

Teacher

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We are the BCTF



Teachers and supporters attend a BC Federation of Labour organized rally in Victoria, October 17, 2005.

by *Jinny Sims*

When teachers on picket lines during our recent political protest against Bill 12 were approached by media for comments on the action, they were consistent in their responses. Teachers needed improvements in their classroom conditions and a fair and reasonable salary increase. And we also needed our bargaining rights restored. A member on the lines was asked by a TV reporter what she thought of the BCTF's continuation of the job action. Her response was "I am the BCTF." That response spoke to one of the reasons our action was so successful. It is not possible to separate teachers from their union. Members decided what they would do at every critical juncture of the action through member votes; and that helped build the unity we experienced.

Our action was strongly endorsed by teachers in all parts of the province, and it quickly engendered widespread parent and public support. When the government legislatively imposed terms and conditions of our employment through Bill 12, they underestimated both teacher resolve and the extent to which our issues would resonate with the public. By taking the actions we did, we served notice to this government that we will not accept unilaterally imposed conditions of employment. We want a return to free collective bargaining where those conditions are determined through a process of negotiation. We fought back in a

formidable way by refusing to respect the unjust law that government used to diminish our rights. And we had the important support of the BC Federation of Labour, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, local labour councils, and other unions. Our struggle to bargain became an issue for the entire trade-union movement; union leaders understood this; rank-and-file trade unionists understood this.

We fought back in a formidable way by refusing to respect the unjust law that government used to diminish our rights.

Our teacher colleagues in every other province and territory in Canada understood this too and their organizations came forward to support us.

An important victory of our action was in the area of classroom conditions. In September, government was saying there were no problems in our schools, that they were well-funded and achievement results showed everything was fine. By the end of the action, we had a Learning Round Table with a tacit public commitment from government to make changes to *The School Act* that provide class-size maximums in all grades and put in place class-composition provisions that improve learning opportunities for all students. We will work to sustain that public support through the work of the

Learning Round Table and into the spring session of the legislature to ensure that government delivers in this critical area of learning conditions improvements.

The Executive Committee, the bargaining team, and staff are working on the implementation of the Ready recommendations. This includes getting dollars into member pockets from the \$40 million allocation to the BCTF LTD/SIP contained in the recommendations as soon as possible. This provision along with the \$40 million for grid harmonization essentially broke the zero/zero mandate from government that gave cause to much of this dispute. The improved pay and seniority provisions for teachers on call will help give tangible recognition to the role these members play in our schools. We asked government to ensure that teacher locals are involved in negotiations with their school boards to determine the allocation of their district's share of the \$20 million for improved learning conditions in this school year.

The BCTF Fall Representative Assembly adopted an important action plan to continue the campaign for improved classroom conditions, restoration of bargaining rights, and a fair and reasonable salary increase for all teachers. The plan includes actions by the BCTF, by locals, by PSAs, and by school staffs. It is an important plan that keeps the momentum going into the next round of bargaining, which begins in March of this year, so we can build on what we did this fall and move closer to the

full achievement of our goals. The plan provides opportunities for each and every member to be involved. I urge you to participate in discussing the plan in your local and to become involved in its implementation.

We built a lot of support provincially and in every community during our protest and it is important that we keep working with parents, labour, and others in the community who are committed to improvements in public schools. We need to continue to recognize that we have each other. This protest action helped a lot of teachers new to the profession understand the importance of the union and the importance of standing together. As long as we are clear on our goals, as long as we make decisions together, and as long as we advocate for a well-funded and healthy public education system, we will be strong and we will maintain public support. We all took an important and decisive action together. I hope that you will all

We all took an important and decisive action together.

be a continuing part of the ongoing initiatives that we can take together to improve our students' learning conditions and our working conditions, to restore our bargaining rights, and to ensure that all of us have a salary commensurate to the roles and responsibilities we take on every day in the public schools of this province.

Jinny Sims is president of the BCTF.

President's message



Jinny Sims

I want to take this opportunity to thank the people who made our stand successful. Teachers can be proud of the fact that we stood up for our students, our rights, and our profession. The unity displayed by our 38,000 members honouring the results of our democratic votes was overwhelming and inspiring. The government has learned that it must change the way it treats the teachers of this province.

We have to thank the members of our support staff unions who went out with us without even having had a vote.

We received support from students, parents, retired teachers, members of other unions, and other British Columbians in general.

We received direct support in different forms from the BC Federation of Labour, CUPE, the Federation of Post Secondary Educators, and many other organizations.

The Canadian Teachers' Federation was quick to step in and offer support. It ran supportive radio ads throughout BC. It established the BC Teacher Hardship Fund immediately following the court decision to cut off strike pay. The presidents of all the CTF affiliates attended the rally in Victoria. The Ontario Teachers' Federation and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation placed full-page ads in *The Vancouver Sun*, *The Province*, and *The Victoria Times Columnist*. The president of the Washington Educators' Association also visited picket lines in Metro and on Vancouver Island.

We received letters of support from teacher organizations around the world.

Your actions have been an inspiration. Together we have proven we can change the direction of this government. Together, we can see this action through and ensure that our students experience improved learning conditions.

I want to thank every teacher for your courageous stand. You are my heroes.

Jinny

Retired teachers' committee recognizes dedication

The BCRTA Committee for Excellence in Public Education recognizes the dedication, the commitment, and the personal and collective contribution that teachers in the K-12 education system of this province make to public education.

That dedication, commitment and contribution was never more evident than in the public stance of protest that those teachers made in response to the inequity of Bill 12-2005 *Teachers' Collective Agreement Act*, and the government's refusal to honour the traditional bargaining process.

Their concerted action ranks most favourably with some of the greatest forces for social change this province has seen.

In the days before the strike, and in the days after the strike, a visitor to our classrooms would have seen/will see, great teaching and learning taking place. That visitor would have seen teachers "at work" teaching.

Every system needs constant positive attention if it is to flourish. Lack of qualified support staff, over-crowded labs and classrooms, under-valued teachers, disgruntled parents, inadequate resourcing, and a system in conflict are not units of constant positive attention.

The civil protest of teachers reiterated that we do want our students in school, but we want them back in a teaching-learning partnership with teachers who feel valued, respected, and fairly rewarded. And in a teaching-learning partnership that is supported by the best possible working and learning conditions.

Great teachers do not only teach. They model respect. They demonstrate leadership. They reflect commitment to the "good society."

Our commendation to the teachers of this province for their efforts on our behalf.

Owen Corcoran
BCRTA Excellence in Public Education Committee chair

It's the small things that give you hope

I was in the checkout line at the super market a couple of days after our return to work when I heard the lady behind me start in on her little girl, who would be about 6 or 7 years old. Nothing threatening was being said but it was obvious from exactly four apples, exactly four oranges, and several packets of no name macaroni and cheese that Mom was under a lot of pressure and was losing patience with her daughter who wanted to know why she couldn't have a chocolate bar. Anyhow, mom finally said, "Go stand by the till," which put the little girl right beside me. I was fumbling with cards and groceries so I was a bit oblivious until I heard the girl talking and realized that she was reading out loud from my T-shirt. The shirt has a picture of a dog and says "Cu-

There are half a million unemployed workers in Canada, the direct responsibility of employers and government. Why not an injunction ordering the employers and government to put them to work?

The question may sound silly but it's a sight more sensible than what the court is proposing to do in the case of ironworkers.

The answer given by the strikers is providing sensible leadership to the rest of the labour movement in the militant tradition that built unions in this province and won the conditions today's members enjoy.

Support announced Thursday by the Building Trades Council should be affirmed by all sections of organized labour. Struggles like the Battle of the Bridge can be won with trade union solidarity. Bill 43 can be made ineffective and wiped off the books in that manner.

There are big strikes in the offing, in the lumber and fishing industries in particular, both within the next few weeks.

United action by all labour

iosity killed the cat but for awhile I was a suspect." I turned so the little girl could see clearly as she sounded out the words for her audience. When she finished all the adults around her congratulated her on a job well done as Mom beamed. Mom, now totally diverted from her financial burdens, said "And to think she has only been back to school a couple of days." And there you have it, pride in a bright child but thanks for the teacher who kindled the flame. Kids need us and parents appreciate us. It's worth reminding ourselves of this even if the reminders are small.

Pat Dyer
New Westminster

My first AGM

It was an incredible experience for me to be one of the representatives from our local at the 2004 AGM. If a more democratic institution exists in our country, I don't know what it is. There are so many thoughtful, caring, and intelligent people working on behalf of teachers and the students we care for.

If the Liberal government is bent on underfunding, destabilizing, and privatizing public service in our province then the BCTF may be one of the strongest voices to prevent the deterioration of the social fabric of the province. I support our Federation's endeavor to oppose changes to working and learning conditions. Thanks for allowing me to participate.

Steven Carriere
Okanagan Skaha

can win these strikes despite the opposition of employers, government, and courts.

Injunctions can't catch fish, cut logs, nor in the case of the ironworkers' strike, can they build bridges."

A special thank you!

Teachers want to thank support staff members of the following unions in different locals who stood united with teachers throughout the political protest.

- Canadian Union of Public Employees
- BC Service and Government Employees' Union
- Teamsters' Union
- Carpenters and Joiners
- International Operating Engineers' Union
- Professional Employees' Association
- Construction Maintenance Allied Workers



Vancouver, October 11, 2005

New date and location

New Teachers' Conference

March 3-4, 2006
Plaza 500 Hotel, Vancouver

Registration will be available in January 2006.

For more information on the New Teachers' Conference, contact Ghislaine Varin at 1-800-663-9163 (1844) or 604-871-1844 or gvarin@bctf.ca.

Deadline for AGM resolutions

The deadline for submission of AGM resolutions is December 16, 2005. The policies relating to the submission of resolutions can be found in statement 2.C.04 (page 28) of the *Members' Guide to the BCTF*.

BCTF winter holiday closure

The BCTF office will be closed at noon on December 23, 2005, and will reopen at 8:15 a.m. on January 3, 2006.

Poetic justice

Globe and Mail, October 22, 2005

The Class War

by John Allemang

"We must uphold the rule of law," says Gordon Campbell, he who saw
No harm in knocking back a few
And driving with his wits askew
While on vacation, far away
From any thoughts of teachers' pay.

Now this ex-drunk's our sober guide
To why some get an easy ride
In BC's brisk economy,
While leaders, with false bonhomie,
Insist that teachers pay the price
Since public service is a vice.

Contracts imposed for years and years,
No wage increases—save the tears—
And here's a detail business likes:
You're too essential. No more strikes.

But it's not worth what Campbell saves
When public servants end up slaves,
Essential only in the court
That twists their rights into a tort.

Respect the law? Gord, what's at stake
Means more than some sweetheart tax break—
But if you like your tough-guy pose,
Try wage control for CEOs.



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All advertisements will be reviewed and approved by the BCTF. They must reflect BCTF policy and be politically, environmentally, and professionally appropriate.

BCTF action in historical perspective

by Ken Novakowski

BC teachers' recent two-week illegal strike will clearly demarcate a watershed for the BCTF and organized labour in this province with respect to bargaining rights. The action not only challenged government legislation, it sought to have government agree to terms and conditions of employment that were not contained in the "legislated agreement." As such, this action was more than a protest, it was a challenge to the seemingly inalienable right of governments to pass unjust

Since the inception of the BCTF in 1917, BC teachers have acted collectively, to press politically for their issues when no legal avenues of recourse existed.

laws. Democracy is not just about winning a majority government and having your way; it is about continuing to govern with the consent of the majority. Gordon Campbell's government did not have the public on his side in this dispute—quite the opposite. Parents and the public overwhelmingly supported teachers and the goals they were seeking even after court rulings declared the action illegal. The moral authority in this dispute was with the teachers.

Ever since the election of the Campbell government in 2001, bargaining rights have been under attack. Collective agreements have been ripped up. Terms and conditions of employment have been arbitrarily and unilaterally imposed by legislative fiat. Public-sector mandates set by government have become sacrosanct. Collective bargaining in BC, at least in the public sector, has

become a sham. When the Hospital Employees' Union continued their strike action in 2004 after a legislative agreement was yet again imposed, labour stood together and on the basis of threatened action, mitigated the job loss aspects of the imposed settlement. Labour had taken an important first step toward collective action.

But it was the teachers of this province, who after four years of being bullied by the provincial government, said enough is enough and stood firm in the face of unjust legislative imposition once again. BCTF members, knowing the risks of withdrawing services in the face of the legislation, voted overwhelmingly to do so. And all the conditions were right to do so. Hard work by teachers and the BCTF [leaders and staff] on the issues of education underfunding, classroom conditions, and teacher salaries over the past number of years laid the groundwork for public understanding.

The public had also had enough of the Campbell government's heavy handedness in dealing with citizens in all walks of life. And the labour movement was ready to take a stand for bargaining rights. We had a united leadership and a united membership with clear and understandable goals.

So we took on the state in a battle that labour historians will tell you labour never wins. We proved them wrong.

Since the inception of the BCTF in 1917, BC teachers have acted collectively, to press politically for their issues when no legal avenues of recourse existed. In 1919 in Victoria and in 1921 in New Westminster, teachers, in the absence of any legal dispute resolution mechanism, went on strike to get union recognition and agreement to salary scales. In 1971, we held a province-wide withdrawal of services for one day to protest the lack of indexing in our pension plan. In 1974, Surrey



BC Federation of Labour organized rally in Vancouver, October 11, 2005.

teachers walked off the job for a day to go to Victoria to protest large class sizes and untenable working conditions. And in 1981, teachers in Terrace struck for six days for a personnel issues contract. All this happened without a legal framework for strike action.

Then the Solidarity Action of 1983 happened. Teachers in a member vote the year before had actually rejected requesting the right to strike as a resolution mechanism for the salary bargaining we did at that time.

BC teachers, as part of a wider BC labour action, walked off the job on November 8, 1983 and picketed school sites in every local in the province for three days.

But, when the newly elected Bill Bennett Social Credit government escalated its restraint program and introduced 26 bills into the legislature on July 7, 1983, it triggered a widespread public outcry led by the BC

Federation of Labour against the legislative package that threatened to destroy the entire social-safety net and human-rights framework of the province. Bill 3 allowed unionized public employees, including teachers, to be laid off without cause and without reference to seniority. BC teachers, as part of a wider BC labour action, walked off the job on November 8, 1983, and picketed school sites in every local in the province for three days. Other education workers walked out as well, joining the BCFed, which was already in the midst of a legal collective-bargaining strike. With the action set to escalate after the Remembrance Day long weekend, the BCFed reached an agreement with the government that guaranteed seniority rights in lay-off for public employees. For teachers, it meant that we could now negotiate seniority/severance provisions locally, something that was previously outside our legal scope to bargain.

On June 1, 1987, the BC Federation of Labour held a one-day, province-wide general strike to protest Bill 19, a regressive piece of anti-labour

legislation. That was the last time that labour in this province acted in consort to press back the agenda of a government that was clearly opposed to free collective bargaining.

I believe that by standing up to the Campbell government, we have given other working people the confidence to take on the fight.

I believe that by standing up to the Campbell government, we have given other working people the confidence to take on the fight. Hopefully, the experience will change the parameters and the ethos of collective bargaining in the public sector in the years to come. Specifically, it should lead to greater co-ordination and a more inspired collective resolve that transcends sectors when we, along with thousands of other public sector workers, go to the bargaining table in the new year.

Ken Novakowski is the executive director of the BCTF.

Looking back

70 years ago

One of the most satisfactory things about the school man's world here in British Columbia is the friendly intimacy between the Department of Education and the British Columbia Teachers' Federation. A letter from the Superintendent of Education is evidence in point. Dr. Willis writes: "The selection of committees for the revision of the Programme of Studies in the various phases of work for Grades I to VI has been submitted by the Central Curriculum Revision Committee. The Department of Education wishes these committees to have at their disposal as full an expression of the views of the teachers of the province as may be obtained." *The BC Teacher*, November 1935

50 years ago

The old argument that principals of schools should not be members of the Teachers' Federation will not meet with

the approval of all principals. This attempt to turn a principal into a "school manager" instead of a scholastic head is regrettable in the eyes of many members of this teaching group. I happen to know more than one good principal who looks on himself as a teacher first and foremost with his administrative duties taking a second place. That is a sound attitude and one that is far more likely to produce a healthy educational atmosphere. I just don't like the "managerial" type of state we seem to be drifting into. *The BC Teacher*, December 1955

30 years ago

Bonjour mes enfants! Thus begins a school day for more than 400 public school children in B.C. who receive all or most of their instruction in French. This number is growing rapidly, as a major educational movement labeled "French Immersion" gains popularity among English-speaking people

throughout Canada. Its aim is to make children bilingual in Canada's official languages.

The BC Teacher, Nov./Dec. 1975

10 years ago

You may have been appalled by a recent CBC radio report of a school assembly in Regina. The principal brought all the students to the gym for what was described by one commentator as an "infomercial" on the virtues of drinking bottled water. He told the students that drinking water improves brainpower, but not the tap water in Saskatchewan, and that they should drink bottled water. The principal was wearing a T-shirt with the brand name of the water, distributed by Coca-Cola, the company paying the school to sell the products.

Teacher, Nov./Dec. 1995

Chris Bocking, Keating Elementary School, Saanich



Chetwynd

The learning round table

Cautious optimism after first meeting



PETER OWENS PHOTO

Jinny Sims

The attendees at the first meeting of the learning round table held October 23, 2005 were:

- BC Teachers' Federation: Jinny Sims, Irene Lanzinger, Susan Lambert, Ken Novakowski
- Co-Chairs: Honourable Gordon Campbell, premier; Honourable Shirley Bond, minister of education and deputy premier; Emery Dosedall, deputy minister of education; Rick Davis from the Ministry of Education
- BC School Trustees Association: two representatives
- BC School Superintendents' Association: two representatives
- BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils: two representatives
- BC Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association: two representatives

The premier: The premier chaired the meeting and opened with comments. He talked about the round table as an open

partnership with the groups in attendance, and expressed the need to hear from groups that were not at the table. He identified class size and composition as the first issue the round table needed to address, and said that, if there were problems with the school act, then "let's fix it." The premier also identified the need for a common database on class-size issues and indicated that the ministry would have information collected and available for the next meeting of the round table. He identified the goal as a "great public education system," with BC being the most literate jurisdiction in North America. He said that the "government could not achieve that by itself." He also stated that if this exercise is going to be real, and it was identified that additional resources were required, government would try to deliver. Twice during the meeting, the premier informed the round table that government would be having separate meetings with the BCTF on the issue of teaching conditions, specifically class size and composition. Those meetings will be with the minister of education.

Minister of education: Shirley Bond indicated that she needed to meet with the BCTF as we did not complete the agenda in our first meeting in late August. She agreed to meet at the BCTF building and a time will be set soon. The minister also expressed her desire to visit schools and classrooms and asked the BCTF to assist her with this.

