

Extra money helps

Unclear picture on grant distribution

Federation officials expressed pleasure at the \$21 million in grants now being disbursed throughout the province primarily to reduce pupil-teacher ratios.

However, the impact of the grants is uncertain. A com-

plete provincial picture of the use of these funds will not be available until all local boards have met. Grants should be a topic for discussion at the May Representative Assembly.

The \$21 million will cover costs of the reduced ratio only

for the last four months of 1974, September to December, according to Education Minister Eileen Dailly. Funding for the rest of the school year stretching into 1975 will be appropriated by the Legislature next year.

After meeting with Department officials, BCTF President Jim MacFarlan says the specific amounts for individual districts will not be released by the Department. However, he pointed out, a number of individual school boards are releasing the amount they received to the local news media.

MacFarlan said he hoped the bulk of the money would be used to provide classroom teachers and not for a disproportionate number of administrators.

Surrey school district has been awarded \$331,000 in provincial government supplemental funds, a figure that Lloyd Edwards, president of the Surrey Teachers' Association calls, 'extremely disappointing.'

Surrey teachers held a one-day protest strike in March at which time they were given assurance by the Minister that the educational needs of the district would be looked after.

The district, Lloyd Edwards points out, asked for more than \$2 million and actually received \$1.5 million. 'But of that total, \$900,000 will go to maintain the Surrey mill rate at last year's level,' he says, 'and has, therefore, no educational value, while another \$300,000 will go to Douglas College, leaving only \$331,000 to go toward the pupil-teacher ratio. It is a political response, designed to appease people but it doesn't do anything for education.'

School board chairperson Rod Kerr has also called the grant disappointing, and predicted the district will not be able to hire 58 new junior secondary teachers required for next year.

In Delta the supplementary grant for reducing pupil-teacher ratio is \$310,900.

In Burnaby the grant is \$392,080.

Coquitlam received \$331,000. West Vancouver received \$80,000 from the provincial grant.

NORTH VANCOUVER

North Vancouver has received \$243,360 for the hiring of 53 new teachers for this year. Out of its budget, the board had already approved the hiring of 37 additional teachers this year, making a total of 90 new teachers who will join the district.

North Vancouver's president Clifford Boldt says the district should be able to maintain the BCTF minimum criteria except possibly in kindergarten and some areas of secondary.

The distribution of funds, the grants, Cliff Boldt points out, was agreed to by teacher representatives, superintendent and school board. 'It is consistent with BCTF policy, consistent with the presen-

tation by teachers to the board in October, and consistent with a joint teacher-trustee brief to the Minister in December.'

A comparison of this year's budget with last year's budget was made at a school board meeting and it shows that assessed values in the school district have increased by 25.7 per cent in the past year which means the district is no longer eligible for the 75 per cent sharing on a 50 per cent basis.

The provincial government sharing in the operating expenses of North Vancouver has decreased from 45.6 per cent to 40.47 per cent and its sharing of the gross budget has decreased from 47.96 per cent to 44.38 per cent. In dollar terms, the provincial government contribution to the gross budget of this school district has increased by \$1,648,035 and the local contribution by \$3,802,017. The mill rate of the district in 1974 will be up approximately 2.28 mills, to 36.58 mills.

NANAIMO

Teacher representatives in Nanaimo mounted a strong campaign this year making submissions to the board and meeting with Department officials. But Glen Plueckhahn, local president, says teachers are bitterly disappointed over the results.

Nanaimo can only hope to get 13 to 15 additional teachers from a grant of \$77,741.

Plueckhahn estimates 30 additional teachers are required. Before the grant, teachers and trustees had agreed to hold primary classes to a limit of 25, he says, which means an additional nine teachers in primary for the district. To meet BCTF minimum criteria, Plueckhahn estimates 21 additional teachers are required, making a total of 30 needed in the district.

'Thirteen to 15 teachers is a far cry from that minimum requirement,' Plueckhahn says.

Nanaimo, he points out, is what might be understood as an average district for the province — average in terms of such things as class size, pupil-teacher ratios, per pupil expenditures and wealth. If the Minister's commitment to reduce pupil-teacher ratio by one and a half had been followed through, approximately 40 additional teachers would have been anticipated in Nanaimo.

Department officials appear to have used an estimate for enrollment drawn from past experience, Plueckhahn says, rather than anticipated enrollment submitted by principals. He argues that Nanaimo's school population is not dropping as Department figures indicate, but is shifting within the district.

