in the ivory tower? Not" *The Globe and Mail*. Tuesday, May 2, 2006.



Friends and family of Sheldon at the ground breaking ceremony

Ground Breaking Ceremony Held at Sheldon Chumir Health Centre Site

The Calgary Health Region held the official ground breaking ceremony for the new Sheldon Chumir Health Centre on May 12, 2006. Although there is no official connection between the Foundation and the Centre we are pleased to see Sheldon so honored. Sheldon dedicated his life to serving the community and especially those in need and this facility will stand as testament to his many contributions.

What is Sociocracy?

Sociocracy is an alternative form of governance for ethical leadership conceived in the 1940s. Sociocracy strives to ensure inclusiveness, accountability and transparency. Small groups make informed, participatory decisions, which are communicated to larger groups in a pyramid structure. The system focuses on consent in decision-making, rather than majority or consensus rule. For example, a person can disagree yet still give consent for a decision to go forward to the next level. Kees Boeke, a teacher in Holland, outlined this vision of "democracy as it might be" in May 1945. One of Boeke's pupils, Gerard Endenburg, developed the sociocratic method and now teaches at Maastricht University. The method has been used in schools, businesses, police departments, and community organisations in a range of countries, including Canada, the USA, Italy, Switzerland, Brazil, and has been proposed for the Australian Senate.

For more information see:

www.sociocracyinaction.ca

www.sociocratie.nl

Thanks to Maggie Dutton for suggesting this topic

Please attend our pre-Stampede panel discussion:

**"Ethical Leadership and the Alberta Landscape:
Preserving the Foundation of Our Cowboy Heritage"**
Monday, June 26th, 5:00 - 6:30 pm at the Kahanoff Centre 1202 Centre St S.



Speakers include award-winning writer Andrew Nikiforuk,; legal and policy analyst Steve Kennett; and Janet Keeping, Foundation President.

For info or to register for this FREE event contact Elaine at 244-6666 or email info@chumirethicsfoundation.ca

Volunteer Needed

The Foundation would appreciate help in distributing copies of the book from the last symposium. The volunteer would work primarily with our office manager, Elaine Wojtkiw, to assemble a mailing list, put the list into an Excel format and package the books to be sent out. We need this work done during office hours (8:30-4:00) preferably during July or September. If you are interested, please contact Elaine at 244-6666. We would be very grateful for your assistance.

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