BCTF: Jinny Sims spoke on behalf of all 38,000 public school teachers in the province and responded positively to the words of the premier. She talked about the passion of teachers for teaching and their continual advocacy role for the needs of

students. She talked about class size as an important learning and working condition, and identified not only the need for maximums in the Grade 4 to 12 classes, but specifically cited labs and shops as potential safety problems. She referred to the need for clear language on class composition and identified the problems that have arisen in the system since 2002. Sims also went back to earlier government decisions to integrate students with special needs into classrooms and affirmed the BCTF support for this policy. She stated that governments have never fully committed the resources necessary to make this policy work. Sims raised the issue of the four-day school week in some districts and how the resultant intensification of teaching and learning is taking a toll on teachers and students. She also identified textbooks and other learning resources as in need of attention by the round table, and spoke about the significant amount of money that teachers spend out of their own pockets on classroom supplies.

BCSTA: Penny Tees talked about the need to improve student achievement through working together. She said school boards make trade-offs after they consider all factors involved.

BCPVPA: Tom Hierck talked about all the factors that need to be considered, including what a reasonable class size would be. He also identified the need for a funding base to support educational decisions. He said that it is clear that the status quo is not good enough.

BCSSA: Sheila Rooney said she hoped the round table would be a vehicle for discussing how the system can meet student needs. We can all learn from each other

and the perspectives we bring. Real progress will have a positive impact on the education system as a whole. She stated that we need to analyze the pros and cons of any initiative before acting, and hoped the round table would help to create a new confidence in public education.

BCCPAC: Kim Howland spoke about how pleased parents were to be at the round table and to be involved in education policy discussions rather than simply playing the "hot-dog-sales" role they had in the past. She hoped the round table would deal with the whole range of educational issues and mentioned teacher training as one.

Following comments by the groups at the table, there were various statements made by individuals. Of particular note, the premier stated that he agreed with Sims that there had not been sufficient public investment in public policy decisions around inclusion. He also said that teachers should not have to pay for supplies and books out of their own pockets.

Operating procedures

The following were generally agreed as operating procedures:

1. The round table will meet at least once a month and will try to maintain a consistent membership for each year of its operation.

2. Sims made a strong case for CUPE to be represented at the round table. Others argued for students, First Nations, etc. After discussion, it was agreed the round table will hold special meetings, perhaps all day sessions, where it will hear from other groups not at the table (CUPE, First Nations, etc.), including specific groups of teachers from within the BCTF.

3. Minutes will be kept of each meeting and, once approved by the group at the subsequent meeting, will be posted on the ministry web site. It was agreed that groups at the table will be able to report out to their members prior to the official minutes being available.

4. Recommendations from the round table will go to the minister of education by October of each year so that any cost increases accepted by government can be built into the government budget-setting process for the following year. It was clarified that, in spite of the late date regarding the government budget-setting process, if government does agree to changes in class size and composition they can still be implemented in the next school year (2006-07).

5. The round table will hold its next meeting in the next two to three weeks, when information from school districts regarding class size/composition is available. The meeting will be at the cabinet offices in Vancouver and will deal with class size and composition.

6. The round table has the capacity to initiate research projects it feels necessary to acquire information to inform its recommendations.

Toward the end of the meeting, Sims talked about the BCTF Professional Development and Social Justice programs; she referred to our PSAs, Lesson Aids, Program for Quality Teaching, and our social justice and international solidarity initiatives. The premier seemed very interested, particularly in the work of PSAs. Sims extended an open invitation to the premier to visit the BCTF building to find out what we really are all about. He laughed and jokingly said, "Maybe in a week." Sims, in the humour of the moment, said, "You should. I came to your den today."

Sims spoke to media after the meeting and expressed cautious optimism about the work of the round table. Clearly, she said, it will be the actions, and not the words of government, that teachers will be looking for to make a difference in their classrooms.

You've got a friend

CUPE support never wavered during Bill 12 fight

BC teachers found they had a steadfast ally in the Canadian Union of Public Employees when push came to shove with the BC Liberal government this fall.

When the Liberals introduced Bill 12 in the legislature on October 3, Canada's largest union passed a unanimous motion at its national convention, tabled by the BC division, to support the BC Teachers' Federation "in any way possible" in its fight with the Campbell government.

This was a fight, after all, that affected more than the BCTF's 38,000 members and CUPE's 25,000 support workers in K-12. With several contracts in the public sector expiring soon, and private-sector employers like Telus playing an increasingly brutal hand, many observers saw Bill 12 as a litmus test for a much larger union-busting campaign.

"The (convention) resolution reminded everyone that CUPE university members were the first education workers in BC to be legislated back to work by the Liberals," recalled CUPE BC President Barry O'Neill.

"The Liberals' long-term privatization goals had already resulted in thousands of job

losses, reduced wages, and eroding working conditions for our sisters and brothers in community health, social services, and the Hospital Employees' Union. Our members have never forgotten this, and that's a major reason our campaign was so successful."

Putting plans into action

With the national union's support, O'Neill and almost every K-12 delegate and staff rep left convention early and returned to BC to prepare CUPE locals for the looming job action. Daily conference calls were held and "K-12 Alert" bulletins released, while the CUPE BC website was boosted with regular updates and "CUPE Tools Down" posters announcing rotating protests throughout the province.

From October 7 onward, CUPE members joined BCTF members on the line and at rallies throughout B.C.—support that never wavered, even after a Supreme Court ruling that declared the teachers' strike illegal.

"Once CUPE began our broader political protest, we were clear that the only thing that would have us step down was a letter from the BCTF asking us to do so," O'Neill

recalls. "We followed through to the end, where on Saturday (October 22) we received just such a letter from Jinny Sims."

On the line: a provincial tour

On October 17, a week-long series of CUPE protests began with actions on Vancouver Island and in Powell River. On this day, a multi-union rally at the provincial legislature was complemented with actions by thousands of CUPE members from the Capital Region to Gold River. In Saanich, Ladysmith, Nanaimo, Tofino, Comox, Campbell River, and Powell River, CUPE members walked side by side with teachers.

October 18 was "CUPE Day" in the North, featuring a demonstration in front of Education Minister Shirley Bond's MLA office in Prince George. CUPE rallies and other actions were held in Smithers, Dawson Creek, Chetwynd, Tumbler Ridge, Prince Rupert, Masset, Port Edward, Stewart, Kitimat, Terrace, Quesnel, Houston, Telkwa, Hazelton and Fort Nelson. In Mackenzie, CUPE members hosted a candlelight vigil.

On October 19, CUPE members joined the BC Fed for actions in the East and West Kootenays. In Trail, CUPE

members from as far away as Castlegar attended a noon-hour rally at the cenotaph and shut down services for the day. In Cranbrook, CUPE members attended a noon-hour rally outside MLA Bill Bennett's office.

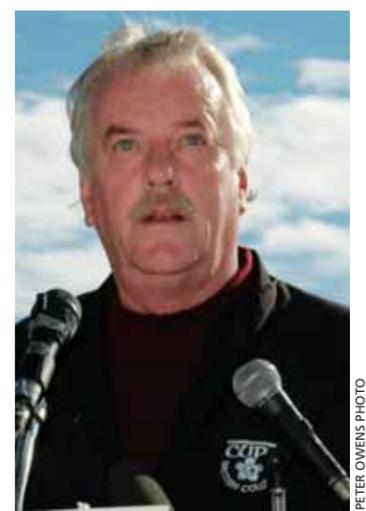
October 20 was CUPE day in the Interior. In Kelowna, 1,000 people attended a rally at Kerry Park, while in Kamloops hundreds of people rallied and shut down services including the university. Rallies were also held in Vernon, Penticton, and Summerland.

Walking the talk

CUPE followed through on its promise to support teachers on October 21 with rallies and job actions throughout the Lower Mainland, Howe Sound/Sunshine Coast, and Fraser Valley.

In the morning, CUPE members at the Vancouver Public Library began the day's actions by putting up protest lines in front of the VPL's main branch. At the Pacific Coliseum, 8,000 attended a rally where O'Neill and Sims were joined by CUPE National president Paul Moist and HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy.

Later that afternoon, more than 3,000 attended a rally at Cloverdale's Stetson Bowl, where the same union leaders congratulated CUPE members and teachers for their tremendous courage in standing up and letting their voices be heard.



PETER OWENS PHOTO

CUPE BC President
Barry O'Neill

Reasons for pride

In just five days, nearly 2,000 visitors to the CUPE BC website used a special page to send protest letters to Premier Gordon Campbell and the ministers of Finance, Labour and Education.

As BCTF and CUPE K-12 support workers returned to work on October 24, following an historic struggle to defend B.C. teachers' bargaining rights, O'Neill thanked CUPE members for their hard work and congratulated BCTF members for their courage during the three weeks of resistance to Bill 12.

"We can all be very proud of the role that we played standing up for the workers and students in our public education system," he said.



Kelowna

Flip-flop policies and directives from Victoria

by Noel Herron

What's up with the Ministry of Education in Victoria? First, Education Minister Shirley Bond announces that BC school boards would retain the savings from the recent 10-day teacher strike, only to be flatly contradicted by Premier Campbell a few days later.

Second, Deputy Education Minister Emery Dosedall, gives a mean-spirited order to all school boards to make strike pay deductions in one fell swoop (an intrusion into local school board autonomy), only to be countermanded by a directive from Shirley Bond that boards could determine their own payroll schedules.

Third, Deputy Minister Dosedall's recent, and by now well-known order to school boards to repurpose themselves in light of a potentially huge upcoming reorganization (to be tabled in spring legislation) allows only a month to respond.

Questions: will we now have a third flip-flop in view of the initial angry reaction of many boards to the bare-bones proposal? And will the minister contradict the deputy minister once again?

I am reminded of the lines from the famous Abbott and Costello skit: Who's on first? What's on second? And are the BC Liberals on third?

Noel Herron is a Vancouver school trustee.

Support from boards and administrators

Forty school boards wrote to the government during the political protest requesting the government to either negotiate with teachers or repeal Bill 12. Some even called on the government to do away with BCPSEA as it has never been able to negotiate an agreement.

Three groups of administrators called on the government to negotiate with teachers. Administrators in Coquitlam, Richmond, and Maple Ridge all took a stand in support of public education.

Boards stand up to ministry official

At least three school boards stood up to the Ministry of Education and ignored a directive from Deputy Education Minister Emery Dosedall telling boards that they had to deduct all lost pay in the month of October.

Dosedall sent a memo to boards directing them to make the deductions in October and inferred that they could be in contempt of court if they didn't. The court ruling on the withdrawal stated that the BCTF could not use its resources to encourage the continuation of the action. The contempt of court hearing came about because the employer, the BC Public School Employers' Association went to court to have the Labour Relations Board order enforced. It is not believable that BCPSEA would attempt to have the courts rule against boards for taking the pay off over a more extended period of time.

The minister of education eventually said that Dosedall's directive was just a suggestion, but boards had to make their own decisions. Many boards provided an early mid-month advance or interest-free loan to be paid back over a couple of months.

The minister of education eventually said that Dosedall's directive was just a suggestion, but boards had to make their own decisions. Many boards provided an early mid-month advance or interest-free loan to be paid back over a couple of months.

MLA says boards misbehaved

The following is excerpted from *Kamloops This Week*, November 4, 2005:

Kevin Krueger, [MLA, Kamloops Thompson], said there were some boards that handled themselves admirably during the teachers' strike, including School Board 73, but that the actions of other trustees has caused the government to ask some questions.

"The fact that they took a hands-off position and some of them went and stood on the picket lines themselves...it's just ridiculous behaviour...when they are the employer."

No decision has been made on what to do about this "yet," said Krueger.

But the situation has "left a lot of people wondering what in the world do you do with trustees in various districts around the province who take such a shabby approach to their responsibilities."

Preserve local, elected school boards

Teachers don't always agree with the decisions made by their school board. Despite this, we believe that the best form of education governance maintains a significant role for elected trustees who represent their community.

Why do we feel we have to reaffirm this position now? School boards are under threat. According to reports made by school trustees to their local boards, Deputy Minister of Education Emery Dosedall has put them on notice. At a meeting of the BC School Trustees Association, he told trustees that this might be their last election. Plans for restructuring education governance could restructure them out of existence, to be replaced by provincial or regional bodies.

He didn't give them much time to think about the issue or to organize an effective argument for the value of local school boards. The legislation for the spring agenda will be

School boards already have an important purpose—running effective public schools that reflect community interests and needs.

developed in early December, and the boards would have to get their feedback in by late November—about the same time that new school boards are elected.

School boards don't need to be re-purposed

The deputy minister told the school trustees that if school boards aren't eliminated, they will have to be re-purposed. This re-purposing seems to involve birth-to-death responsibilities.

The education ministry has been given new mandates, as reported in the "2005-06—2007-08 Service Plan Update." It says because "the Ministry of Education is responsible for literacy services, the ministry will be able to address the needs of the whole family—from preschoolers to grandparents." Public libraries and library boards have been moved into the Ministry of Education as well.

Services in all of these areas are important—preschool, with the new money coming in from the federal government, public libraries and library boards, and services to seniors to keep them active in the community. And it is true that co-ordination of activities is important.

That does not mean that these should all come under one governance structure at the regional or community level. The healthcare regional structures, across services, and with appointed boards, is not the model that should be followed in education. Services for pre-school children and public libraries, for example, should be governed by structures that have interests and expertise in those areas.

In addition, elected school boards have been an important institution of democracy. For more than a century, communities have been able to influence their public education system through electing trustees. That democratic tradition should not be undermined by eliminating elections or by moving responsibility from elected representatives to provincial bureaucrats.

School boards already have an important purpose—running effective public schools that reflect community interests and needs. That is a big job, if it is being done well. School boards don't need to be re-purposed.

School boards have lost important responsibilities

There is no question that school boards have lost important responsibilities. They no longer have taxation authority. Their total budgets are set entirely by the provincial government. Their responsibility for collective bargaining was handed over to BCPSEA, and boards seem to have little influence over its decisions, taking orders, rather than giving direction.

These situations should be reversed. Barring that, school boards still can and should play an important role in making decisions about education in their communities. Having a local board that parents can go to with their concerns and ideas makes education services more responsive. If not, parents can express their views in the next election and try to make changes. That does not happen with appointed boards.

Bad timing for proposing changes in governance

This proposed change has been dropped on school districts and their communities right in the middle of an election. Existing board members have been given little time to undertake consideration of a big issue. New board members taking office with a fresh mandate may be presented with a *fait accompli* without any chance to demonstrate that school boards can be effective if they retain or regain a sense of the importance of their role in the community.

...school boards still can and should play an important role in making decisions about education in their communities.

Let the Select Standing Committee on Education consider future directions for governance. There is no urgency to abolish school boards or restructure and re-purpose them. The Select Standing Committee should hear what the public has to say and report back with recommendations to either change existing mandates and governance, or maintain them.



Nelson



Honking good students! Student-organized rally at Broadway and Granville, October 14, 2005.

Students who care

by Eliot Hong

When I heard that teachers across British Columbia were voting on whether to walk out of schools on Friday, I was shocked that the issues between the teachers and the government had reached this level. I heard things like school might be out on Friday, and closed until the problems between the teachers and the government are resolved! And, all over the evening news, was the same message, that teachers had decided to stand their ground until the government decided to talk with them.

The initial delight quickly turned into full consciousness that school might be out for weeks! How was I going to play football? How was I going to participate and learn at school? This quickly led to an idea to create a group representing students all over the Lower Mainland! I grabbed my cell phone and started calling students I knew who were part of student council, grad committee, or any other youth council. The word spread that I was hunting for these students, and soon I had calls pouring in from students all over the Lower Mainland. We set a date for our first meeting, Friday, October 7, at the downtown Vancouver Public Library. At our first meeting, we had 13 student representatives from West Van, Kitsilano, Handsworth, Sentinel, David Thompson, Churchill, and Point Grey Secondary Schools.

We established our group's name—Students Who Care. We also established our group's viewpoint: students who care about our education and future. By supporting the teachers we hoped to speed up negotiations between the BCTF and the government to get us back into school ASAP. We also set up a web site, where we planned to post strike and student involvement information, www.xanga.com/lowermainlandinfo06. We needed more people on board, so we decided to have another meeting at Kitsilano Community Centre. CBC was there for the first media coverage of our group. We collected e-mail addresses and phone numbers of everyone who was there. We finalized the executive of the group. Students from Van Tech and Ideal were added.

We set up a student rally on the corners of Broadway & Granville, on Friday, October 14, at 3:00 p.m. We sent out e-mails, to all the students that had showed up to Wednesday's meeting, with information

about the rally and sign ideas, and the request to forward the e-mail to as many students as possible! On Friday, we were worried about how big the turnout would be, because student interest seemed low at the time. We were shocked! There were approximately 300 students with signs reading Honk for [Edumacation], Students Support Teachers, Negotiation not Legislation, and Kill Bill 12. We were getting people constantly honking horns in support for our cause, and parents and teachers coming up to us, shaking our hands, and thanking us for our support! We had excellent media coverage. What was amazing was that this student-led rally was going really well.

We set up a student rally on the corners of Broadway & Granville, on Friday, October 14, at 3:00 p.m.

On Tuesday, October 18, the executive met to discuss what course of action was necessary to end the tribulations between the BCTF and the government. We decided to first join the Lower Mainland Rally at the PNE Coliseum on Friday, October 21. Other plans included another, much larger, student rally, creating postcards, and getting students, teachers, and parents to sign them and send them to Victoria, and following Gordon Campbell himself to all media events as a sign that students are the voice of the future and should not be ignored!

However, by Friday, October 21, the teachers and the government had reached a tentative deal. Nonetheless, we still participated in the rally with CUPE members, HEU members, and teachers all across the Lower Mainland! Not only was it inspirational, we even got a standing ovation for our support! It was amazing, to have so many adults clapping, stomping, and cheering for us students!

It was amazing to see what students can do, once brought together united for a single cause! The group was disappointed that there would be no more student events, but was glad to know that school would be back. Now inactive, we have hung up our signs, yet we will not hesitate to come back and raise our voices, should the need come up again, as we are Students Who Care and will not back down in our beliefs!

Eliot Hong is a Grade 12 student at West Vancouver Senior Secondary School.

Overwhelming support

Support from teachers' organizations across Canada

Winston Carter
CTF president

I am writing to you today on behalf of CTF, its 17 Members and the 210,000 teachers we represent in all of Canada's provinces and territories to let you know that you are not alone in your fight for open and free collective bargaining. Such a heavy-handed tactic as using the legislature to impose a contract flies directly in the face of everything that we believe as a Canadian Teachers' Federation. We will not stand idly by and allow such a heavy-handed and punitive measure be borne by one of our member organizations. We are all in this fight together and will remain one in solidarity.

All eyes in Canada are now focused on the plight of your teachers. Today we are sending a message that is loud and clear, that we will not tolerate what is happening in your province! This is wrong for students, it is wrong for education and it is wrong for teachers! We are also serving notice to any other government that is even considering such an action, that the Canadian Teachers' Federation and its Member organizations will do whatever is necessary to ensure that democratic rights and principles will be respected in all future rounds of negotiations.