Cowichan Commission reports:

Learning conditions deficient

A special inquiry into Cowichan schools has shown parts of the system are substandard and badly in need of immediate attention.

Fundamental issues of immediate concern to parents, trustees, and teachers in the district identified by the commission include:

- * lack of classrooms, laboratories, libraries and poorly equipped playgrounds

- * absence of strong educational leadership because there is no one designated chief executive officer for the school board

- * no planning, short-term or long-term, on most educational matters

- * communication gaps between various groups within the Cowichan education system

- * a general air of pessimism about the community's willingness to support a quality education system for Cowichan

The commission, established by the British Columbia Teachers' Federation, investigated Cowichan School District in February. Members of the commission were Kay McKinnon, primary teacher, Agassiz; Bill Melville, secondary school principal, Coquitlam; and Wes Knapp, secondary school teacher, Vancouver.

Basic physical inadequacies is the most obvious and pressing problem facing the schools in Cowichan.

Calling the present physical condition of many school buildings and all school grounds in Cowichan 'deplorable,' the commissioners say, 'pupils in this school district are being deprived of educational opportunities as a result of overcrowded conditions within the buildings.'

In elementary schools, they say, it is common to find classrooms lacking storage space, halls and corridors dimly lit, activity rooms that lack toilets, showers, changing areas and adequate storage space for gym equipment.

'In one school the library was in the basement; this cellar area was cold, poorly lit and had a bare concrete floor. In another school the library consisted of a 9 by 12 foot closet space.'

Staffrooms were generally inadequate — small, crowded, used for storage, work area, interviews and staff meetings. 'In some instances staff toilets are inadequate, and lack privacy and proper ventilation.'

None of the elementary schools, they point out, has a daytime caretaker, which has led to a serious state of disrepair in schools.

Although the commissioners found adequate cause for the frustration among the district

teachers over the physical state of both buildings and grounds, they were impressed by the evidence of a high level of good teaching and effective learning in many classrooms despite the situation.

'The quality of student work, seen in many classroom displays and activities,' says the commission report, 'appeared to be of a high standard, and the general interest of students in their studies was most heartening.'



BCTF special commission members from l. to r., Bill Melville, Kay McKinnon, Wes Knapp and Jim Cairnie spent three and one-half days in Cowichan, received 36 briefs and found much support for teachers.

Knapp, Bowman appointed to staff

Two highly regarded teachers have been given a one-year appointment with the BCTF's Professional Development Division.

Wes Knapp, a teacher at Vancouver's Gladstone Secondary School and Jim Bowman, a superintendent in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, were chosen from more than 100 applicants for the positions.

Wes Knapp has taught English for nine years in B.C., four years in Richmond, one in Kamloops and four in Vancouver. He has been editor of the English teachers' newsletter for three years, as well as workshop co-ordinator, a chairperson of an English composition marking committee, and chairperson of the Vancouver learning conditions committee. This year he served as a member of the commission to investigate learning and working conditions in the Cowichan School District.