The draconian measures being used by the government of British Columbia to unilaterally impose a contract are nothing short of dictatorial. We believe that this desperate measure is the sign of a desperate government. This measure lacks imagination, compassion and honesty in resolving your labour issues. It is a bullying tactic by a government intent on imposing its way on the teachers and students of your province.

Our member organizations, 210,000 strong, throughout the provinces/territories stand ready and waiting to defend and serve the teachers of British Columbia!

Frank Bruseker
ATA president

On behalf of the Alberta Teachers' Association, I wish to assure you and your colleagues of our support as the BC teachers deals with the provincial government and the current bargaining issues. If we can provide additional support, do not hesitate to contact us.

Emily Noble
ETF0 president

Please know that 70,000 elementary teachers and education workers of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario stand with your members.

Even through the dark days of the Conservative Government here in Ontario, we never faced the kind of hostile and punitive measures your government is taking against teachers.

Brian Ardern
MTS president

On behalf of the 14,000 members of The Manitoba Teachers' Society I extend our support to the teachers of BC as you face this critical situation. I would be honoured to walk the picket line with you.

Indu Varma
NBTF president

This letter of support is from all the teachers in New Brunswick to all the teachers in

British Columbia. Perseverance in your endeavours will eventually bring you success.

Kevin Foley
NLTA president

On behalf of the teachers of Newfoundland and Labrador I offer our unqualified support in your struggle. Your fight is our fight and the fight of all groups who join together to bargain to improve quality of lives.

The teachers of our country are accomplishing more now than at any time in our history and, at the same time, being treated with more disdain than at any time in our history. We do not need to apologize for asking for what is rightfully due to us and the students in our care.

Mary-Lou Donnelly
NSTU president

Please convey to your members the support of 10,000 of their colleagues in Nova Scotia in your ongoing struggle to achieve a fair collective agreement. What affects your membership often looms on the horizon as a potential threat to our own members here on the East Coast. Do not hesitate to ask for any support and assistance we may be able to offer.

Amanda Mallon
NWTTA president

It is ironic that I sit down to write you on World Teachers' Day, a day that should be celebrated by teachers, their public and governments everywhere. The Northwest Territories Teachers' Association supports BCTF in its fight.

Donna Marie Kennedy
OECTA president

The members of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA) share your anger and disappointment at the treatment you've received. Yours is indeed a political protest, as the concerns of BCTF members transcend collective bargaining interests and speak directly to the welfare of the province's students and the health of the public school system. We will do everything in our power to support you in this struggle.

Marilies Rettig
OTF president

Your fight for a fair, just and equitable collective agreement is an important one for each of your members, and indeed for all teachers right across this country. I express to your membership our support and solidarity of the 144,000 teachers of Ontario. We stand shoulder to shoulder with you in your struggle.

Rhonda Kimberley
OSSTF president

We congratulate you on your principled stand against a government determined to strip away decent working conditions for teachers and erode positive learning opportunities for BC students.

We understand that your fight goes beyond collective bargaining and the obtainment of fair working conditions for your members. We also know that when colleagues in one province take a stand it helps all of us across the country. On behalf of the more than 58,000 members of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, I wish our colleagues in British Columbia every success in their struggle to achieve a fair and reasonable outcome through free collective bargaining with the BC government. We will strive to offer you all the support that you may need.

Seana Evans-Renaud
PEITF president

We recognize that your teachers are at the forefront of the battle against those who promote consumerism, globalization, and privatization and that, in many ways, you are fighting for the teachers in this province, even at such a distance. You have the unqualified support of the teachers from Prince Edward Island, and that we will continue to support your struggle through the policies and practices of CTF and as an individual member organization.

Heather Vermeersch
STF president

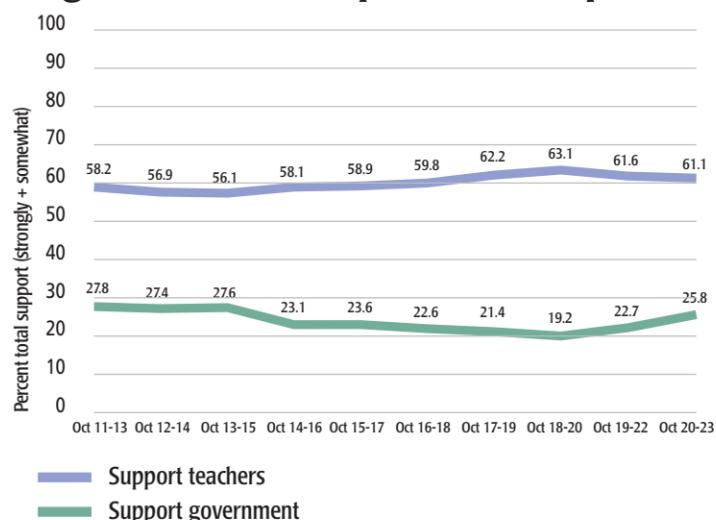
On behalf of the teachers of Saskatchewan, I am pleased to extend our support as you move forward on a difficult road. Our members know that their colleagues in BC will remain steadfast and resolute in their pursuit of goals that are fair, reasonable and serve both the profession and their students. Your organization and your members can count on the respect and support of the teachers of Saskatchewan.

Sandra Henderson
YTA president

The members of the Yukon Teachers' Association, though our numbers and resources are limited stand with our BC colleagues.

We are reminded that in 2001 the BCTF stood by us. We engaged in our first ever job action and the BCTF financial and moral support was immediate and without reservation.

Support for BC teachers and the BC government in the past labour dispute:



International support from teacher unions

The following international groups either sent messages of support to the BCTF, letters to the BC government, and/or Canadian embassies abroad.

- National Education Association
- Washington Education Association
- New South Wales Teachers' Federation
- South African Democratic Teachers' Union
- The Namibia National Teachers' Union
- National Confederation of Education Workers of Brazil
- Education Workers' Union of Costa Rica
- Panamanian Educators' Reformist Front
- Tri-national Coalition for the Defense of Public Education, Mexico
- Union of Guatemalan Educational Workers
- Easling Teachers' Association, London, UK
- Peruvian Education Workers' Union
- National Union of Education Workers, Mexico
- Union of the Autonomous Metropolitan University Workers
- National Union of Educators, Ecuador

The CTF produced and ran supportive radio ads throughout BC and established a Teacher Hardship Fund of over one million dollars. The OSSTF and OTF produced and placed supportive full-page ads in *The Vancouver Sun*, *The Province*, and *The Victoria Times-Colonist*.

Scottish Parliament

Carolyn Leckie, a member of the Scottish Parliament introduced a motion in support of BC's teachers.

BC faculties of education speak out

The Faculties of Education at the University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, University of Victoria, and the University of Northern British Columbia all endorsed motions of support for the BC public school teachers' recent actions.

The following message from the UVic faculty summarized their sentiments.

"Educators at all levels know the importance of having sufficient resources to do the job properly. They also know that successful learning requires class sizes that allow for meaningful pedagogical contact between teacher and student.

"Restricting the rights of British Columbia's teachers to negotiate these conditions, along with the freezing of their Federation's assets and its freedom to communicate with its membership, is of grave concern to many in this province."

Wage increases for union/non-union workers

The Conference Board of Canada is projecting the following pay increases for 2006:

- 3.6% for non-unionized employees in the broader public sector
- 3.4% for non-unionized employees in the private sector
- 2.5% for unionized employees in both the public and private sectors.

The increases, according to the board, are driven by a tightening labour market.

Post-secondary support for teachers

by Cindy Oliver

The biggest teachers' dispute in BC's history is over and it's time to reflect on lessons learned. Certainly, those in the premier's office are still trying to figure out what happened. In a dispute where the government was convinced that strike-bound classrooms would turn public support against teachers, the results were the exact opposite. Close to two-thirds of British Columbians supported teachers in their fight for better classroom learning conditions, even though that fight had been deemed illegal by the BC courts and had kept kids out of school for over two weeks.

When the courts froze the teachers' strike fund, FPSE was quick to provide direct support to individual teachers.

The dispute was a wake-up call for the Campbell government. Bully tactics, like the legislative hammer embedded in Bill 12, the *Teachers' Collective Bargaining Act*, were not going to go unopposed by either those directly affected—BC teachers—or their allies in the broader labour movement. As well, the BC Liberals were reminded once again that the public looks to government to find answers, not pick fights. Many thousands of parents know all too well what the teachers are talking about when they say classroom conditions have deteriorated over the last four years. Parents wanted those problems fixed and knew that supporting teachers in this dispute was the only way to do it.

In the broader labour movement, the solidarity and support for teachers was nothing short of spectacular. Whether it was the protests in Victoria or the Kootenays, thousands of workers walked off the job to

send a clear message to the premier: bargain with teachers, don't ignore them. Those workers risked a lot to send that message. In the Kootenays, six steelworkers were fired for participating in the protest. In other areas, workers faced suspensions for taking a stand.

Within the ranks of the Federation of Post-Secondary Educators of BC (FPSE), support for the teachers was tremendous. Members on Vancouver Island, in Kamloops, and the Northwest, as well as throughout the Kootenays joined with others to show their support for the teachers' fight. Hundreds joined in community rallies and walked the picket line with teachers.

When the courts froze the teachers' strike fund, FPSE was quick to provide direct support to individual teachers. We established the Feed the Teachers Fund and called on others in the labour movement to join our effort. The initial commitment of \$200,000 has since climbed to almost \$300,000, with support from other unions, FPSE locals, and CAUT (Canadian Association of University Teachers) affiliates from across Canada.

The response from teachers was heartfelt. Our office received hundreds of calls, e-mails, and letters from teachers. One Burnaby teacher wrote "Wow! What a wonderful gesture of support—thank you. I am a Burnaby teacher on call and a single mom so this is awesome for us."

Lessons learned? When we support each other, we're all stronger for it. Yes, collective action is never easy to mobilize, but it is a powerful reminder of what makes our movement so essential. There will always be room for improvement, but what we demonstrated to ourselves and to teachers is that solidarity is forever.

Cindy Oliver is president of the Federation of Post-Secondary Educators of BC (FPSE).



Rally in Prince George; salmon for lunch in Nisga'a.

Government upset with interview

John McComb, news commentator, CKNW responds to a BC government missive.

"In the last hour, we had the labour minister of British Columbia Mike de Jong, on the air along with BCTF leader Jinny Sims, and we interviewed both of them at the same time, although they didn't speak to each other directly.

"This has prompted a response from the government, calling that interview inexcusable, and demanding that it not happen again. And in the meantime, the government of British Columbia has decided, that it will not make available any cabinet ministers, to this radio station.

"Calling the interview inexcusable, demanding that it not happen again, and demanding an explanation for why, I put Jinny Sims on the air and Mike de Jong on the air, and asked questions of the two of them, questions back and forth.

"That is the response, of the province of British Columbia, of

the government of British Columbia, to allowing a free and open debate about a strike that has kept 600,000 kids out of school for the last two weeks.

"The spin doctors, and the communications people, are in a knot over this, and I can tell you that personally and professionally, I could care less.

"If the province of British Columbia has decided that an issue like this does not allow for a complete and full public airing of the issues, to the extent that the labour minister is somehow inconvenienced, or blindsided, or upset where he was put in a position that he didn't have his spin doctors to speak for him—*tough*.

"The interview was an attempt to allow this audience to hear both sides, and to cut through the rhetoric, and to cut through the nonsense. And for that, the government has decided that no one from the government will speak on CKNW for the next couple of days at least.

"So there you have it. I'll leave that for you to digest."

Government accused of antifemale bias

A political science professor at Simon Fraser University says the Campbell government has an abysmal record in its dealings with female-dominated trade unions, including the BC Teachers' Federation. Women currently make up about 70% of the BCTF membership who have been out on strike for the past two weeks.

Marjorie Griffen-Cohen, who teaches women's studies and political science at SFU, notes this isn't the first time the Campbell government has tangled with a female-dominated union. She points to the fight with the Hospital Employees' Union over the past few years as an illustration of the government's real attitude toward women workers.

She says the government rescinded the HEU's existing contract, privatized jobs, and cut wages. "In the case of the hospital support workers, I think

that this kind of care work that is being done by women is undervalued by the government, and I suspect they undervalue the extent of effort and skill and responsibility that is necessary to be a teacher."

Griffen-Cohen says teachers have received a lot of support from women during their current strike, perhaps because of the way they've been treated by the government. "I think we should care about the way they are treating female-dominated unions because it affects a group in a discriminatory kind of way."

Griffen-Cohen notes that the B.C. Medical Association—a male-dominated group—has fared much better in the past in their negotiations with the government. While the professor's full-time job is at SFU, in 2001 she completed a research study on pay equity for the Hospital Employees' Union.

Source: *CBC News* web site



Victoria rally, October 17, 2005.

Law or justice?

by Art Gans

Many years ago, in the late fifties, I, with many others, marched in demonstrations for justice in sympathy with a leader of the black community in the southern US whose name was Martin Luther King, Jr. I wasn't at Selma, but my bishop was. I joined with others in the Bay Area as we did what we could to express support for an issue that we believed was terribly important. I have never forgotten those days, even though they are more than half a lifetime ago.

I have been reminded of them again in recent weeks by the BCTF's actions in the present labour disagreement here in British Columbia. I have seen a number of statements by those who say that the teachers are violating the law and providing a poor example for their students. Others have said things like "Jinny Sims is no Rosa Parks." Well she may not

The law supported segregation, but justice did not.

be, but there is a similarity in the situation that perhaps those who do not know their history might miss.

The march in Selma was against the law too. So were most of the actions of civil disobedience that were carried out in those days so long ago. The law in Alabama was quite clear, and, at the time had been upheld by the highest levels of courts. Segregation was legal in schools until 1954 under the doctrine of "Separate but equal facilities," which always turned out to be "separate but unequal." In the late fifties, segregated seating on buses and other public transport was legal and that is what the demonstrations were about. Black people paid the same fares, and many more black people used public transit than whites did, but they were limited in where they could sit. If the black seats were full, blacks were expected to stand, even if there were a number of seats available in the white section. It was Rosa Parks sitting in one of those white seats that started the Birmingham bus strike and triggered a major civil-rights campaign throughout the south. The law



Supporting Mom on the picket line, Kelowna.

supported segregation, but justice did not.

And, that is where the present situation in BC is very similar. Several BC governments have legislated the BCTF back to work with imposed contracts. Ostensibly the teachers work for the BC Public School Employers' Association, but in reality, that agency is a wholly owned and directed subsidiary of the BC government. It has no independent funds or the means to raise them. It is totally dependent on the actions of the government. And the government has legislated contracts that have not been negotiated and used its legal powers to do the same thing that southern governments in the US did during the civil-rights campaigns. The government has had the capability of sitting down with the teachers for a number of years and has chosen not to do so. They have, in their legal operations, removed negotiated elements of contracts to their benefit. And they talk about how the teachers are not "law abiding" when they finally say "enough is enough."

In my opinion, the teachers are doing just what other free people have done when governments took intolerable positions

Free people cannot obey tyrannous laws and retain their freedom.

and tried to enforce them by law. Yes, they are in rebellion against an unjust law. Had the government sat down with them months ago and committed itself to real negotiations, it is my belief that the present situation would not exist. But since they didn't, then I believe that the

teachers have justice, if not the law, on their side.

After World War II, one of my particular heroes, Martin Niemoeller, a German pastor who spent most of the war in Nazi concentration camps, is quoted as saying: "When the Nazis came for the Communists, I wasn't a Communist and so I did nothing. When they came for the Jews, I wasn't a Jew and so I did nothing. When they came for the Catholics, I wasn't a Catholic and so I did nothing. When they came for me, there was no one left to do anything."

Free people cannot obey tyrannous laws and retain their freedom. At some point, they must protest, even if the protest is declared to be illegal. If the government declares education

Simply passing a law that imposes a totally one-sided contract is not and can not be a solution in a free country.

to be an essential service, they should use the means that are normally used in such situations—binding arbitration—which takes note of the needs of both sides in arriving at a solution. Simply passing a law that imposes a totally one-sided contract is not and can not be a solution in a free country. It is my opinion that this is why the teachers have struck and for that reason, I support their action.

Arthur E. Gans is an Anglican priest and military ethicist, Lake Country, BC.

Source: *The View in Lake Country*, October 20, 2005.

Liberals the lawbreakers in this dispute

by Joel Bakan

Who are the real lawbreakers in the dispute between the teachers and the liberal government?

The government has been quick to condemn the teachers as lawbreakers. Invoking the rule of law, it has refused to negotiate with them and asked the courts to punish them.

The hypocrisy is astounding, as the laws that made this strike illegal are themselves likely illegal, and the government that created them a recidivist lawbreaker.

In 1972, Canada, with the approval of all provincial governments, ratified a United Nations treaty designed to protect the rights of unions and their members. No provincial government has shown more contempt for this treaty than the Liberal government in British Columbia.

Tribunals of the International Labour Organization have consistently found the government to be in violation of treaty standards—nine times over the past few years, making it the worst repeat offender in North America—and they have become increasingly blunt in asking the government to mend its ways.

In a recent ruling, the ILO found it necessary to remind our government that, "all governments are obliged to respect fully the commitments undertaken by ratification of ILO conventions."

Previous governments in BC have respected international law—indeed, it was an ILO ruling that helped prompt the government in 1987 to extend collective bargaining rights to teachers in the first place.

Premier Gordon Campbell, however, has said, "I feel no pressure at all" to make changes to labour laws to comply with ILO rulings.

As a result, key legal elements of the government's

case that the teachers' strike is illegal are themselves legally questionable.

The legislation deeming teachers to be an "essential service," and denying them the right to strike on that basis, to take one example, was ruled by the ILO in 2003 to be a "violation of freedom of association principles and should be repealed." A limitation on teachers' right to strike can only be justified, according to the ILO, if the consequences of a strike "become so serious as to endanger the life, personal safety or health of the whole or part of the population."

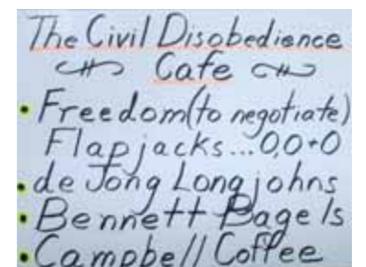
And what about the recently passed Bill 12, which unilaterally imposes a settlement by extending the teachers' collective agreement, and correspondingly suspends their rights to bargain collectively and strike?

In 2003, the ILO found a similar piece of BC legislation to offend freedom of association. It "firmly request[ed]," as stated in its ruling, that "the government ...avoid in future having recourse to such legislated settlement."

The simple truth is this—if the Liberal government had complied with international law, the teachers' strike would be legal.

Joel Bakan is a law professor at the University of British Columbia and author of *The Corporation: The Pathological Pursuit of Profit and Power*.

The *Vancouver Sun*, October 13, 2005. Reprinted with permission of the author.



Conflict of interest for prosecutors

If criminal charges are brought against teachers, Crown counsel will be unable to prosecute, says the head of the professional organization that represents B.C.'s 400 prosecutors.

The Criminal Justice Branch of the Ministry of the Attorney General yesterday appointed Vancouver lawyer Leonard Doust as an independent special prosecutor. Part of Doust's mandate will be to determine whether to initiate criminal contempt proceedings against illegally striking teachers.

But, said Michael Van Klaveren, president of the B.C. Crown Counsel Association, "It is our position, right now, that prosecutors are in a conflict of interest position when it comes to prosecuting any teachers."

On Friday, Klaveren advised the attorney general's office that there would be an apprehension of bias, or a perceived conflict of interest, "Given the striking parallels between the dispute between the teachers and the government and the prosecutors and the government."

Over the past two years, the association representing B.C.'s 400 Crown prosecutors has been

immersed in a labour dispute with Victoria.

The association has twice won binding arbitration in relation to wages and working conditions. But in February, the provincial government introduced Bill 21. The bill threw out the binding arbitration; ordered prosecutors back to work; imposed a three-year contract and wage freeze; and stripped away their right to withdraw service, Van Klaveren said.

Similarly, the passing of Bill 12 last Friday eliminated the teachers' right to job action and extended their expired contract until July.

"As prosecutors we can not condone illegal strikes, but what is happening right now is ultimately the fault of the government," Van Klaveren said.

He contends the government has acted in bad faith when dealing with a number of unions.

"When they don't get what they want at the bargaining table they simply legislate. And in essence they are abusing their legislative authority."

Source: Jeff Hodson, *Metro Vancouver*, commuter newspaper, October 18, 2005.



Cranbrook teachers and supporters; their cafe menu, above right.



Merritt teachers and school board members.

Who does BCCPAC speak for?

BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils claims to speak for parents. The president of the BC Council of Parent Advisory Committees (BCCPAC) held a news conference eight days into the teachers' protest. The speaking notes from that conference are printed here.

Does this reflect what you heard from parents?

"Today is the eighth day that our children are not in their classrooms. Parent leaders and individual parents throughout the province have been in constant contact with us, keeping us updated on the events in their districts and sharing their concerns, challenges, and frustrations that have come about as a result of this job action. Parents recognize the diversity of our province with its many different educational challenges and concerns. BCCPAC members strongly agree that:

- Until October 7, there was no crisis in our public education system.

- To parents:
 - our children, not being in their classrooms is a crisis.

- To parents:
 - teachers participating in illegal job action is a crisis.

- To parents:
 - teachers defying the BC Supreme Court Order is a crisis.

Students need to be back in their classrooms now. Our members from around the province tell us there is only one crisis.

Our children are not in school!

On October 6, the Labour Relations Board declared the BCTF job action illegal. Recognizing that the Labour Relations Board had no power to enforce this order, the BC Public School Employers' Association approached the Supreme Court for a ruling of contempt against the illegal job action of BCTF. On October 9, Supreme Court Justice Brown ruled that the strike was illegal, and that teachers were to return to classrooms. The decision by the BC Teachers' Federation to ignore the contempt ruling on the basis that they believed it to be an unjust law is extremely concerning to parents. As parents, we raise our children to obey the law. Children are taught to respect and listen to their teachers. What message are the teachers in this province sending our students, when they choose which laws they will obey and which they will not? Our children are receiving very mixed messages.

Parents are receiving mixed messages as well. We hear

reports of classrooms with too many students, not enough textbooks, and a lack of resources, yet we know that student achievement is rising, graduation rates are increasing, and aboriginal student success is improving. International testing tells us that our students are consistently rated among the top three in the world. Internationally, our public education is seen as one of the best. Province-wide, we know every child enrolled in public education is losing school time. That is the crisis.

- Students in the primary classes are losing precious reading and math instruction.

- Grade 6 and 7 students are losing academic instruction time to prepare them to enter high school.

- Students in Grades 10, 11, and 12 are losing important classroom instruction to prepare them for provincial exams.

- Grade 12 students are losing opportunities to apply for scholarships.

- Students planning to attend post-secondary institutions may be less prepared than students from other provinces.

- Students in the last two years of school are losing the opportunity to be scouted for college sports programs.

It is time for students to be back in class. It is time for schools to be back in operation. It is time for the adults to put aside their differences and begin to deal with the labour dispute in a way that does not break laws, does not put children in the middle of the adults' dispute, and does not keep students out of class any longer. It is time for all parties involved in educating our youth to work together to affect positive change in our education system. Let's talk about what each child needs to succeed to the best of their ability.

To government: we expect you to ensure that students are provided with the resources and

support that they need to be successful.

To teachers: we expect you to put the best interests of the students first by returning to classrooms to teach.

Learning conditions are not the sole responsibility of teachers or government. Our members are encouraged that all education partners: teachers, parents, principals, superintendents, trustees, and government, will sit down together at one table—the provincial learning round table—where we can all share the responsibility for learning conditions for all children in public education. Parent leaders are encouraged that a similar model is already working in some districts demonstrating that decisions on learning conditions that are unique to their school communities (class sizes, composition, supports for students with special needs, school safety) are being effectively addressed at the district and school levels.

Let's get students back into classrooms, teachers teaching, and school communities focused on the education of our students. Let's put children first.

- Let's make the 8th day the last day that schools are closed.
- Let's make the 8th day the last day of this crisis.
- Let's give the 9th day back to our children."

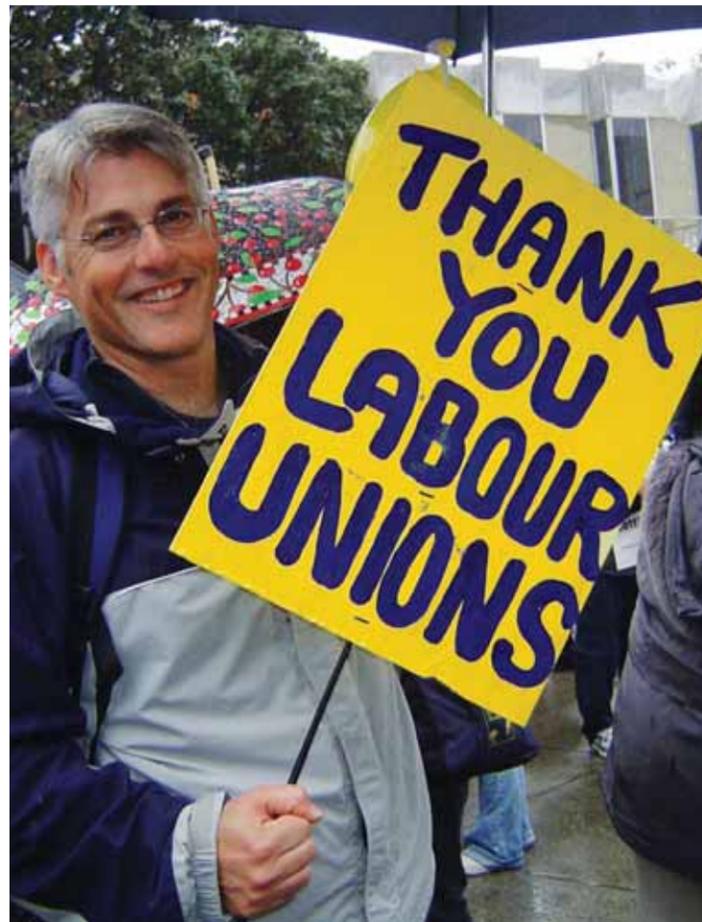
At the media conference, the BCCPAC president admitted that 40% of its funding comes from the BC Liberal government and most of the rest comes from gambling revenue—read government.

As you meet with parents and PACs to discuss ways to ensure the government makes good on its commitments, you may want to discuss how they view BCCPAC's statement. The web address is www.bccpac.bc.ca.

A parent group that appears to represent the views of parents in our communities has a web site at www.bcspe.ca.



Keeping warm in Stikine.



Victoria, October 17, 2005.

Fine disbursement

by Jinny Sims

Thank you to all local leaders and members who put forward suggestions for groups to receive donations from the \$500,000 fine. The BCTF considered over 50 organizations that had either sent a request directly to the Federation or had been suggested by members. The process that the BCTF had to follow required that:

- the Federation seek BCPSEA's agreement to any recipients being proposed.
- the list agreed on between the parties be submitted to court.
- the judge make the final determination.

The full-time table officers used the following criteria to select eight organizations to propose to BCPSEA:

- The donations should:
 - have a province-wide or broader impact.
 - advance the key elements of the stand that teachers took.
 - acknowledge the support teachers received and build on alliances.
 - be consistent with the BCTF commitment to social justice.
- Key elements of the Taking a Stand action were:
 - standing up for improvements in learning conditions for students.
 - standing up for bargaining rights.
 - standing up for the teaching profession.
 - standing up for a strong and stable public education system.
 - standing up for justice and equality.

The Federation proposed the following groups to BCPSEA:

- United Way, specifically province-wide projects helping children
- The organizations that belong to the BCTF Special Education Partners' Group (Autism Community Training Society, BC Association for Community Living, BC Branch of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association, Down Syndrome

Research Foundation and Resource Centre, Family Network for Deaf Children, Family Support Institute, Federation of Invisible Disabilities, Learning Disability Association of BC, Special Needs Adoptive Parents' Association)

- Kids Around the World Museum
- RR Smith Memorial Foundation Fund (directed to scholarships and bursaries for education students, foundation run by the Retired Teachers' Association)
- Labour Heritage Centre
- World Peace Forum
- Public Education Research Foundation (foundation attached to the Charter for Public Education)
- International Writers' Festival

BCPSEA agreed to the United Way, RR Smith Memorial Foundation Fund, the organizations in the Special Education Partners Group and the Kids Around the World Museum.

On Friday, Judge Brown approved the following:

- United Way—\$175,000
- Special Ed Partners Group Organizations—\$175,000 to be divided equally among the nine groups
- RR Smith Memorial Foundation Fund—\$150,000.

The lawyer for the Attorney General's office, which had intervenor status in the case, made it clear that the ministry did not want the BCTF to appear to earn goodwill from this fine. He suggested that the money should not go to charities, it should not fund any pet projects that the BCTF already support, and the BCTF should not be getting its name on any plaques as a result of the donations. He also suggested that the fine should be contributed to the premier's literacy initiatives.

The BCTF Executive Committee is pleased with the judge's decision to allow the donations to go to the charities listed above and is confident that the fine money will be put to very good use.

Jinny Sims is the BCTF's president.

Future teachers reflect on the job action

These are challenging times as the teachers' job action continues. In the words of Dr. Paul Shaker, Dean, Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University, at the Education With/Out Borders Symposium... "these are historic times as teachers of British Columbia continue their civil disobedience to protect public education."

Every weekend, student teachers in the Delta Hub & Spokes module at SFU write a weekly reflection about their *aha* moment or an experience that enabled their growth as professionals. As I read these reflections, a number of them had written about the current conflict about public education. Though these student teachers are only starting their journey in becoming teachers, I was most impressed that the reflections were informed, thoughtful, sensitive, critical, and passionate. With the permission of the student teachers, I share some of these reflections.

— Kanwal Neel, SFU, Faculty of Education

Michelle Donaldson

My "aha" moment this week would have to be the 30 minutes I spent with the teachers on the picket line at Gray Elementary School. During that short time, I listened to their stories, heard their positive attitudes and outlooks despite this negative situation, and waved—boy, did I wave! The honks for the teachers were incredible as well as other means of public support. Students came to show support with baked goods and a car drove by with a sign that read "I support my children's teachers." Wow! It is just such a great feeling to know that people are supporting the teachers and children's education in hopes of a better education system. I have never felt prouder to be going into this profession than I did in those 30 minutes.

Melissa Letkemann

"If a doctor, lawyer, or dentist had 40 people in his office at one time, all of whom had different needs, and some of whom didn't want to be there and were causing trouble, and the doctor, lawyer, or dentist, without assistance, had to treat them all with professional excellence for nine months, then he might have some conception of the classroom teacher's job."

— Donald D. Quinn

This past week I was searching for some interesting education quotes to include either in my credo or my portfolio and I came across this quotation by Donald Quinn that really struck me, especially in light of the current controversy. I believe that this quotation really sums up what the teachers have been feeling and fighting for, and what I have been feeling and trying to express to those in my life who question the teachers' motives for the job action. Observing a classroom of 24 active Grade 3 students, with multiple cultural and ethnic backgrounds, differing parental backgrounds, and varying learning styles and abilities, I believe that I have seen and have come to understand more clearly what teachers are required to manage every week.

It humbles me to know that the teachers are fighting for



Victoria rally, October 17, 2005.

their classrooms but are also fighting for *my* future classroom, *my* future learning environment, and *my* future students. I look at what the teachers are doing, at the personal sacrifices that they are making, and at their determination to do what they feel is right and necessary, and I feel honoured to know that I will one day be a part of that community. I also feel challenged to be as bold, strong, and resolved as are the teachers today.

Pam Gill

The BC teachers' strike has been inspirational for me. Even though the teachers are being threatened with fines and jail time, they are not backing down from the government. Watching the teachers' picket and voice their rights is important and motivating. I have always been a strong supporter of those who fight for what is right. I am glad the majority of teachers are united and taking a stand for the needs of the students. I support the teacher's decision to strike in hopes of smaller class sizes, increased resources for special education and ESL students, amongst other things. It is encouraging to see parents, students, and other unions showing their support to the BC teachers as well. I do not understand why the government is not in support of putting the needs of the children, who will be the future of this country, a top priority. It is disheartening to see the government treating the teachers in such a poor manner. But I have faith that the teacher's voices will be heard—hopefully sooner than later.

This week was a great example of how teachers need to be flexible and ready to adapt to the situation when the need arises. Whether its inside a classroom surrounded with students, or dealing with parents and community members, teachers are constantly put on the spot and must be able to manage their audience while seeing both sides of the situation.

Stephanie Trafton

In some ways, I feel very fortunate to be involved in my practicum during this difficult time for all of those involved in education. In the past two weeks, I have learned more about the union and teaching issues than I ever knew existed. I feel I am more informed and better prepared for discussion on this issue. While it is by no means an easy time for anyone involved in this strike, it is definitely an important time to address what is going on.

Ten minutes that I spent on the side of a road supporting teachers provided one of the most inspirational moments in my life. The teachers thanked us for our support. They said, "we are doing this for you." This statement meant so much to me. Many of them have been suffering with the current learning conditions for years, and they are about to retire. But they know that these children are our future, and they want to fight for the right to educate them in the best environment possible. This was my connection for the week. As people drove by honking and waving, I truly felt connected to this group, and I knew that this is where I belonged.

My *aha* moment occurred while I stood on that sidewalk, and a car drove by with a sign in the window. The sign said: "We support our kids' teachers." This statement was overwhelming, and still makes me emotional. It felt so good to feel they were on our side, even though they are also struggling in their own way. From that moment on, each time I drive by a school, I honk and wave as much as possible. They probably have no idea who I am, what I do, and what I am striving to become, but in my small way I hope this gives them the strength and courage to continue this fight.

Erica Brugge

We started off the week with an activity where we say one word stating how we were feeling. My word was "torn," and it hasn't changed. On Tuesday, I was visiting with a

teacher friend of mine in Kamloops and joined her on the picket line in front of her school. We created little signs for our dogs that joined us, stating "Puppies Support Teachers." We had great support from the students and parents in the neighbourhood. We had older students come and put on a placard themselves, joining us as we walked the route. Other times, parents came and dropped off goodies or asked how many teachers there were at the school, as their child wanted to bake something for them. We seem to have the support of a majority, no matter where you go.

Where I am torn is that I want to go and show more support to the teachers as we will have to go back and work with them after this is over. On the other hand, I want to get as much as I can from the campus aspect as well, as this is where we will get more questions answered, and get more accomplished. There is part of me that wants the strike to be over, as I want to get back in the classroom, however, I also want it to last as long as it needs to, to show the government that the teachers mean business and their needs must be heard. I am sure that all teachers feel the same sense of turmoil, as they want to get back to work as much as the public wants them to. Every teacher I talked to is using this time as prolonged prep time. They don't know how to truly strike!

Jeff Hacker

The way opinions have crystallized around this labour dispute has really helped my own developing view of teaching as a profession and as a craft because it shows the passion and commitment that teachers have to the important issues in education. When I think about what I'm passionate about, I'm starting to find my own way. I was especially touched in 100 Mile House to see two good teachers on the line: a PE teacher who coaches several different teams and gives a lot of his time and a counselor who I know had worked a few years

ago to have breakfasts brought in for less fortunate students. If these two are on the picket lines, I know this strike is not about money: they want what is best for their pupils.

Malgorzata Karpierz

We are in the middle of turmoil—unprecedented conflict—teachers' strike and government blindness to public concerns. These historical events became part of our PDP. It was coincidental, like most of the teachable moments in the classroom. Life happens while we plan it, so some of our projects never see daylight and some of our schedules need adjusting. In my opinion, it is more interesting this way.

We are in a universe of relationships trying to place our moral stand on issues so dear to every teacher's and every parent's heart—public education. We do not live in isolation. As future teachers, we feel that we are part of a community, and that social problems are inseparable with educational concerns. In an ironic way, we should be grateful that we have the opportunity to witness this struggle and define our stand on it. It is like a mirror or a magnifying lens, which helps us define our priorities in life and look at ourselves from the perspective of our future profession.

Last week, I visited picket lines to show my support to our remarkable teachers. My intention was not only to be there and share the experience of togetherness but to talk, to self reflect, and give all of us hope that we are not alone in this struggle and that community and parents understand and wait for a big change. Teachers I know well and those I never met before expressed in a very open way their concerns, fears, and predictions regarding the near future. Our conversations circled around teaching and what this complicated situation might bring to our students. I think that picketing teachers took great comfort from those exchanges.

Student teachers

by Rick Appel
and Mark Vance

As we handed out signs for the rally, we noticed immediately the turnout was better than we expected. We were also busier than expected—speaking to the media and talking with each other. The rally was organized by SFU and UBC student teachers to show support for the striking teachers. What this meant to each of us certainly varied, but it was clear from our conversations with other student teachers that the rally was necessary.

The purpose of the rally was to show that student teachers support public education.

The rally took place at Broadway and Granville in Vancouver, on October 21, the day teachers began voting on acceptance of the Ready recommendations. Teachers joined us for the rally, and there was no doubt that many were concerned about the outcome of the vote. Had public awareness of the issues confronting teachers increased? Was it time to return to the classroom?

To many of us, it felt like time to return. We were in the middle of our long practicums, and a continuing strike might well have resulted in either extending or repeating these practicums—the former was more palatable, while the latter was difficult to swallow.

However, we believed that repeating our practicums would have been worthwhile if teachers were successful in gaining improvements to teaching and learning conditions. As student teachers, we were experiencing the realities of BC classrooms first-hand. We were teaching large classes and trying to make time for students with learning difficulties and behavioural concerns. Like the striking teachers, we recognize that addressing these issues is the necessary starting point to improving public education. We also realize that this is not an exhaustive list—there are many other aspects of our education system in need of repair.