Of Knapp, colleagues say that he is a thoroughly com-

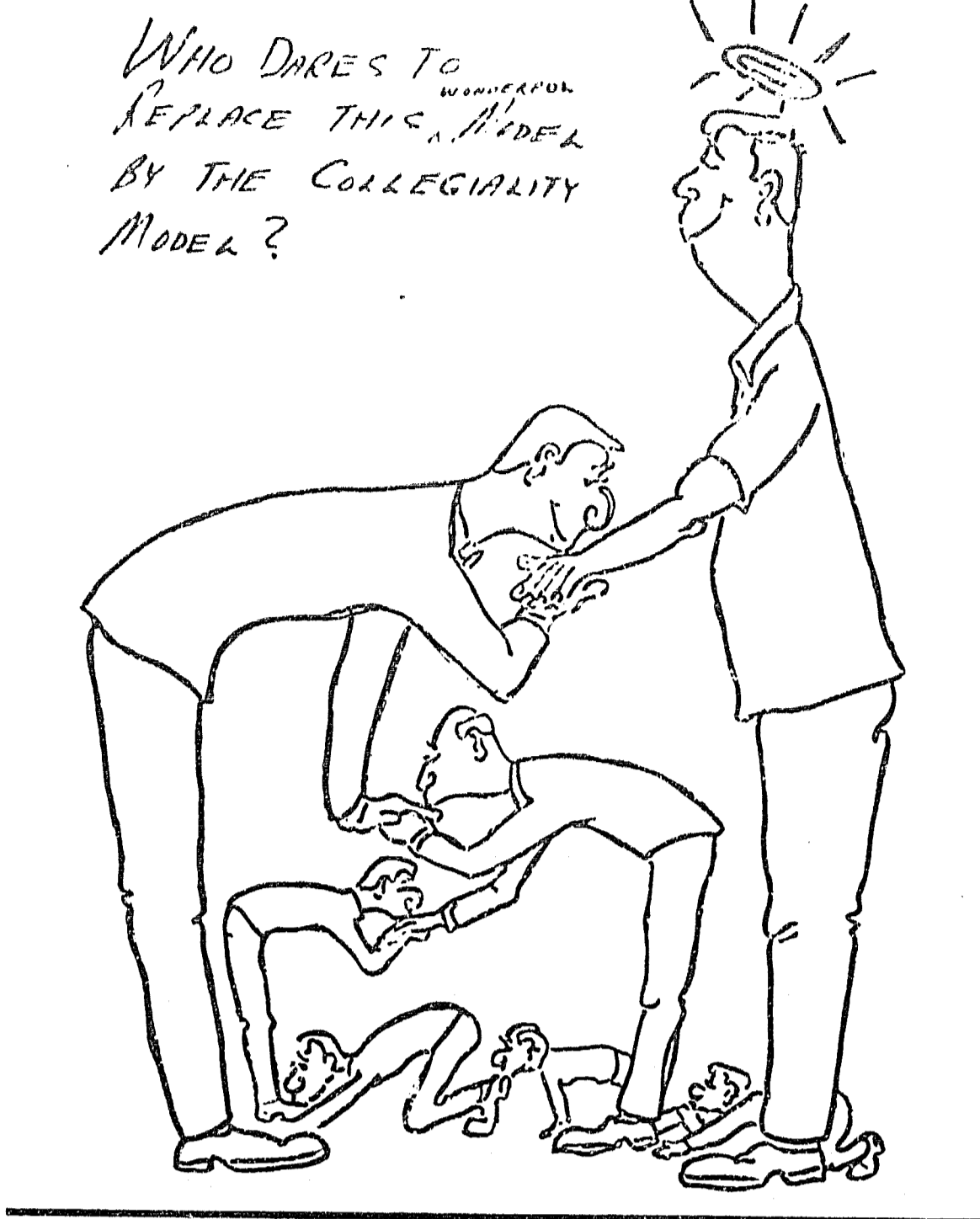
petent and professionally-minded teacher, with a proven record of working well with others.

Jim Bowman brings a wide variety of professional experience to the position. He taught in a one-room rural school, Grades 1 to 9 in Saskatchewan from 1953 to 1955, and as a social studies teacher, Grades 9 to 12 from 1955 to 1960.

He has served as a research assistant for the professional development division of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation.

His local experience includes a member of a teacher salary negotiation committee and a chairperson of a salary negotiation committee in two school districts. He has served on numerous professional development committees including work as a member of the STF advisory committee on curriculum.

At present he is superintendent of schools for Prince Albert.



Salary continuance

Protection revised April 1

Two amendments to the long-term salary continuance plan, underwritten by Great-West Life Assurance Company, went into effect April 1.

Details of the changes have been forwarded to all local association presidents and geographical representatives.

The elimination period between expiration of statutory sick leave and receipt of benefits is now 85 working days, not 105 working days. Great-West Life will review applications now on hand and commence benefits as of April 1 where the applicant has met the 85 working day waiting period.

An optional plan available to each local association now

provides benefits at 60 per cent of salary (versus 50 per cent in standard plan) for a monthly premium rate of .67 (versus .56 in standard plan). All other features of the standard plan, including the revised elimination period of 85 working days, remain in the optional plan.

Premium rates of .56 and .67 are guaranteed to December 31, 1974.

Salary indemnity benefits from the BCTF (\$21 per working day) are payable to eligible members after a waiting period of 10 consecutive working days after expiration of statutory sick leave.

Dear Sir:

Before we implement our new policy (of judging one's peers), a definition of the word 'peer' should be given. 'Peer' should not be equated with 'colleague.' Some of us are sadly peerless.