We are committed student teachers. We have chosen this profession because we fundamentally believe in education and want to make a positive difference in the lives of our students. In our current practicums, it is clear that our students recognize our commitment as well. We have not turned to teaching out of econo-

mic necessity. We have made conscious decisions, switching from already successful careers as a contractor and college instructor respectively.

This is why we took this labour dispute so seriously. From an employability standpoint, finishing our practicums is only the short-term goal. Our long-term goals are the same as those of working teachers.

The excellent turnout for the rally showed that other student teachers share these goals. We, and other student teachers from SFU, had already joined teachers on picket lines at various schools. At the start of the week, student teachers from the University of Victoria and SFU made their presence and support known at the protest on the Legislature lawn in Victoria.

For us, the student-teacher rally was just as important as the previous support we had shown. As future teachers, we felt beholden to make a statement of support for our future profession. We do not hope that teaching will be a career of job action and labour strife. However, we fear it. Many others fear it too. We believe the support we received from the passing motorists was evidence of this.

However, the conversations we had with pedestrians allowed us the opportunity to clarify the message on our signs. Many passersby were alive to the idea that we were protesting against an employer that was not our employer—yet. This was a valid idea deserving a valid response. We are still working toward certification, and we do not know how a full school year feels. Nevertheless, student teachers are already committed teachers. We have made the commitment to a profession, and with that comes concern for the issues surrounding that profession.

As the rally wound down, and our classmates and future colleagues made their way home, we recognized the success of the afternoon. Speaking to people allowed us to show our support. People learned that teachers are committed before they even begin teaching. They learned that although we faced difficulties, we still believed in the profession. The purpose of the rally was to show that student teachers support public education. Our signs clearly stated this, but our conversations helped people on the street understand what this really meant to us.

Rick Appel is on practicum at John Oliver Secondary School, Vancouver, and Mark Vance at Alpha Secondary School, Burnaby.



Chetwynd

On being well

The social well being of the picket line

by Julia Johnson

After two weeks of the BCTF civil protest, teachers returned to their classrooms with a wait-and-see approach. The prevailing mood in my school on the first day of our return was a mixture of disappointment and subdued gratitude. Disappointment, because of the loose ends surrounding the unresolved issues of class size, class composition, working and learning conditions, and the uncertainty of the future of our bargaining rights. Subdued gratitude, because teachers would rather be inside the classroom teaching than walking the line. However, the prevailing mood during the two-week protest was courageous, buoyant, and energetic.

Picket lines, by their nature, evoke myriad emotions. For me, feeling like the victim of a bully was new. What surprised me was the way my emotions were on a roller-coaster ride. I was overcome with hopelessness, and depression seeped into my being the way fog renders one sightless. I began to understand the plight of a victim who is the target of verbal or physical attacks. I knew intellectually that what I was experiencing

emotionally was a far cry from the torment a victim is subjected to at the hands of a bully, but I found it difficult to rein in my sense of hopelessness and sadness. The picket line, by bringing people close to each other, was the support that enabled me to bring my emotions under control.

Picket lines in my community (Quesnel) became a space for social interaction. Staff members had time to talk together. New friendships arose as unfamiliar colleagues walked together for hours and exchanged personal worries, fears, and hopes. Laughter was shared as engaging storytellers took advantage of captive

People brought together in times of trouble are better able to cope with the problem at hand.

audiences. Shelters were constructed to stave off foul weather. Propane and wood heat wrapped us in smoky warmth. Closet chefs working in portable kitchens created award-winning breakfasts and lunches. Members of the community stopped by long enough

to offer verbal support, trays of doughnuts, and carafes of coffee and hot chocolate. Those who drove by showed their support by honking their horns.

The picket line atmosphere of camaraderie, shared focus, support, and commitment provided an opportunity for bonding like a social support group. Research has shown that social support groups promote feelings of connectedness, belongingness, and bonding that contribute to health. When individuals engage in social contact where values and attitudes are similar, the collective energy that is experienced far exceeds the negative feelings felt by any one person individually (Seaward, 1999). People brought together in times of trouble are better able to cope with the problem at hand.

The teachers of British Columbia, through their social interactions on the picket line and their concern for one another's well being, created the supportive atmosphere that enabled each person to stand firm for education.

Julia Johnson, a learning resource teacher at Red Bluff School in Quesnel, is a BCTF PD wellness associate. johnsonj@abccom.bc.ca

Health and safety

We are not hockey players

by Mark Keelan

Football players and hockey players get paid to be hit. Police officers and soldiers are trained to put themselves in harm's way. For these people, the risk of violence is part of the job.

But why are so many teachers willing to accept that being punched, kicked, scratched, and bitten is simply part of the job? There are many answers: it is embarrassing to admit to being assaulted by a 5-year-old, the student couldn't help it, the teacher shouldn't have been in the way, the student's friends might retaliate, etc.

Sometimes lack of support from supervisors compounds the problem. A pregnant teacher reported that, in the half-hour period between her special education assistant's departure and the end of the school day, one of her Grade 3 students routinely punched her in the stomach. Her principal's response was that maybe he should buy her some hockey pads. Another teacher who

suffered bruises, bites, and scratches on her arms was issued a pair of falconer's gloves. When she argued that the solution was not adequate, the district agreed. It purchased a pair of gloves for the special education assistant as well.

When teachers join the ranks of football and hockey players as workers who get paid to be hit, perhaps we will also be able to command multimillion dollar salaries.

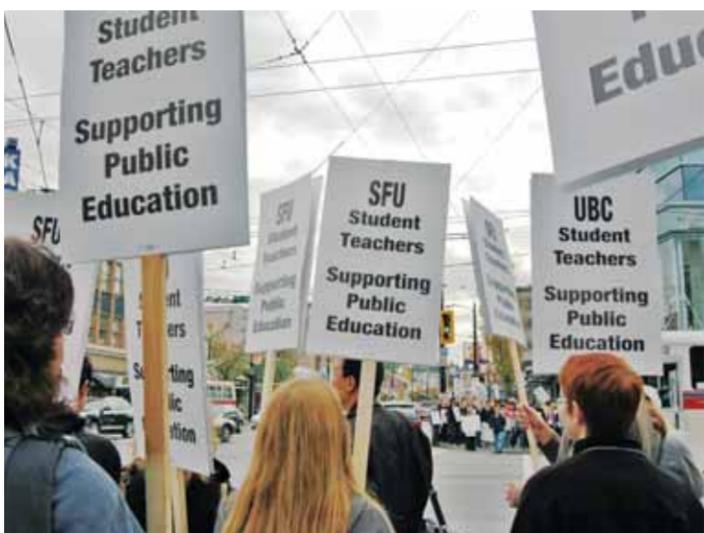
Teachers must not be subjected to acts of violence! Employers have an obligation to provide a safe workplace. If they cannot provide a completely violence-free workplace, they must ensure there are policies and procedures in place to minimize the risk of violence.

The *BCTF Occupational Health and Safety Manual* is an excellent source of information. It includes the following

information for dealing with potential violence in schools:

"OH&SR [Occupational Health and Safety Regulation] 4.28 requires the employer to perform a risk assessment at all workplaces in which a risk of injury to workers may be present. Given the experience of members in BC and elsewhere, BCTF believes that all places where our members work are workplaces in which violence might occur. BCTF also believes that violence can be prevented.

"Some school boards have refused to perform a risk assessment of individual workplaces, stating that their obligation is merely to perform a district risk assessment. This is not correct. The word "workplace" is deliberately used in this part. The risk assessment is to consider previous experience in the workplace, occupational experience in similar workplaces, and the location and circumstances in which work will take place. This assessment should be done with the assist-



CHRISTINE KWOK PHOTO

continued on page 12

Health & Safety continued

ance of the joint committee and must include input from all staff in order to be meaningful.

"It is the employer's responsibility to conduct a risk assessment and to eliminate violence in the workplace. However, many of the steps can be conducted by the union and used as evidence with the employer and WCB of the potential for violence in the workplace. A risk assessment should be done by the supervisor of the school, in co-operation with the joint committee. However, lack of leadership or co-operation should not stop members from proceeding. Call a WCB officer if the supervisor is not in compliance with the regulation. Anyone can phone anonymously if afraid of retaliation.

"As previously stated, given that the potential for violence exists at all BCTF workplaces, risk assessments should be conducted at every workplace. Additionally, risk assessments should be conducted as a baseline, as part of an accident/incident investigation, at the start of a new operation/program/school, or when a significant change occurs, e.g., addition or deletion of grades/programs, major renovations."

The *BCTF Health and Safety Manual*, which is available online at bctf.ca/education/health/OhandS-Manual, includes a step-by-step summary of how to conduct a risk assessment and sample forms. Keep in mind, however, that it is not enough to just conduct a risk assessment. Information from the assessment must be used to create policies and procedures to eliminate, or at the very least, minimize the risk of violence.

A number of strategies should be considered when deciding which policies and procedures to implement. In some school districts, a student who arrives to register at a new school is sent home until someone can contact the student's previous school to determine if the student or the student's parent or guardian might present a risk to staff or other students. Students with behavioural problems and students with special needs who are violent should have individual safety plans that are created in consultation with the teachers who work with the students. The safety plans must be monitored and updated as necessary. These are just two of the many options available. All policies must be consistent with workers' right to know a person's history of violent behaviour.

When teachers join the ranks of football and hockey players as workers who get paid to be hit, perhaps we will also be able to command multimillion dollar salaries. In the meantime, we must insist that employers fulfill their obligations to provide a workplace free from violence.

WCB claims process

If you are injured as a result of a violent work-related incident, or experience any other occupational injury or disease, click on bctf.ca/education/health/wcb/ClaimsProcess.pdf to find out more about the WCB claims process. For more information about WCB, contact Gail Montgomery, BCTF WCB Advocate, 604-871-1890, 1-800-663-9163 local 1890, gmontgomery@bctf.ca.

Mark Keelan is the BCTF's health and safety officer for prevention.

Media makes the news

by Donald Gutstein

The evening after the British Columbia government introduced legislation imposing a contract on the province's teachers, Michael Smyth interviewed British Columbia Teachers' Federation President Jinny Sims and Labour Minister Mike de Jong on his CKNW Nightline BC radio show. Smyth was argumentative and surly with Sims. He accused her of not being straight with the public. When he interviewed de Jong, Smyth was respectful and attentive. He sought de Jong's opinion; he disputed Sims's opinion. Smyth ended the segment with a promo for his next-day column in *The Province*.

The column continued his attack on teachers. Smyth accused Sims of displaying "predictable moral outrage," as if it had been fabricated for the cameras and tape recorders. He lambasted the union for its "militancy" and the NDP for its predictably "snuggly relations" with the teachers.

As for the government, Smyth informed us, Premier Gordon Campbell had to bring down the hammer because "the hammer is the only thing the BCTF understands." The kindly but firm father applied the punishment he knew would hurt but would be good for his unruly children.

Reduce, reuse, and recycle are excellent concepts when applied to the environment; they are dangerous when practised by news media.

Several days later, his column and radio show spread some of the blame for the impasse to the government. Both sides were at fault, Smyth said and wrote. Government was responsible for provoking and baiting the teachers, among other factors.

It's as if he's creating his own echo chamber. He shouts "teachers are militant" or "government provoked the teachers" in one direction. He shouts it again in another. It bounces back from somewhere

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else, as other media pundits join in. Soon the message surrounds us and we don't know any more where it originated. The message seems to have always been out there, so it must be true.

Smyth is not alone in appearing on supposedly rival news outlets. *Vancouver Sun* political columnist Vaughn Palmer appears every morning on CKNW's *Morning News* with Philip Till. Palmer also hosts the *Voice of BC* show weekly on Shaw Cable 4. Keith Baldrey, Global TV's legislative bureau chief, is a weekly radio commentator on the "Cutting Edge of the Ledge" segment of the *Bill Good Show* on CKNW.

CKNW is one of 50 radio stations across Canada owned by Corus Entertainment, including four in Vancouver. Both Corus, which also owns 10 cable channels, and Shaw Cable—the second-largest cable system in the country—are controlled by the Shaw family of Calgary, whose net worth last year was \$635 million.

Global TV, *The Vancouver Sun*, and *The Province* are owned by the Asper family of Winnipeg. The Aspers own major newspapers across Canada, the Global Television Network, eight cable channels, and the *canada.com* web sites.

This family was worth \$1.09 billion in 2004.

When the Senate Communications Committee came to town earlier this year to study media concentration, it heard loudly and clearly that CanWest holds too much of the Vancouver English-language media market. The inevitable consequence, many presenters told the committee, is a reduced diversity of news and opinion available to citizens.

Now CanWest is sharing its people with Shaw and Corus. Reduce, reuse, and recycle are excellent concepts when applied to the environment; they are dangerous when practised by news media.

CTV, CHUM, and *The Globe and Mail* are small players in the Vancouver market. CBC radio and television are the only news organizations equal in size and scope to the giants. But after its recent labour troubles, the public broadcaster may be permanently weakened. That leaves industry leaders *The Vancouver Sun*, *The Province*, Global TV, and CKNW, and they're increasingly speaking with one voice.

Some of the connections between CanWest and Shaw-Corus are long-standing. The premier's brother, Michael Campbell, has had his *Money Talks* show on CKNW for years, and his *Vancouver Sun* business column is tired news. Vaughn Palmer has been doing his *Voice of BC* show for several years.

CanWest's near-monopoly means that its commentators and columnists are the experts, not because they are most knowledgeable and well-informed but because they have the soapbox and no one else can compete. If another organization wants to be taken seriously, it grabs CanWest's experts.

These practices may be good for shareholders but they do little for readers and viewers. With so few major news organizations in the city, the pool of experts is shallow. They know each other, they interview each other, and they rarely disagree. The range of opinions

is narrowed even further.

Sharing employees creates other concerns for the audience. Can CanWest ever report objectively on Corus or Shaw, or Corus on CanWest, if their most high-profile people are scurrying between the organizations? Can one reporter work simultaneously for two competing media organizations? Can one reporter use the facilities of one newsroom to write for another? Where is the reporter's loyalty when she or he obtains a scoop? What ethical issues might arise?

Telus says the future is friendly, but in media the future is all about controlling content and distribution. CanWest has huge content resources but no electronic distribution systems such as cable or satellite TV to deliver them. Shaw-Corus has the cable and satellites but is light on content. Together they make a world-class powerhouse, at least domestically.

Such a combination would make the Aspers and Shaws even richer. But it would be a black day for Canadians, weakening our rights to receive the information we need to be informed citizens. The echo chamber would be made permanent and we would forever lose our bearings.

Meanwhile, Jim Pattison's AM600 pulled the plug on Rafe Mair's talk show last week. Mair

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ended up on that station after his popular CKNW show was cancelled by Corus several years ago, in part because he was critical on-air of Corus's cost-cutting measures. Who will tell those stories now?

Source: Donald Gutstein, *Georgia Straight*, October 20, 2005



PETER OWENS PHOTO



DAVID YORKE PHOTO

BCTF mobilization protest action

Fall 2005

August 20–21 EC meeting

- Adopts Contingency Plan.

August 22 Special Representative Assembly

- Sets strike vote for September 20–22.
- Sets strike action plan:
 - October 3: no supervision, etc.
 - October 11: rotating strikes
 - October 24: all-out strike.
- Considers legislative intervention response.
- Procedure—vote to end job action.

August 23–31 Summer Conference

- Jinny announces RA decisions.
- Core sessions on mobilization planning.
- Alfie Kohn takes on government achievement agenda.

August 31–September 1

- Meeting with Education Minister Shirley Bond.

September 6–8

- Back to school news conference highlights bargaining issues.
- BC Federation of Labour officers' meeting—fully briefed on BCTF Action Plan.
- Local general meetings—EC visits.

September 12

- EC initiates program of legislative visits by members and PSAs.
- BCTF TV, radio, and print ads, including community papers, begins.

September 15

- BCPSEA holds news conference: declares talks at an impasse, calls for government intervention.

September 19

- BCTF/BCPSEA meet with Labour Minister Mike de Jong in Victoria, appointment of Rick Connolly as a facilitator/factfinder to hold exploratory talks with the parties.
- Essential services hearings at LRB commence.

September 20–22

- Strike vote held.
- Result 88.5% vote YES.
- First meeting with Connolly September 20—exploratory.

September 23–24

- September 23: Strike vote results announced publicly.
- September 23: LRB rules on first phase of job action—notice requires delay of first phase by one day to September 28.
- September 23: EC adopts salary proposal.
- September 24: Substantive meeting with Connolly—discuss two tracks to resolution on WLC and possible benefit/LTD improvements in second year. Provide substantive case materials on issues.

September 27–October 1

- September 27: Meeting with Connolly—change in “atmosphere”—less optimistic on possibilities.
- September 28: BCTF job action commences.
- September 30: LRB—teachers must take attendance.

- September 30: Connolly reports to minister—voluntary agreement between the parties not possible.

- October 1: Meeting of local presidents—briefing/update.

October 3–4

- BCTF radio/newspaper ads.
- BCTF meet with Leader of the Opposition.
- Government tables Bill 12.
- BCFed officers meet.
- EC meets October 4. Adopts Action Plan to recommend to members.
- BCTF asks locals to organize local meetings October 5 and 6.

October 5–7

- Members vote on Action Plan—approve it by 90.5%.
- BC Federation of Labour officers vote to support BCTF—call upon labour councils to organize rallies across BC.
- BC Fed officers meet with Labour Minister de Jong.
- Education Minister Bond announces creation of Learning Round Table.
- LRB rules planned walkout by teachers an illegal strike.
- BCPSEA files motion in Supreme Court—hearing set for Sunday, October 9.

October 7

- Teachers around the province walk off the job—set up picket lines—supported by CUPE and other support staff unions.
- BCFed officers at Van Tech high—major media event.
- Regular conference calls with Labour Councils begin.
- Bill 12 passes in the House.
- Labour Minister announces Vince Ready Industrial Inquiry Commissioner.

October 8–10

- October 8: BCTF/BCFed meeting—discuss BCFed support—CUPE attends.
- October 9: Supreme Court—BCPSEA asks for contempt declaration and fine against BCTF. Justice Brown reserves judgment to October 13.
- October 10: BCFed officers meet—identify triggers for action:
 - failure to bargain
 - discipline/firings
 - heavy fines

October 11

- Rick Connolly calls BCTF to meeting—exploratory.
- Roundtable. Ready IIC issues raised by Connolly.
- Labour Council organized rallies held in 19 centres around BC.
- Labour and public support for teachers is overwhelming.
- Canadian Teachers' Federation and Washington Education Association weigh in.

October 12

- Second of Connolly meetings—going nowhere—nothing there.
- BCFed discuss Victoria shutdown for October 17. Objective: get BCTF a table over weekend.

October 13

- Justice Brown finds BCTF in contempt of court:
 - imposes injunction on union expenditures to support contempt
 - appoints monitor to review BCTF expenditures
 - no strike pay

October 14

- Justice Brown clarifies that her order is not intended to monitor BCTF communications.
- BCFed takes over organization of October 17 Victoria rally.

October 16

- Jim Sinclair gets government to consider involvement of Vince Ready as a go-between.
- BCTF rejects government precondition that zero/zero mandate must apply.

October 17

- Massive rally in Victoria—whole Lower Island shut down. CUPE out on whole island.
- CTF announces “hardship fund.”
- Government appoints special prosecutor.
- Crown counsel announce their refusal to prosecute teachers—conflict of interest.
- BCFed announces shutdown in the Kootenays for October 19.
- Ready terms of reference changed to include involvement in dispute.

October 18

- BCTF meets with Vince Ready to discuss issues in dispute—identifying our key issues.
- BCFed officers meet to discuss Wednesday action follow-up.
- CUPE members out in northern BC.
- Justice Brown reserves ruling on BCPSEA application on fine imposition to October 21.

October 19

- Labour shutdown in both East and West Kootenays. Rallies in the region.
- Further meeting with Ready. No progress evident. Ready says he will draft recommendations.
- EC decides to put our position out publicly next morning in a news conference.
- BCCPAC holds news conference.

October 20

- BCTF news conference announces our proposal for settlement.
- BCFed officers meet, decide to stand down and await recommendations.
- OTF/OSSTF ads run in major newspapers.
- CUPE out in Interior.
- BCTF meets with Ready to clarify recommendations.
- BCTF EC decides to accept recommendations with condition of letter on class size/composition.

October 21

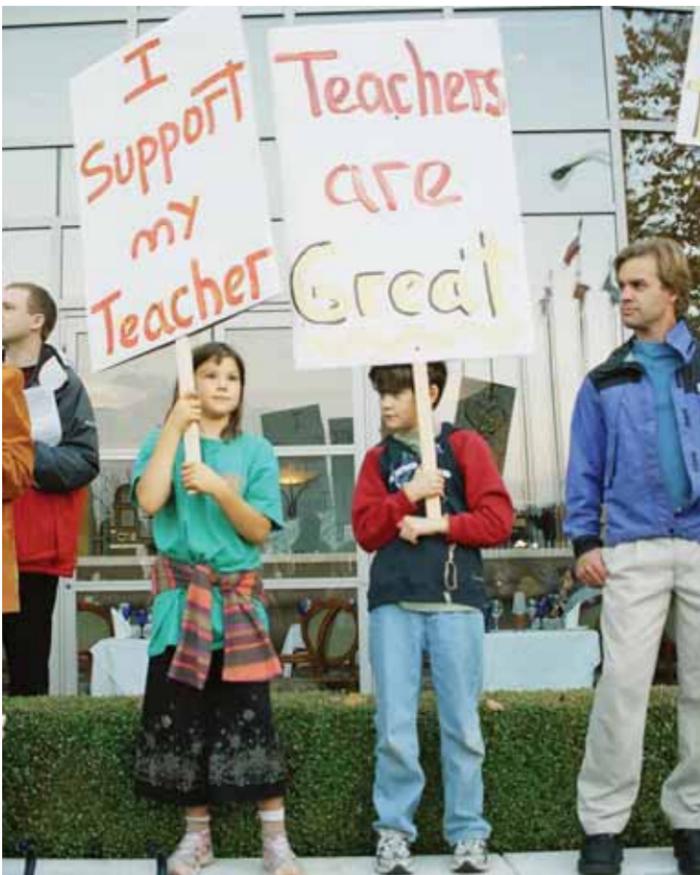
- BCTF announces its conditional acceptance of Ready recommendations.
- Government announces its unconditional acceptance of Ready recommendations.
- Justice Brown fines BCTF \$500,000.
- Government refuses letter requested by BCTF.
- BCTF EC recommends acceptance to members in local votes Saturday/Sunday.
- CUPE out in Lower Mainland—two large rallies.

October 22–23

- BCTF asks CUPE to stand down.
- Locals vote on EC recommendation in meetings around the province.
- Members vote yes by 77.7% to accept Ready recommendations and return to work October 24.



PETER OWENS PHOTO



DAVID YORKE PHOTO



(Top) Victoria rally, October 17, 2005. (Middle) Vancouver rally, October 11, 2005. (Bottom) Kelowna, Debbie Strohmaier and Blaine Hendry, on their wedding day, October 22, 2005.

Picket line stories

Cariboo-Chilcotin

We have a school that is a 3.5 hour drive, mostly on a one-way dirt road, from Williams Lake. They have a generator for the entire community that runs 24 hours a day. Some community members keep their food in a communal freezer in the school. They also use the school's laundry facilities rather than overwork their own generator.

Our members on the picket line did not prevent the community members from accessing either food or clean clothes. — *Sheila Wyse*

Kelowna

Rose Valley (Kelowna) teachers walk the line for best education for our children. I am not a teacher but feel the present government is in error in denying the teachers the right to fair bargaining. This is an erosion of fundamental labour negotiations. The general public has to suffer the government's arrogance once again. I walk the line this morning with honks and waves from everyone who drives by. Except one very large gentleman in a new shiny Corvette—it was hard to hear what he shouted as he was stuffing a jelly doughnut in his mouth, however one of the other picketers heard. "Hope you all get fined." — *Alan Wood*

Kitimat

Members signed up for duty beginning at 7:00 a.m., but many members who weren't scheduled for 7:00 a.m. were out on the lines by 6:30 a.m. and are resolute to stay there all bloody day! — *Francis Boucher*

Okanagan Skaha

Okanagan Skaha had a successful meeting with parents last night. We had advertised an open-house type meeting at the Days Inn Convention Centre. We had an excellent turnout of teachers and we set up an informal discussion with parents as they came into the meeting. The parents were very supportive and several said they would see us on the picket line to help. It was a great way to talk to parents about education as opposed to just doing an interview about student progress. We think we'll do this on a more regular basis. The teachers of Okanagan Skaha are strong and united. We've had nothing but

positive comments coming from the community and wishes for a successful resolution to the dispute. — *Terry Green*

West Vancouver

Picket lines in West Vancouver are as rare as palm trees in Nunivut, but several were sighted today. Members grow stronger by the hour, encouraged by the good wishes of the community. A trend has been noted by the early morning shift. The people in the cars driving down hill (mostly Mercedes and Lexuses) are generally hostile. The people driving uphill (domestics, gardeners, and pool cleaners) are very supportive. — *Kit Krieger*

[A phone call from a parent to the BCTF office on Day 2 of the strike: "I've been going around Vancouver to the picket lines offering my support and I hear there is not much support in West Vancouver so I'm going over there tomorrow to drive around to the picket lines and offer teachers my support."]

Burns Lake

We are solid and in great spirits in Burns Lake. Great support from our CUPE colleagues on our picket lines as they do regular shifts with us. No bear sightings on the picket lines yet. The campers, 5th wheels, motorhomes, and burning barrels are beginning to appear as we settle in for the long haul. — *Jim Iker*

Vancouver

I have talked to many colleagues in Vancouver and can report that across the city:

- Teachers remain undaunted. Solidarity is even stronger than ever.
- We are behind Jinny 100%.
- We knew there was a possibility that we would end up in this spot when we voted.
- This ruling further galvanizes us—we're not in it for the \$50.
- Most of our young members didn't expect strike pay anyway.
- We will not have our voices silenced!

As a VSTA EC member I am prepared for any circumstance. I have made arrangements for the care of my son (I'm a single parent) and my pets. I've also arranged for my sister to have

power of attorney over my affairs.

Teachers need the leadership to stay the course and remain unwavering in their commitment to this job action. We will follow where Jinny leads. Please do not fold!

Fort St. John

I drove around with BCTF staffer Dick Gilbert this morning after he had spent Thursday in Peace River South. We managed to visit four schools before he had to drive out to Hudson's Hope, Moberly Lake, and Chetwynd before getting back to Prince George to fly to Vancouver. We all thank Dick, and the rest of the BCTF staff, for their tireless efforts on our behalf.

The message tonight is: Stay the course and do not give up. I have never seen such resolve in our members.

Not only that, but in a community that has been historically hostile to unions and teachers, the response has been wonderfully positive. We hear lots of honking and receive spontaneous gifts of food and coffee on the lines. People stop to wish us well and tell us that normally they are not union supporters, but on this the government is wrong; we are right and we must not give in. Wow!

The Stalinist tactics of this government have made our members even more angry. What I hear from the lines is simple: We will do this for nothing because it's not about \$50, and we're not going back for a nothing deal.

On a lighter note... Our lines are becoming more creative as time passes. Trivial Pursuit is played at a couple of lines, the pedometer challenge is growing, and Survivor: "Picket Edition" is at another. I think they're looking a challenge. — *Al Wilson*



Mackenzie candlelight rally



Mackenzie

How the teachers won

by Glenn Bullard

"You always said I was a bum. Well, not anymore. I'm going down to the dock. Don't worry, I'm not going to shoot anybody. I'm just going to get my rights."

— Terry Malloy in *On the Waterfront* (1954)

On October 7, 2005, the teachers of BC launched a strike as daring as anything dreamed up for the movies. They took on the Liberal government that had held them in contempt for four years, and that had threatened to use the courts to crush them.

On the seventh day of the strike, a supreme court justice seized control of their union's assets, prohibited strike pay, and threatened further penalties, including enormous fines and criminal proceedings, but by then the teachers were already well on their way to a major victory.

From the first day, they had taken to the public airwaves to do what they do best—they talked. And talked, and talked, and talked. They talked about class size and composition, staffing ratios, special needs, and a dozen other teacherly matters that are reality for them.

They talked one after another: wise, foolish, arrogant, and timid. They talked with passionate, idealistic rhetoric and with cool, fact-based logic. In their endless, quirky variety they talked, by turns charming, irritating, silly, sensible, and always irrepressibly human and deeply caring. And the people of BC listened.

The government didn't stand a chance.

Across the province, teachers produced facts and opinions that overwhelmed their opponents and drove them from the field. Ten days into the strike, they had won.

The *Vancouver Sun* summed up their stunning achievement: "Public support for BC's striking teachers has remained steady at just under 60% since their province-wide illegal strike began..."

The Liberal government asked Vince Ready to draft the terms of a truce.

By this time, the teachers had talked up so many issues, old and new, that it took them several days to understand and accept his recommendations.

Even after their first day back at school, many teachers are still confused about the way the strike ended, and uncertain about what they achieved for their efforts.

They haven't yet achieved a fair and reasonable salary increase. That will come later, through the collective bargaining process. Ready's recommendations give them a great head start, but it will take determination to carry the next round of bargaining to a successful conclusion.

They haven't yet achieved guarantees for student learning conditions in *The School Act*. Those too will come later, through the ordinary political processes that shape public policy on a hundred other matters. Ready's recommendations broaden the union's scope of action in this new arena, but it will take an entirely new set of tactics and ways of thinking, and much patience, for the union to effect the changes they seek.

So what did they achieve, besides a headstart on the next round of bargaining, and a leading role in public policy development?

They forced the most anti-union provincial government in Canada to publicly acknowledge the BC Teachers' Federation as the foremost authority on educational matters.

They inspired the labour movement by their audacity and courage and determination.

They won the hearts of the public with their democratic sense of responsibility to check the authoritarian tendency of an arrogant government.

It will take time for some teachers to grasp the significance of their victory, and it will take hard work to turn that victory into further concrete gains.

What's important now is that teachers understand that they won this round. They need to hear that from their leaders and from each other, to build their confidence for the struggles ahead.

To allow the teachers of BC to think that they failed, that their strike was futile, would be to disdain their great courage and to squander their victory.

Glenn Bullard teaches at Columbia Square Adult Learning Centre, New Westminster.



Chetwynd



Victoria rally, October 17, 2005.

Patience, temps et persévérance

par Donald LeClair

Qui aurait cru qu'au début du vingt et unième siècle, nous aurions à livrer bataille pour ce qui nous a paru depuis toujours comme des acquis ? Que d'émotions et de sentiments mélangés avec la séquence des événements à partir de notre grève du zèle jusqu'au vote sur les recommandations de Vince Ready et le retour en classes ! Personnellement, pendant les quarante-huit heures qui ont suivi les recommandations, j'ai dû passer d'un « non » catégorique rempli de frustrations à un « oui » récalcitrant. Mais quelles étaient nos véritables options ? Maintenant que nous sommes revenus dans nos salles de classe, avec un peu de recul, nous pouvons mieux réaliser et savourer notre victoire politique et nos nombreux gains. Plusieurs d'entre nous ont même commencé à se préparer pour nos prochaines campagnes.

Toute la polémique s'inscrit dans un cadre beaucoup plus grand ; il faut voir le tableau entier avant de faire le point sur notre situation actuelle et notre dernière victoire. D'un côté, nous avons un mouvement néolibéral à l'échelle internationale, extrémiste de la droite qui vise la mondialisation et de l'autre côté, nous avons les travailleurs syndiqués, avec des tendances de gauche qui revendiquent leurs droits fondamentaux et qui prônent la justice sociale. Dans cette perspective, comme suite à notre grève « illégale », nous pouvons nous demander : sommes-nous devenus par la force des choses, des anarcho-syndicalistes ? Avec la mondialisation, les États se désresponsabilisent et font tout en leur pouvoir pour diminuer les salaires, privatiser les avoirs publics, couper les services sociaux, et extorquer les acquis et les biens des travailleurs. Le système économique crée des conditions de vie inhumaines, force des millions de gens à vivre dans la pauvreté, engendre des famines et des guerres impérialistes qui tuent des millions d'innocents. À tout considéré et par rapport au monstre auquel nous faisons face, notre dernière victoire est flamboyante !

Devons-nous regretter d'avoir osé résister au régime totalitaire de Gordon Campbell ? Au contraire, nous devons en être

fiers et marcher la tête haute. Nous avons dit NON à la dictature. Toute l'histoire du syndicalisme canadien, américain et européen est remplie de résistances semblables. Par exemple, en 1834, une loi française veut restreindre le droit d'association. Les travailleurs se mobilisent et font un énorme soulèvement à Lyon. C'est cette réaction qui a rendu possible le suffrage universel et la suppression de l'esclavage en 1848. Dans les années 1900, le droit de vote au Canada était déterminé par la propriété, le sexe et la race. Ce n'est qu'en 1940 que les femmes ont obtenu le droit de voter au Québec. Ce n'est qu'en 1947 que les Asiatiques ont pu voter en Colombie-Britannique. Ces règles étaient dictées par des lois. Lorsqu'un gouvernement abuse de son pouvoir législatif, il devient notre devoir moral et notre obligation de nous battre contre ses mauvaises lois. Quel que soit le pays, quand le peuple est opprimé, quand les travailleurs sont mal payés, quand les conditions de travail deviennent exécrables, le peuple se révolte. La lutte politique contre l'oppression doit donc continuer.

L'opposition des enseignants représente les premiers pas d'un mouvement qui demande des changements politiques radicaux. Les libéraux avaient déjà enlevé le droit démocratique de faire la grève aux chargés de cours de l'Université de la Colombie-Britannique, aux employés de la société des traversiers et à ceux des hôpitaux. Nous nous sommes battus pour le droit des syndicats d'exister dans notre province. Nos alliances avec le syndicat des employés de soutien (Syndicat canadien de la fonction publique-CUPE) et tous les autres syndicats doivent être considérées comme des gains importants. Comme nous avons fait les manchettes pendant plus de deux semaines, nous avons réussi à rendre publics les grands problèmes de notre système d'éducation. Les parents, les grands-parents, les étudiants, tout le monde a reçu le message de l'importance des meilleures conditions de travail et d'apprentissage, et ils nous ont appuyé malgré l'illégalité de notre grève. Notre action nous a aussi permis de recruter de nouveaux militants. Nous avions

besoin de sang nouveau parmi nos activistes, de jeunes enseignants et même d'étudiants en formation des maîtres. Nous étions tous dans le même bain de solidarité, de fraternité et d'unité. Nous avons aussi gagné quelques avantages financiers pour un grand nombre de collègues. Notre cause s'est fait connaître dans toutes les communautés de la Colombie-Britannique, au Canada et partout dans le monde. M. Campbell s'est mérité deux yeux au beurre noir !

Maintenant qu'on réalise notre force et notre solidarité, c'est le moment de reconnaître l'importance de notre engagement politique. Nous avons vu ce qui arrive lorsqu'on élit des commissaires d'écoles qui ne comprennent pas leur rôle. Ce n'est pas le message de Victoria qui devrait arriver dans nos conseils scolaires, mais plutôt le message des conseils scolaires qui devrait être livré au gouvernement à propos des besoins de chaque communauté. Il faut donc écrire des lettres, discuter avec nos voisins et s'assurer que le public n'oublie pas les promesses de M. Campbell. Communiquer avec les parents se devra d'être une priorité pour qu'ils puissent tenir le gouvernement responsable des conditions d'apprentissage pitoyables auxquelles nos étudiants sont soumis. De plus, nous devons continuer à entretenir de bonnes relations avec tous les travailleurs, car nous partageons les mêmes aspirations à la liberté d'expression et à la démocratie.

Nous vivons le début de l'émergence d'un mouvement social et nous ne savons pas où celui-ci s'arrêtera. Chose certaine, nos efforts doivent être constants et à long terme. Le syndicalisme ne peut plus être séparé de la politique si nous voulons accomplir des transformations sociales. Face à la mondialisation, un syndicalisme rassemblé et uni peut faire une différence. Il ne faut pas lâcher !

Donald LeClair, École des Pionniers

Synopsis: Our recent illegal strike marks the beginning of a social movement that will fight the government's attacks on teachers and all workers in British Columbia. Globalization is at the center of our problems therefore, our fight has only begun!

Ten new BCTF lesson aids

1 LA 9916—Reading by the Learning Assistance Teachers' Association, 64 p. Fall 1998. This issue of LATA's *The Vital Link Journal*, vol. 4, no. 1, features articles and lessons on balanced literacy programs for elementary school, reading in Kindergarten and reading continuums. Grades K-7. \$12

2 LA 9917—Spelling by the Learning Assistance Teachers' Association, 71 p. Winter 1999. This issue of LATA's *The Vital Link Journal*, vol. 4, no. 2, features 25 articles and lessons on spelling from the history of spelling to seven habits of effective spellers. Grades K-7. \$12

3 LA 9919—Testing and Assessment by the Learning Assistance Teachers' Association, 82 p. Fall 1999. This issue of LATA's *The Vital Link Journal*, vol. 5, no. 1, is dedicated to furthering understanding of, and providing resources for, testing and assessment while building on the foundational truth that "testing is not done to prove, but to improve." Grades K-12. \$12

4 LA9346—School-Wide Literacy by Dan Lukiv, 18 p. ©2005. This article, written by the former chair of the Committee for School-Wide Literacy at McNaughton Centre Secondary Alternate School, addresses what teachers can do to promote literacy in their classrooms and de-promise illiteracy. The author first recommends ways to encourage students to write, discusses the culture of the classroom, then recommends ways to encourage students to read. K-12. \$4

5 LA F920A—DEBOUT! Guide national d'animation culturelle, Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants, 208 p. © 2002. DEBOUT! est une invitation à célébrer la diversité et la richesse des communautés minoritaires de langue française. Puisez dans ses pages des expériences épanouissantes à faire vivre à vos élèves en français. Amenez-les à mieux connaître le tableau national de la francophonie canadienne en milieu minoritaire. Un bouquet d'activités transdisciplinaires vous est offert pour marquer des dates précises pendant chaque mois de l'année scolaire. M-12. \$16.95 et **LAF202B DEBOUT! La musique qui nous anime**, CD, ©2003. Cette compilation accompagne le guide national d'animation culturelle DEBOUT! Chacune des 14 chansons, choisies pour leur signification culturelle et leur valeur pédagogique, est assortie d'une activité éducative et amusante. Un livret dépliant, affichable et très coloré est inclus. S'y trouvent des renseignements sur les artistes ainsi que des descriptions d'activités qui mettent en lumière la diversité et la richesse de la francophonie canadienne. M-12. \$11.95.