I have further things to say to the officious, zealous colleagues who think they have what it takes to sit in judgment of others:

1. I have too much humility to judge teachers of other subjects.

2. — too much generosity to judge teachers of French.

3. — and too much common sense to allow any other teacher to judge me.

4. However, I would welcome the opinion of a reliable expert in my field and would humbly heed his/her advice, comments and suggestions.

A. J. Johnstone

Dear Sir:

I have just finished reading the April 1974 issue of the Newsletter. I am somewhat dismayed to read the letter to the editor column.

It is appropriate that the letter signed by Mr. Ralph Sundby appears directly below the heading 'Federation is democratic in operation'. Mr. Sundby should look up the definition of democracy with

particular emphasis on the concept of freedom of speech. Mr. Ovans has every right to express his views. He is a respected member of our profession and has a right to be heard. We may not agree, and should say so, but should not engage in personal attacks.

Surely Mr. Sundby in his zeal to 'democratize' us all would not deny this right to others. On the other hand, maybe Mr. Sundby is, in the words of our President, one of those teachers who '... have gone to school in an authoritarian system ... (has) taught in an authoritarian system, and we shouldn't expect ... (him to) overnight assume the full responsibility of participation in a highly democratic system.'

Now that I think of it, after reading the entire Newsletter, the President, being a local boy, has that problem too! 'Nuff said!

W. L. Melville
Coquitlam

Dear Sir:

This is to protest an attitude

Negotiations snarled in the Yukon

Negotiations between the Yukon territorial government and the Yukon Teachers' Association have been adjourned and a settlement does not appear probable before September 1974.

Yukon teachers were using the services of Don Creamer, a B.C. teacher from Cranbrook and a member of the provincial Agreements Committee, in their negotiations with the government when the commissioner, James Smith, adjourned the negotiations acting unilaterally. Teachers brought a writ against the commissioner asking that he continue negotiations, and, because he terminated negotiations unilaterally, repay negotiation costs to the YTA.

There has occurred, in addition, tabling of new school ordinances that say: teachers cannot run for political office without prior approval of the commissioner; teachers shall supervise any time, any place for presumably 12 months; teachers are civil servants, teachers can be transferred anywhere in the Yukon on seven days' notice.

The CTF has expressed deep concern at the tenor of the school ordinances and has deplored the deterioration in the relationship between government and teachers.

Commissioner James Smith, moreover, has launched a counter suit against the YTA for vexation and embarrassment of government.

Any teacher still interested in applying to the Yukon for work should contact the YTA at 4051 - 4th Avenue, Whitehorse, Yukon.

expressed by Ralph Sundby in the April issue.

When a member (I think Charlie Ovans qualifies) may not express his opinion on ill-considered policies, the Newsletter will then be nothing but a purveyor of current gospel according to the current messiah.

Then nobody will read it.

Bruce Ewen

Dear Sir:

About six years ago a bite was discovered in the BCTF apple. Two years ago that same apple was found to be feeding a worm. This year that same worm is obviously deep in the core.

Partisan politics is destroying the credibility of the BCTF as a body concerned primarily with education and educators. Partisan politics in this case is the support of socialism. This is the worm in the BCTF apple.

It is through this worm that our profession is being remade to conform with Socialist dogma. What else can be said about the 'collegiality' which infected this year's AGM?

Unless action is taken soon to put this worm out on its own, where it belongs, we'll end up with a big, hungry worm, but no apple.

Gordon R. Scott
Surrey

Cowichan Commission

Findings supported at public meeting in Duncan

Some Cowichan trustees seemed bent on following the time honored tradition of killing the messenger that brings ill tidings. In this case the BCTF special commission, when the two groups met in Duncan, April 24, at a public meeting.

But the commission survived, and survived well according to teachers packed into the board offices. 'We were extremely proud of our colleagues,' Cowichan president Pat Clarke reports.

'That we can still entertain any hope for positive dialogue with our trustees is very much to the credit of the commissioners who represented us with a graciousness and honesty of manner which must have impressed trustee and spectator alike — and which has, without any doubt, enhanced the public image of the BCTF in this district,' she says.

It was a meeting that altered

nated between tense hostility and moments of humor as trustees, obviously stung, prodded and pried through the commission report section by section. And though the evidence submitted by the commission that learning conditions in the district were substandard was supported, there still remained, for some trustees, a marked inability to accept the criticism.