6 LA F9918—Les intelligences multiples. Guide pratique, Bruce Campbell, 162p. ©1999. Comment favoriser les intelligences multiples en salle de classe ? Ce guide propose de nombreuses feuilles reproductibles et diverses avenues et méthodes pour organiser votre classe au

quotidien et créer des centres d'apprentissages. L'auteur propose également 16 modèles de cours thématiques et il élabore une méthode pédagogique pour l'enseignement des matières par le biais des intelligences multiples. À noter : Ce livre a été publié en 1994 donc les intelligences naturalistes et spirituelles n'y paraissent pas. M-12 \$41.95

7 LAF9919—Bien s'entendre pour apprendre, Lee Canter Katia Petersen, 184 p. ©2002. Cet ouvrage propose une vingtaine de situations d'apprentissage et des trucs pratiques pour réduire les conflits et favoriser la coopération dans les classes du préscolaire et du primaire. M-3 \$44.95

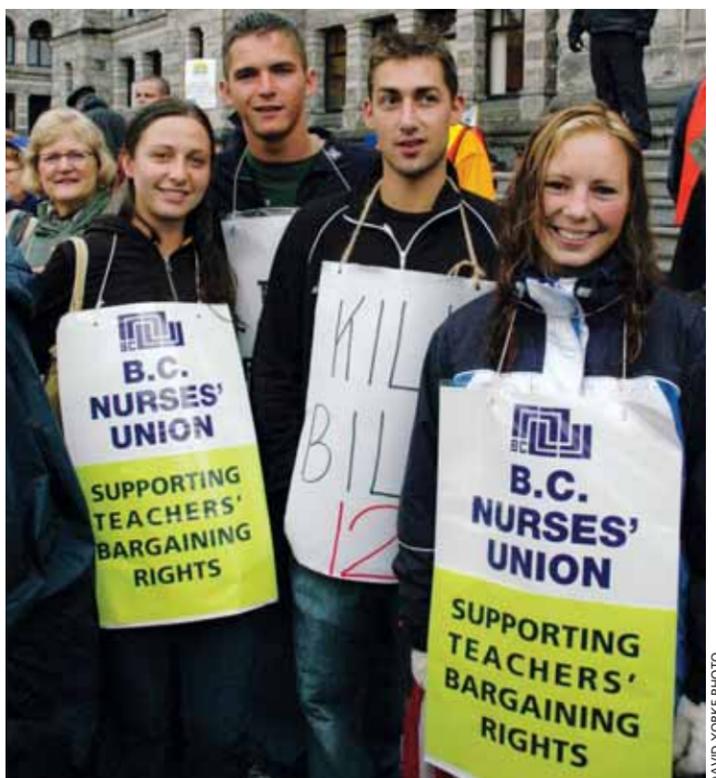
8 LAF9920—Harmoniser TIC et approches pédagogiques : Démarches et projets intégrateurs pour favoriser la réussite, Daniel De Champlain et Gaétane Grossinger Divay, 319 p. ©2003. Ce livre présente des activités diversifiées intégrant les technologies de l'information et de la communication (TIC) de façon simple en fournissant des outils de planification, d'encadrement et d'évaluation. Les projets interdisciplinaires relient les TIC aux différentes approches pédagogiques dans des contextes significatifs pour les élèves du primaire et du secondaire. 3e-12e \$42.95

9 LAF9921—Le cerveau et l'apprentissage, Eric Jensen, 137 p. ©2001. Ce livre présente des activités diversifiées intégrant les technologies de l'information et de la communication (TIC) de façon simple en fournissant des outils de planification, d'encadrement et d'évaluation. Les projets interdisciplinaires relient les TIC aux différentes approches pédagogiques dans des contextes significatifs pour les élèves du primaire et du secondaire. \$41.95

10 F9922—Ma première classe : Stratégies gagnantes pour les nouveaux enseignants, Hélène Bombardier et Elouardes Pierre, 226 p. ©2004. Ma première classe est un guide de préparation, de gestion de classe, d'enseignement d'habiletés sociales, et de communication efficace avec les parents. De nombreux outils reproductibles viennent faciliter le travail des nouveaux enseignants. M-8. \$44.95

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Victoria rally, October 17, 2005.

Teachers' pension fund invests in bullets, bombs, and butts

by Jim Pine

Do you know where our \$12 billion pension fund is being invested? We buy shares in tobacco, weapons, gambling, and sweatshops. For a complete listing, visit www.bcimc.com. Go to *Investments* and then open *bcIMC Inventory March 31, 2004*.

As a social justice union, why are we investing in anti-union, sweatshop companies like Wal-Mart? bullet manufacturer SNC Lavellin? Cruise Missile developer Raytheon Corporation? the world's biggest tobacco seller Altria (previously known as Phillip Morris)? Iraqi war profiteer Halliburton? gambling corporations like The Great Canadian Casino?

On my year-long odyssey of investigation. I've discovered that we don't have to put our money into unethical companies. We can use our money morally by following socially responsible investing, or SRI. Whenever the issue of applying non-financial criteria to the investment decision-making process, there are a number of concerns raised.

The first concern is that SRI would compromise the fiduciary responsibility of our pension trustees to maximize pension returns. Is SRI prudent?

Lawyer Gil Yaron answers the question of legal permissibility of SRI in his May 17, 2005 paper on fiduciary duties: "A review of both statutory and common law indicates that the law does not prohibit the use of investment screening and economically targeted investments (ETI) as part of a pension plan's investment policy. Pension trustees may incorporate investment screening and ETI into a fund's investment strategy provided that it is articulated in the fund's investment policy, that it is communicated to plan members, and that it does not impair the risk and return profile of the fund's portfolio." ("Fiduciary Duties, Investment Screening and Economically Targeted Investing: A Flexible Approach for Changing Times," p. 22) www.share.ca/files/pdfs/FINAL_DRAFT.pdf

Historically, the implementation of negative screening regarding investments in South Africa played a significant role in the eventual collapse of apartheid. Increasingly, governments around the world are recognizing the consideration of non-financial criteria by pension fund trustees. In 2000, Britain "...adopted regulations that require pension funds to disclose" (a) the extent (if not all) to which social, environmental, or ethical considerations are taken into account in the selection, retention, and realization of investments..." (*ibid*, p.11) Sweden, Belgium, France, Germany, and Australia have enacted similar provisions. Austria, Spain, Denmark, Switzerland, and Italy are also considering similar clarifications.

The second concern is that SRI would not be acting in the best interests of all of the shareholders and would breach the trustees fiduciary duty of loyalty, which requires pension trustees to act in the best

interests of plan beneficiaries. But if the pension trustees are not considering SRI, are they acting in the best interests of plan beneficiaries? Trustees must not act in the best interest of the union or the plan members as union members. Their primary concern is the interest of plan members as plan beneficiaries. Yaron argues that: "Failure to consider non-financial indicators, such as climate change or corporate operations in zones of conflict, could constitute a breach of fiduciary duty where it is determined that trustees ought to have had a reasonable expectation that such factors could influence materially the long-term performance of plan investments." (*ibid*, p.9)

A third concern is the trustees' obligation to diversify and thereby safeguard pension monies against downturns that might negatively affect one sector. In other words, don't put all of your eggs in one basket. So the argument goes that investing in SRI limits the world of investments. However, any investment strategy involves the selection of some investments to the exclusion of others. Traditional investment managers screen out lots of companies based on fundamental or other analysis. Applying criteria that focuses on social, environmental, and governance issues is simply doing more due diligence. While it used to be argued that in order to maintain sufficient diversity, bcIMC had to invest in the entire Canadian equity market, that is less of a concern now with the elimination of limits on foreign investments and the availability of other classes of investments. In other words, we don't need Canadian tobacco and Canadian gambling in our portfolio anymore to maintain diversity.

Diversification could also be interpreted as the need to balance between short-term and long-term investments. Optimal

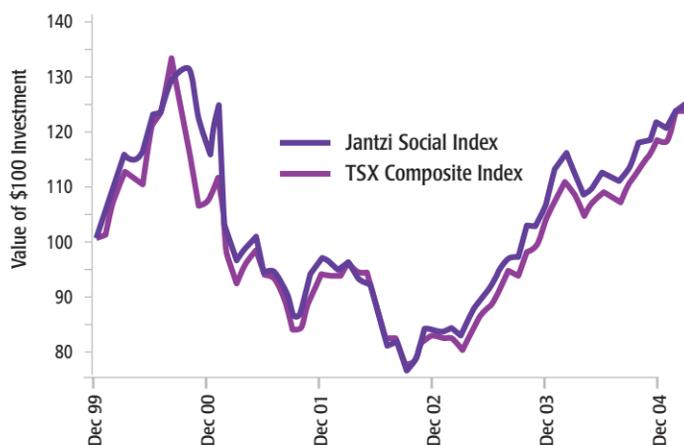
diversity may very well necessitate some form of SRI. For example, in the U.S., the United Methodist Church (US\$10B) found that during the dotcom collapse, their investments in affordable housing helped to balance their equity losses. "When equities overall were declining, (the Church's) \$1 billion in affordable housing brought in 16.8% in 2000, 81% in 2001, and 12.8% through September 2002..." ("The New Fiduciary Duty," *Business Ethics*, Spring 2003)

Finally, is SRI profitable? The web site, www.sristudies.org, lists 16 studies that show that SRI funds do as well as or better than comparable financial-only funds. The Domini 400 Social Index is a list of US companies that meet certain social and environmental criteria. Over the 10 years to 2001, the index returned an annual rate of 16.3%, compared with the 15.1% returned by the S&P 500. In Canada, we have the Jantzi Social Index of 60 Canadian companies selected on social responsibility criteria. Although the index does not have a long track record, historical data shows that the value of the JSI increased by 18.9% over a five-year period, compared with the TSE 100's growth of 18.1% and the TSE 300's 17.4% over the same period. (see charts below)

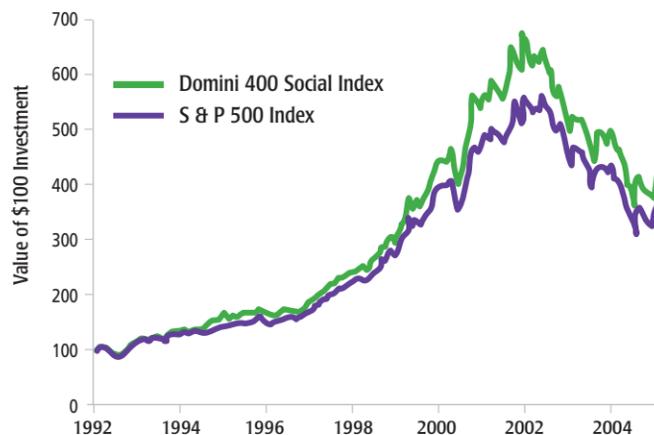
As a parent and an educator, I want my money going to make the world a better place. I also want to know that my pension fund is in good shape. Investing my money in tobacco, gambling, and the weapons industry will not make this a better world. There are better options out there. Let's be the change we wish to see in the world and start the move to SRI.

Jim Pine teaches at Victoria High School, Victoria, and is a member of the GVTA Social Justice Committee. For more information, visit www.pensionjustice.info.

Canada 5 year comparison



U.S. 13 year comparison



Socially responsible investing

Socially responsible investing (SRI) is one of the hottest topics for pension-plan managers. If what the proponents of SRI state is true, implementation of an SRI strategy is not only necessary but required in order for the trustees to meet their legal and fiduciary responsibility to plan members. If it is not true, the trustees should avoid SRI. Unfortunately, in managing a pension plan such as the Teachers' Pension Plan, issues such as SRI never have black-and-white solutions.

What is SRI, and how is the Teachers' Pension Board of Trustees responding to issues raised by SRI proponents?

SRI is primarily selecting or managing investments according to social or environmental criteria. The Canadian Social Investment Review 2004 identifies a number of unique approaches:

1. Screening based on exclusionary or inclusionary criteria such as tobacco, alcohol, environmental performance, human rights violations, community involvement, and employee relations. That top-down approach includes the application of pre-determined screens to investment selection.

2. Stock portfolio analysis and management that integrate social responsibility and/or sustainability policies with traditional financial analysis. It is a bottom-up approach incorporating social policy considerations in the investment decision without establishing screens.

3. Shareholder advocacy and corporate engagement strategies. Shareholders influence corporate behaviour through corporate communication, shareholder proposals, proxy voting policies, and divestment.

The 2004 report indicates that no large Canadian public-sector pension plans have established screening as a method for implementing SRI policy. Further, the report indicates that only two organizations use analysis for implementing SRI policy: the Hospitals of Ontario Pension Plan and the Caisse de depot et placement du Quebec, which manages the pension assets for most Quebec public-sector pension plans. Finally, the report notes that many public-sector pension plans use shareholder advocacy and corporate engagement strategies to implement SRI policy.

The first thing that members need to know is that the trustees are not sitting on their hands when it comes to SRI.

One of the basic beliefs of the trustees is that the best performing and most profitable companies in the Canadian and world economies maintain high ethical standards, comply with environmental regulations, have a record of progressive labour relations, do not have business dealings with companies where human rights are violated, and do not have the production of armaments as their primary activity. Currently, active investment managers are instructed to favour companies that reflect those values; however, they are not instructed to screen out or exclude companies that do not meet those values.

The trustees have taken a proactive role in terms of

engagement and advocacy. They use their influence as shareholders to promote good corporate governance and to encourage companies to be good corporate citizens. The trustees believe that encouraging companies to employ high ethical standards is in the best interest of plan members and that they will be more influential by voting for proactive directors and resolutions at the company's annual general meeting than they would be by boycotting their shares. The trustees also work with other institutional investors through the Canadian Coalition for Good Governance. The coalition represents Canadian institutional investors to promote best corporate governance practices and to align the interests of the boards and management with those of the shareholders (the trustees). The Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan is a founding member of the coalition. And, the trustees co-operate with Shareholders' Association for Research and Education (SHARE), a labour-sponsored B.C.-based non-profit organization whose objective is to help pension funds build sound investment practices, to protect the interest of plan beneficiaries and to contribute to a just and healthy society. One aspect of SHARE's operation, in which the trustees participate, is tracking proxy voting and voting on shareholder initiatives by investment managers.

As you would expect, the trustees of your pension plan have been proceeding cautiously as they consider the next steps to be taken with respect to SRI. The trustees cannot ignore the legal implications of any actions they take, notwithstanding the opinions of some, as there continues to be considerable debate among legal experts as to whether trustees can use SRI screens under the existing legislative framework. If the trustees were satisfied that there are no legal implications in moving forward on SRI screening, the bigger challenge may be that of determining criteria acceptable to all plan members for establishing the SRI screens. The members of the Teachers' Pension Plan have diverse religious, economic, political, social, and personal views that need to be considered in establishing any criteria for including or excluding any investments.

The Teachers' Pension Board of Trustees continues to consider the issue of SRI. In fact, the trustees will be participating in a major review of the topic later this year that will include a one-day conference in which all aspects of SRI will be considered. It remains to be seen whether there are acceptable options out there that can be implemented and which, at the end of the day, will lead to a more financially viable pension plan.

The focus of the trustees is to ensure that the pension promise made to teachers is met or exceeded. An implicit component of that promise is to keep the cost of the pension plan as low as possible. If SRI is a strategy that will help the trustees accomplish that goal, then it must be given serious consideration.

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Teachers' Pension Board of Trustees.

Teachers' Pension Plan

How did the job action affect your pension?

During the recent political protest, pension contributions ceased. Pension credit for this period cannot be purchased. Members will have lost one-half month of pensionable service for the two-week action.

However, members will not have lost any contributory service, because they worked in October. There is, therefore, no effect on a member's pension as related to the early retirement reduction, or factor 90.

A typical Category 5 Max teacher earns, on average, an annual salary of \$63,500. Each additional year of service increases the teacher's pension by about \$100 per month. If the teacher retires June 30, 2006, with an unreduced pension, the pension payment will be reduced by about \$5 per month as a result of the two-week loss of service.

Any subsequent salary increase will probably more than offset the effect of this lost service.

Are pension purchases worthwhile?

Many members have periods of service that can be purchased to add to their pension. Whether or not a purchase is worthwhile depends on the member's individual pension service, age, and salary information, in other words, the factors of their own pension calculation.

The easiest way to determine if a purchase is worthwhile, i.e., how long it will take to recover the cost, is to use the *Purchase Cost Estimator* available at pensionsbc.ca, click Teachers, click Tools.

Unfortunately, the Purchase Cost Estimator currently underestimates the cost benefit of a purchase, because:

- it only reports the increase to the lifetime portion of the pension.
- it does not report any increase to the bridge portion of the pension.
- does not calculate any increase due to lessening the early retirement reduction that applies to those retiring prior to age 60, or factor 90.

It is hoped that the on-line Purchase Cost Estimator will be revised in the near future.

A more reliable method for determining if a purchase is worthwhile, is to go through the following steps:

1. Determine the estimated cost of the pension by using the online Purchase Cost Estimator.
2. Produce two pension estimates (with and without the additional service that would be gained via the purchase) using the web site's Personalized Pension Estimator.
3. Compare the two estimates to determine the estimated pension increase that would be realized via the purchase.
4. Determine the time required to recover the purchase cost by dividing the cost by the amount of the pension increase. Members may want to carefully analyze their investment options for purchases that take longer than 120 months to recover.

Generally, members should note the following:

- Reinstatements of refunds, especially for first refunds taken from the Teachers' Pension Plan (TPP) are almost always worthwhile.
- Maternity and parental leave purchases, as under the *Employment Standards Act*, are also worthwhile.
- Other purchases may be worthwhile. Members should apply.
- Transfer of service from other provinces may be worthwhile. Members should apply for the transfer to determine if the combined pension is a better option than two separate pensions.
- Transfer of service from other BC pensions may be worthwhile. Phone the TPP at 1-800-665-6770.