Jim Cairnie, who Pat Clarke says made a magnificent contribution, established the credentials of the commissioners at the outset. 'Kay McKinnon, primary teacher, whose recognition in the teaching profession is such that UBC has asked her to take a leave of absence to help establish primary programs; Wes Knapp, teacher, chairperson of Vancouver secondary's learning conditions committee; Bill Melville, member of the provincial Professional Development and Curriculum Com-



Between 50 and 60 people packed the tiny school board office, most of them waiting out in the hall.

mittee, president of the Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association, and principal of Coquitlam's Centennial Secondary School.'

'Not a group of travelling critics, not a group of travelling troublemakers, but rather a group of well experienced, competent professionals who have come because they feel they can make a sincere set of recommendations that will improve the situation they have described,' Cairnie stressed. Nor was the commission interested in ascribing blame. 'On the contrary, we want to explore problems and seek directions for change.'

What did the 'substandard' mean? trustees asked at the start. 'To what are we being compared?'

'It's a subjective statement,' Bill Melville replied. 'I wouldn't want to think you would base it on the worst but on the best.' Wes Knapp added that he taught in Vancouver's east end, sometimes called a deprived area, 'and the conditions I saw in Cowichan are below it.'

Trustee Evelyn Paskin, reading from a prepared statement, said her 'adrenalin flowed' and that it was easy for individuals and organizations to criticize. Teachers' salaries had taken an increasing portion of the budget, she said, and therefore, if teachers were concerned 'I suggest they take less and reverse the trend.'

Bill Melville calmly reiterated they were not there to ascribe blame, that attacking

I have twice employed the word "professional," a term much abused these days. I suspect that it is the interpretation of "professionalism" which is at the core of the controversy surrounding Recommendation 58.

I, like most teachers, look forward to being a member of a truly professional teaching body and the autonomy which that aspiration implies carries with it also the responsibility of ensuring that teaching in the province of B.C. is in accord with the stated professional standards we espouse. That in turn means inescapably that we have to accept the responsibility of self governance and (take a deep breath, conservatives) policing our membership.

The most valid objection to the adoption of Recommendation 58 that I have heard is that the BCTF does not at present have the machinery to effectively implement many of our policies. It is, I fear, true that we are ill-equipped to assume the collegial responsibilities of professionalism, but that is no argument for not making a start by examining our deficiencies.

If we are going to continue to try to handle all discipline ethics and legal aid cases at the Executive table, the future is not promising.

Due process, to which every member is entitled, would be better served by delegating some of the Executive's responsibilities in these areas to standing committees of the Federation, a change which would necessitate constitutional amendments at the 1975 A.G.M.

There are many members of the Federation who could contribute the experience and objectivity which these often complex and demanding cases

require by serving on such committees, and we will be remiss if we don't use those people more fully.

The affairs of a Federation such as ours are too multifarious to permit an Executive to spend its time doing committee work, and the demands imposed by increased professional responsibilities make this doubly true.

If Recommendation 58 and other policies which involve the unpleasant possibility of having to discipline some members are to be meaningful, we must have the means and the will to implement them, otherwise they are nothing. Policy statements, however fine they look in print, are worse than useless if they are not acted upon for their mere presence in the book may delude us into thinking that we have really done something about a problem when we carry motions at the A.G.M.

It is my concern that some Executive and staff members have pronounced Recommendation 58 "unenforceable" for reasons not publicly specified and that, as far as they are concerned, is that.

I invite anyone who feels this to be the case to respond in the next Newsletter with an explanation of their views.

If indeed, they are right in saying that the BCTF is incapable of implementing such policies, then it would be only intellectual honesty to admit as much and to drop our professional pretensions and concentrate on becoming an efficient protective trade union.

Some changes in our constitution and our attitude to professional responsibilities may be needed. It should be remembered that conservatism has two potent allies working for it; inertia and apathy.

On Recommendation 58

A professional obligation to conform with criteria

—John Winstanley



Recommendation 58: That to foster quality education it be considered conduct harmful or prejudicial to the interests of the Federation when any member:

1. does not report a learning conditions violation;
2. deliberately causes misleading or false information to be reported;
3. fails to co-operate with his/her professional organization in attempts to correct violations.

Now that the dust of the A.G.M. has settled I think it is time for us to take a good look at the implications of Recommendation 58.

You will recall that this recommendation of the Learning Conditions Committee was not endorsed by the Executive Committee and much heated debate took place on the floor of the A.G.M. before it was carried without amendment.

Many of the opponents of the recommendation alleged that the measure is "too extreme" or that it is "taking a sledgehammer to crack a nut."

If we draw back from such dramatic and emotional overstatements we see that this measure affirms the belief of the membership that teachers who deliberately turn a blind eye to a bad learning situation, or who deliberately falsify information about a learning situation, or who will not co-operate with their colleagues to remedy the situation are behaving in a manner 'harmful or prejudicial to the interests of the federation.'

The last phrase relates to the wording of By-Law 5.10 of our constitution, which empowers the Executive Committee to refuse, terminate or suspend the membership of a person guilty of conduct harmful or prejudicial to the interests of the Federation. What is being wilfully ignored is section (d) of By-Law 5.10 which empowers the Executive to REPRIMAND a person for the same offence.

Both at the AGM and at the Executive table there has been much talk of "denying a teacher his/her means of earning a livelihood," as though any teacher who runs afoul of the Learning Conditions inquiry is going to be hauled up in front of a grim-faced court martial which is going to cut off his buttons, ceremonially break his piece of chalk and drum him out of the service for life.

The reality is far different. Teachers are sufficiently familiar with the difficulties involved in equitably resolving timetable problems and distributing class loads at the start of each year or semester to enter into any kind of witch hunt, and few would be vindictive enough to try to provoke a confrontation over any situation where all parties involved were genuinely trying to work out an acceptable learning situation.

However, where a person shows no concern over a class

size, far in excess of the tolerable maximum agreed upon by his or her colleagues, then it is the professional obligation of the BCTF — and that means you, and me, and every teacher in the Federation — to put collective pressure on that individual to conform with our criteria. If better learning conditions are as important to us as our mouths say they are, then it is fuzzy-minded liberalism at its worst to wring our hands and talk of the rights of individual conscience when the actions of an indifferent member can vitiate the aims and objectives of his professional association.

John Winstanley is a member of the BCTF Executive Committee.

If such a person, and I cannot in all honesty believe that there will be many of them, remains impervious to the censure of his colleagues and persists in his conduct after being reprimanded, I for one am willing to countenance the use of stronger sanctions, already outlined in By-Law 5.10.

It is significant that in the arena of agreements and income security — in which there can be little doubt that B.C. teachers accord quite justifiably a high priority — nobody has the temerity to suggest that a laissez faire policy would be either appropriate or democratic. Is there a whiff of hypocrisy in the air?

21 in a class: 'space to breathe'

By Bernice Reid

Unexpectedly, unbelievably, it has happened to me! I have 21 names on the register, 21 desks at one end of the long room, 21 chairs in a circle at the other. But something new has been added, something intangible, never before experienced in the noisy, hectic pace apparent in the usual overcrowded classroom.

There is quiet space to breathe. A serene expanse of floor shines as you enter. Children work together in small groups with spaces between. At the long chalkboard there is room to be free with chalk and brush; no shouldering, no shoving because you can stretch in either direction. The math station functions with room enough to make number lines as long as you wish, or to build with a thousand blocks. There is plenty of room to display and use concrete to help us understand the abstract. The science table holds equipment to measure, examine and wonder about. The space in front of the tall bookcase holds enough room in which to sit and browse. There is even space in the cloakroom to sit on the floor when hauling on a snowsuit or rubber boots, unmolested by frantic feet and elbows of numerous classmates. There is room to stand around the piano, together with your friends, and sing out with one voice, like grown-ups at a party, not in the usual space-saving, rigid rows.

And there is extra time. Time for the children to sit in a circle and talk together, to share experiences, talk out fears and frustrations; how we feel about the thrill of learning to skate, or even describing last night's scary dream. The teacher also has time to listen — we all listen to each other — there is time for everything. Time to hear stories, time for poetry, time to experiment with melting snow, time to put it out to freeze again, time to watch from the windows the fluttering of snowflakes, the drifting of low clouds across the mountains — time to experience individual conferences, relaxed, unhurried, to find out how much grown-ups really do care about children. Everyone has time to become friends.

Here for a few months there has been peace, and a perfect learning situation. Without any strain or apparent effort on anyone's part, this class is a month ahead of where it needs to be, in order to accomplish four levels of learning in first year Primary.