Applications and *Pensionfacts* for the above may be found on the Teachers' Pension Plan web site under Forms and Publications.

Reminder

You may be able to increase your future pension benefit by purchasing service, but there are deadlines. You must apply before April 1, 2007, and while still an active member, to purchase the following:

- A leave of absence that ended before April 1, 2002
- Arrears for which you received notice before April 1, 2002
- Non-contributory service if you were already an active member on March 31, 2002
- Reinstatement of a refund if you were already an active

member on March 31, 2002. (This also applies to reinstating refunds taken from the BC Municipal Plan and the BC Public Service Plan; the deadline for reinstating a refund from the BC College Pension Plan is February 28, 2007.)

There are other deadlines. You must apply to purchase the following by the deadlines shown:

- Leaves of absence that ended on or after April 1, 2002—within five years of the end of the leave period, or before you terminate your current employment, whichever occurs first.
- Arrears for which you received notice after March 31, 2002—within five years of when the plan sent written notice to you, or before you terminate your current employment, whichever occurs first.
- Non-contributory service where you became an active member after March 31, 2002—within five years of the date you enrol in the plan, or before you terminate your current employment, whichever occurs first.
- Reinstatement of a refund where you became an active member after March 31, 2002—within five years of the date you begin to again contribute to the plan, or before you terminate your current employment, whichever occurs first.

Finally, the BCTF website at bctf.ca/pensions also provides a significant amount of information for members, including a number of notices and links related to pensions and income security and the schedule of 2005-06 Pension Seminars.

BCTF staff are available to assist with all of the above. Telephone 1-800-663-9163 or email directly to cprellwitz@bctf.ca or alambert@bctf.ca.



Picket line visitor in Telegraph Creek

Pension seminars 2005-06

Saturdays (9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., with a question period following). Seminars cover such topics as the Teachers' Pension Plan, purchase rules, pension options, online tools, and retirement issues. Pre-registration is NOT required.

Jan. 7, 2006	Burnaby	Executive Hotel & Conf. Centre
Jan. 14, 2006	Victoria (Saanich)	Mary Winspear Cultural Centre
Jan. 21, 2006	North Vancouver	Centennial Theatre
Feb. 4, 2006	Richmond	Hilton Vancouver Airport
Feb. 11, 2006	Coquitlam	Executive Hotel & Resorts
Feb. 18, 2006	Vernon	Prestige Inn
March 4, 2006	Prince George	Coast Inn of the North
March 25, 2006	Kamloops	Campus Activity Centre, UCC
April 1, 2006	Delta	Delta Town & Country Inn
April 8, 2006	Nanaimo	Coast Bastion Inn
April 22, 2006	Vancouver	UBC Student Union Building
April 29, 2006	Williams Lake	Overlander Hotel
April 29, 2006	Penticton	Penticton Lakeside Resort
May 6, 2006	Nelson	BW Baker Street Inn

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withdraw.

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WHISTLER GETAWAY. Pinecrest Estates, 5 bd., 1400 sq.ft. cabin, sauna, deck with BBQ, fully-equip. kitchen, DW, WD, wood stove (wood provided). Rates from \$175/nt. (seasonal) glush@shaw.ca or 604-936-3346.

BLACKCOMB Luxury 2 bd/loft, 3 bath, sleeps 8, ski-in, ski-out, 604-940-0156.

WHISTLER Village North, 2 bd. deluxe townhome. 604-531-6847. View at www.whistlervacationhome.ca.

WHISTLER Condo. Sleeps 4, views, close to village, all amenities. 604-943-9423.

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WHISTLER Townhouse, sleeps 8, fully equip. 604-985-7669 or Gary 604-669-7212.

WHISTLER CREEK townhouse for rent. View of Alta Lake. 2 bath., 3 bd., sleeps 6. 604-535-3447.

WHISTLER CREEK Spacious, fully equipped 1 bd. and den condo. Sleeps 4 in privacy and comfort. Available year-round. Excellent mid-week rates for ski season, possibly shared arrangement. 604-222-1022.

WHISTLER condo, fully equipped, Creekside, sleeps 4-6. Reserve early for Xmas holidays. Reasonable rates. 604-802-4899 or ddunn@richmond.sd38.bc.ca

WHISTLER 1 bd. condo (Whistler Creekside) sleeps 4, F/P, hot tub, swimming pool, sauna, kitchen fully equipped, u/ground parking, close to lift and stores. Call Jan or John at 604-530-0958.

WHISTLER Alpine Meadows, 3 bd. chalet, sleeps 6, fully equipped, airtight stove, near Meadow Park Arena. Call John 604-987-7619.

CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS Whistler condo, 2 bd. (sleeps 6), all amenities, quiet family area, 10 min. to village, \$250/night, 3 night min. 604-988-8231.

EAST COAST COTTAGES. 2 bd./1 bath sleeps 5 and/or 4 bd., 2 bath, sleeps 8. Great beach, centrally located in New Brunswick, 1 hr to PEI, 2 hrs to Halifax, e-mail cglass1@shaw.ca, 250-828-6280.

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MAUI. Privately owned, beautiful fully furn. 2 bd., 2 bath condo across from Kamaole beaches. Great complex, Great location. 250-598-6955, F: 250-598-6965.

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MEXICO 2 bd. suite, sleeps 4. Ten minute walk to beach. www.casaserena.net

MEXICO Beautiful Sayulita, 35 min. north of Puerto Vallarta airport. 3 bd. house, 2 blks from beach, 1 blk. to town center. Ideal for families, small groups. Regular rate \$450 US/wk. <http://sayulitarent.freespaces.com> or email bnapoloni@yahoo.ca

MEXICO Perfect teacher's Christmas holiday. Mayan Palace Acapulco. Gold Crown Resort! 1 bd. ocean suites, 4-6 people. Dec 16-23/Dec 23-30. \$900/\$1100. Call now! Best offer, 604-813-4901.

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MISCELLANEOUS

MASTER OF EDUCATION (Special Education) by coursework offered by Flinders University in S. Australia is recognized by the B.C. Teacher Qualification Service. The degree is available entirely in distance mode. Applications are invited now for commencement of study in 2006. More information at: <http://ehf.flinders.edu.au/northamerica> or from the program co-ordinator, Bernice.Burnip@flinders.edu.au

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CANADIAN TEACHERS OVERSEAS

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FIND A TUTOR web site. Designed for tutors looking for clients and parents/students looking for tutors. Free 2 month trial for tutors wishing to advertise. www.findAtutor.ca

SEARCH ASSOCIATES International Job Fare Toronto, Feb. 6-8 where over 50 schools from around the world will be recruiting teachers for the upcoming school year. For more information contact Ray Sparks, raysparks@eastlink.ca or visit our web site www.searchassociates.com

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VANCOUVER Clean, bright, quiet, centrally located condos at Robson & Bute. 1 bd. \$85/single. Daily/weekly/monthly rates. 604-608-4268, dbemc@hotmail.com.

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LANGLEY Large, beautiful, warm, Victorian home available Dec. 17 to Jan. 1. Very reasonable rent in exchange for loving cat care, email micasavictoriana@yahoo.ca

RESOURCES

RESOURCES Enhance your Kindergarten, ESL, First Grade, Speech classes with *Annie Ape: The Magic Bullet to Literacy and Alphasongs*. Information at www.kindergarten-tips-and-skill-lessons.com, 604-850-6748, dewdneydragon@shaw.ca

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Advertising information, contact Kathleen Smith, newmag@bctf.ca

JANUARY 2006

26–27 Vancouver. B.C. Alternate Education Assn. (BCAEA) Conference, Challenge and Change 2006, Sheraton Wall Centre. Visit bctf.bc.ca/psas/bcaea.

FEBRUARY 2006

1 B.C. Art Teachers' Association (BCATA) 50th anniversary celebration. Actual date and details TBA.

1 Kelowna. Learning Assistance Teachers' Association (LATA) conference, Inclusive Education. Visit bctf.ca/psas/lata. Actual date and details TBA.

2–4 Vancouver. The Early Years Conference 2006, Child Development Practices: A Decade of Change, sponsored by UBC Interprofessional Continuing Education, focussing on knowledge and progress over the past 10 years as it relates to early-childhood development. Abstracts accepted until May 31, 2005. Contact 604-822-2801, ipinfo@interchange.ubc.ca, interprofessional.ubc.ca.

9 Richmond. Thinking Like a Historian Workshop and Dinner, using primary sources with your classes, Richmond Cultural Centre, 3:45 to 7:00 p.m. Call 604-231-6427 to register.

16–18 Chilliwack. Linking Literacy Through Language, Culture, and Spirituality, Joint Aboriginal Education Conference (including First Nations Education Association [FNEA]), Sardis Secondary South Campus & Skowkale Smokehouse. Registration through trudland@vsb.bc.ca; f: 604-713-5244; also at Thursday evening event at Travel Lodge: Upon registering, you can participate in the make-n-take workshop.

17 Vancouver. Adult Educators' Provincial Specialist Association (AEPSA) Conference, Adult Educators: A Prime Location in Education, in partnership with Continuing International Education Vancouver School District Adult Educators, VSB office building. Focus on adult learning styles, adult teaching strategies, and cultural diversity in the adult classroom. Contact AEPSA President Leo Hutchinson, lhutch@shaw.ca.

17 Kelowna. Learning Assistance Teachers' Association Regional Conference, Inclusionary Practices: Building a Community of Learners in Our Classrooms, with Dr. Vianne Timmons. Contact Sandra Bava, 250-374-0116, f: 250-374-5554, sbava@sd73.bc.ca.

17–18 Kelowna. Orchestrating Success Series: Orchestrating Success in Reading, Orchestrating Positive and Practical Behaviour Plans, and Orchestrating Success by Adapting and Modifying Programs, presented by Dawn Reithaug at the Best Western Inn, Kelowna. Call 604-921-8660, or e-mail learningwithoutlimits@yahoo.com.

MARCH 2006

2–4 Vancouver. SFU Faculty of Education Conference, Teacher Development: The Key to Education in the 21st Century, SFU's Faculty of Education celebrates 40 years of educating teachers to touch the future. An international conference featuring Stephen Lewis, Marilyn Cochran-Smith, Kenneth Zeichner and Rob Tierney, Hyatt

Regency Vancouver Contact Josh Coward at jcoward@sfu.ca or 604-291-4344.

9–10 Vancouver. Special Education Association (SEA) 31st Annual Crosscurrents Conference, Western Bayshore Conference Centre. Hear entertaining, inspiring, and compassionate Anita Archer speak on the art and heart of education. Choose from 30+ sessions on meeting the challenging needs of diverse learners. For more information, contact pfortier@sd57.bc.ca, or visit bctf.bc.ca/psas/SEA.

APRIL 2006

20–22 Coquitlam. Encompass 2006 Conference, Celebrating Social Emotional Learning and Academic Success, with keynote speaker Roy Henry Vickers, featured speakers Dr. Kim Schonert-Reichl, Dr. Shelley Hymel, Dr. Martin Brokenleg, Dr. Gordon Neufeld, Lesra Martin, Marc Kielburger, Bruce Wellman, Raffi, and 50 to 60 related workshops, Terry Fox Secondary School. Registration information online February 2006. Contact Gerry Lush, 604-936-9971, pd43@bctf.ca.

MAY 2006

4–6 Vancouver. 2nd National Biennial Conference on Late Adolescents and Adults with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, Navigating the Rapids: Doing What Works in Practice—designing optimal environments for the social, emotional, spiritual, and physical well-being of individuals with FASD, The Coast Hotel and Conf. Centre. Contact Leanne Fuhr, 604-822-2801, ipinfo@interchange.ubc.ca, www.interprofessional.ubc.ca.

11–13 Whistler. B.C. Science Teachers' Association Conference Catalyst 2006, with Dr. Joe Schwarz, of McGill University and Discovery's Daily Planet. Contact David Barnum, dbarnum@dccnet.com, or visit bcستا.ca.

12 Whistler. Provincial Intermediate Teachers' Association (PITA) Regional Miniconference in conjunction with the science teachers' association conference, with presenter Dawn Reithaug. \$85. Contact Ray Myrtle, 604-224-3388, f: 604-224-5754, rmyrtle@canada.com.

JUNE 2006

1–3 Vancouver. Maternal Child Youth Conference 2006: Optimizing the Care of Mothers, Children, and Youth, sponsored by UBC Interprofessional Continuing Education. Participants will learn about evidence-based programs or services from across the country and strategies for linking hospital and community. Abstracts accepted until June 15, 2005. Contact 604-822-2801, ipinfo@interchange.ubc.ca, interprofessional.ubc.ca.

25–27 Vancouver. Peace Education Forum, Educating a Generation To Create a Culture of Peace, UBC. Contact Jane Turner, jturner@bctf.ca.

PSA PD Day—October 20, 2006

PD Calendar web site <http://pdonline.bctf.ca/conferences/PD-Calendar.html>

Additions/changes? Contact Elizabeth Lambert, elambert@bctf.ca



PETER OWENS PHOTOS

“We are available 24/7”

by Nancy Knickerbocker

“We are calling on this government to come to a table and seek solutions with us. We are available 24/7.”

BCTF President Jinny Sims declared teachers’ availability “24/7” so often throughout the historic two-week strike it became a running joke among the press corps covering the breaking news.

“Thank you for standing up for kids with special needs.”

Few people realized how true her statement was. Foremost among them were the cabbies who arrived before dawn to take her to *Canada AM* or another of the eastern-based morning shows that set the news agenda across the nation for the next 24 hours. Prime time in the Eastern zone is 4:00 a.m. Pacific time, a difficult hour to be articulate.

But, there she’d be, well-coiffed in a crisp suit on time at the studio where a sleepy-eyed technician would wire her for sound. Then, despite the oddly alienating experience of talking to a TV camera in an empty room, Jinny would still manage to make a genuine connection with the host and audience waking up in Toronto.

Her principled stand, generous smile and open heart connected with concerned parents and jaded journalists alike. They sensed authentic leadership, and sniffed a great story unfolding.

At the other end of the news cycle, there she’d be live on the local broadcasts at 11:00 p.m. Pacific time, updating the public on the latest developments.

Some evenings there were as many as four television crews on location at the BCTF building on West 6th Avenue. Network satellite trucks parked nearby

beamed their signals to the studios and across the province.

Jinny treated everyone, junior reporters to senior correspondents, with courtesy and good humour. They teased her that, no matter how early or late, they could never get her to stray from her main message about the urgent need to improve learning conditions for students, restore bargaining rights, and provide a fair and reasonable salary increase for teachers.

Jinny’s defense of teachers’ civil disobedience in the face of unjust legislation moved people. Day after day, as the risk and the pressure mounted, she remained strong and outspoken. She did so bolstered by a united and fearless Executive Committee, supported by experienced staff working flat out heart and soul.

Most of all, though, Jinny rose to the immense challenge of being BCTF President 2005 through the collegiality and solidarity of the members themselves. She visited picket lines every day, and drew on the teachers’ strength and stories to fuel her own work. She saw true heroism in their stand, and felt both humbled and inspired by it.

“It’s the 38,000 members of the BCTF who are my heroes. I want to thank you for your courage, and I salute you for

Jinny’s defense of teachers’ civil disobedience in the face of unjust legislation moved people.

taking this important stand for our students, our rights, and our profession,” she said.

In response, thousands of teachers reached out to Jinny by e-mail, fax, and phone. They sent her cards, flowers, and even spa certificates.

Best gift of all, they found their voices. Teachers on picket

lines used their cell phones to call radio talk shows and spoke out from the heart and from their experience in classrooms across the province. They wrote letters to editors, to trustees, to MLAs, to cabinet ministers.

This positive coverage was all the more amazing considering Jinny was leading 38,000 people in an illegal job action...

Jinny and other senior Federation leaders now talk excitedly about how a whole new generation of activists has been born this fall, and how the BCTF’s future leaders are among them.

Jinny’s strong work ethic, physical stamina, political savvy, and resilient sense of humour all contributed to her success. Her classroom experience also helped her to take on the leadership challenges. As an English teacher, she has the language skills to articulate teachers’ concerns. As a social studies teacher, she gained historical knowledge that helped her see events in a larger perspective. And as a counsellor, she developed the people skills to work with those on all sides of the dispute.

Fluent in Punjabi, Jinny connected with the Indo-Canadian community in a way no BC labour leader has done to date. Her early childhood experience as an Indian-born student struggling to learn in English helped her understand immigrant families across all language barriers.

Hers was the quintessential immigrant success story just waiting to be told, and reporters soon awakened to the narrative drama. Along with the news coverage of unfolding events, *The Globe and Mail*, *BCTV* on

Global, *CBC Television*, *Sing Tao Daily*, and *The Courier* all did personal profile stories of this clearly beloved labour leader emerging on the scene.

This positive coverage was all the more amazing considering Jinny was leading 38,000 people in an illegal job action, facing potentially devastating fines that could cripple the union and possibly land her in jail on charges of criminal contempt. Despite all that, public opinion remained strong: at least two-to-one in favour of the teachers over the government.

October 11, 7:00 a.m. On the picket line at Macdonald Elementary on East Hastings, Jinny and other teachers enjoy home-baked cookies and hot coffee delivered by former students Kalen and Jewels Murray.

“There’s a big difference between breaking the law and having a law created to break you.”

In conversation, Jinny is shocked to learn that Kalen has 36 classmates in her wood-working class at Templeton Secondary. Kalen loves the course, but is frustrated by the frequent waits for teacher time and equipment in a shop that was designed for 24 students, not 37.

Hours later, at a big rally in front of the provincial cabinet offices at Canada Place, Jinny recounts Kalen’s plight as an example of why teachers are so determined to make improvements to class size and class composition.

In her speech, Jinny also quotes Linda Coyle, president of the Charter for Public Education Network, who said: “There’s a big difference between breaking the law and having a law

created to break you.” The crowd loves it, and clearly is experiencing no cognitive dissonance whatsoever over law-abiding teachers being found in contempt of Bill 12.

Leaving the rally is an emotional experience, and we make slow progress through the crowd as teachers reach out to shake Jinny’s hand, give her hugs, and express their feelings.

“Jinny, you’re doing an absolutely wonderful job. Carry on!”

“Thank you for standing up for kids with special needs.”

“Thank you for being a risk-taker.”

“Will you autograph my picket sign?”

“We’re with you all the way. Keep going!”

Ten days later, we were in a cab on the way to another, even bigger rally at the Pacific Coliseum organized by our wonderful sisters and brothers in CUPE. Four of us yakked and laughed all the way across town, driven by a turbaned Sikh fellow. As we arrived, he spoke a few quiet words to Jinny in Punjabi.

“Yes, of course!” she said. With that, he dialed his cell phone and passed it back to her. As Jinny chatted away, he explained to the rest of us that he wanted to give his 12-year-old daughter a chance to talk to Jinny because she had become her hero.

Nancy Knickerbocker is the BCTF’s media relations officer.

Leaving the rally is an emotional experience, and we make slow progress as teachers reach out to shake Jinny’s hand, give her hugs, and express their feelings