Will it ever happen in my classroom again?
Why can't it happen for every six year old?

Reprint from the Okanagan Valley Teachers' Association Newsletter, Pearl Slater, editor.

BRITISH COLUMBIA TEACHERS' FEDERATION

letter

Member

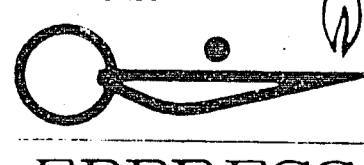
Editor

JOHN HARDY

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JOAN WHITE

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EXPRESS

Bicycle race

One of the more interesting items that we've picked up is a 23-mile bicycle race for five and 10 speeds organized by the student council of George Bonner Junior Secondary School in Cowichan.

Last year, according to Jan van der Have, teams participated from Courtenay, Campbell River, Nanaimo, Duncan and Victoria, with more than 80 students taking part. (The race is open to junior secondary students only.)

They race May 30. Contact Jan van der Have at George Bonner Junior Secondary School, Mill Bay, or phone 743-2251.

What values?

Council for Human Development annual conference on 'What values do we want teachers to teach' takes place at UBC, May 25. Open to the public, no charge. Contact Dr. David Bain, Faculty of Education, UBC.

Scholarship fund

Plans have now been finalized for the establishment of the Art Burch Scholarship Fund.

Art Burch, who died suddenly in England on May 15, 1973, had retired as principal of Kitsilano Secondary School in 1972. The idea of creating a scholarship fund was proposed by students. Contributions may be sent to the Art Burch Scholarship Fund, c/o Kitsilano Secondary School, 2550 West 10th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C.

Raising funds?

If you are interested in raising funds for your school, here's another idea for you: recycle paper.

Howard Cole, of Savage Salvage, is paying \$10 a ton for newspapers, magazines, rags and old clothing. He will travel,

he says, as far as Chilliwack for pick-up. Further details from Howard Cole, Savage Salvage, P.O. Box 80523, Burnaby 1, 521-1544.

Tom Chalmers

Tom Chalmers, principal of Burnaby South Senior Secondary and past president of the BCTF, will be honored at a farewell evening to take place at Burnaby South, June 5, 8:00 p.m. Present and former colleagues welcome. Contact Alex Lucas at Burnaby South.

William Brand

William Brand, Director of Instruction in Coquitlam, is retiring in June ending 40 years, or so, of teaching in the district. Allan Wright says a reception will be held for him June 9, 2:00-5:00 p.m. at Port Coquitlam Secondary, interested friends welcome.

Home Ec conference

Ivy Turner writes:

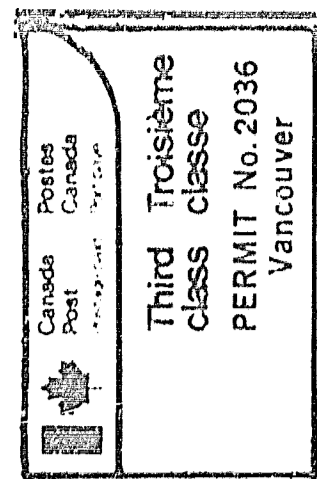
Our West Coast convention for '74 is taking place in a time of change, challenge and opportunity. Our profession stands at the Gateway. The choice is ours, to be limited by the past or to grow.

DAY ONE of Gateway '74 — L'Horizon is planned to let us take a good look at our world. The emphasis is on our environment and we will be encouraged to become involved with today's issues.

DAY TWO gives us a chance to make a professional commitment and in up-dating sessions to become aware of trends, techniques and discoveries in our profession.

DAY THREE will deal with communication, the vital link between people and information.

DAY FOUR will be a day of business and important decisions as we prepare our professional association for an exciting future.



Noon hours should be free for 'eating time'

School boards can exercise discretion in favor of an alternate provision when dealing with noon hour supervision according to legal opinion.

The question arose when members of the Burnaby

Teachers' Association requested legal opinion on a clause in the Learning Conditions Contract that says 'No member of the association shall be required to perform routine school supervision duties during the noon hour.'

BCTF lawyers point out the Act and Regulations do not state in mandatory terms that only teachers shall supervise. 'It would appear that the board has exercised its discretion in favor of an alternate provision when dealing with noon hour supervision.'

It could certainly be argued that it is good policy, they say, in efficient and effective school systems to establish practices which permit teachers whose principal function is teaching, to have a 'duty free' period in which to eat at noon hour.

They caution, however, that in the event of an emergency, teachers could be required to perform school supervisory duties during the noon hour.

Cowichan public meeting

continued from page 3

commissioners were valid enough: the physical state of buildings, the lack of communication, the availability of buses, the lack of planning.

And there is acknowledgement by the commissioners that their colleagues in Cowichan had made an effort as well. They call on teachers, through their association to identify problems, suggest solutions, and assist in the implementation of change.

Bill Melville at one point frankly said, 'We're hard to work with. We keep changing our minds. But it's part of the job. Remember the pupils we have keep changing their minds.' He urged the board to give teachers responsibility and he urged teachers and principals to take some initiative. Parents have to be encouraged, as well, he said, and parents need to know their voice is being heard.

The trustees were critical of the commission's comments on their administrative structure. The Cowichan Board operates on a two committee system — the buildings, grounds and

transportation committee and the education committee — with co-ordination between them largely a matter of coincidence according to the report. The district superintendent meets with the education committee and the works superintendent meets with the other.

The committee's observation that such a system 'tends to divide the elected members of the board' seemed well supported by the events of the meeting. (The commission recommended the board appoint a chief executive officer in the district and demand education leadership.)

Trustee Dave Haywood said the board had hoped to get some constructive criticism but the job was not done properly because the commission had not spent enough time in the district. The report, he predicted, would do a lot of harm, therefore he hoped the commissioners would withdraw it.

Trustee Joan Gillat, on the other hand, said she found the report informative, appreci-

ated the commission's work, and thanked them for it. Board chairperson John Philp, summing up the meeting, said valid points had been made, the information had been gratefully received, but, pointing to the differing opinions expressed, said no collective response would be offered at this time.

For their part, in summation, Cairnie expressed regret at the call to withdraw the report. Instead he urged Cowichan trustees to accept a proposal made by trustee Haywood to form a joint committee of trustees and teachers to follow up the report. In addition, he emphasized that were the trustees to accept the fact that problems do exist, there is a wealth of talent and energy within their own district waiting to be tapped as well as help available from the BCTF and Department of Education. They could move Cowichan into an entirely new situation.

There is much in the district that could be built upon — they hoped the trustees would recognize this and take action.

Proposed legislative changes

Escalation clause gained in pensions

Good news came with the provincial government's proposed changes to the Teachers' Pensions Act in April.

The major change will be to adjust pensions quarterly to compensate for increases in the cost of living.

Federation President Jim MacFarlan reacted enthusiastically saying 'We're very pleased with the amendments the government has introduced, and commend the government for them,' he said.

Here are the highlights of the legislation, to take effect July 1, 1974:

- * Immediate annual escalation of pensions, then quarterly escalation by 1975, to keep pensions in line with increases in the Consumer Price Index.

- * Pensions of 2 per cent times years of service (maximum 70 per cent) for all teachers at age 60.

- * Pensions of 2 per cent times years of service (70 per cent) at or after age 55 for teachers with 35 years of service (escalation provisions effective immediately).

- * Reduced pensions (5 per cent reduction per year under age 60) at or after age 55 for teachers with 10-34 years of service (escalation provisions effective at age 60).

- * For those awaiting deferred pensions: (1) final average salary escalated on Consumer Price Index basis from time of ceasing employment; (2) right to allowance at age 55 or later as if in service.

- * Government to match teachers' contributions beginning in 1975.

MacFarlan said he was particularly happy with plans to increase the pensions of teachers already retired. 'These people gave a lifetime of service to the children of our province, and the inflationary period we are all experiencing has hit them and other people on fixed incomes particularly hard. I compliment the government for acting to relieve their financial burdens.'

Two of the changes will make it possible for teachers to retire as early as age 55. At age 55, those with 35 years of service will be able to retire

on full pension and those with fewer years of service will be able to retire with reduced pensions.

Commenting on the early retirement possibility, MacFarlan said, 'Only those people who have taught recently can have any real conception of the tremendous strain faced by teachers. After 30 or more years of that strain, some of our people suffer declining health, but in the past have not been in any financial position to leave the classroom. Now they will be able to do so.'

MacFarlan also commended the government on its commitment to match the pension contributions of teachers beginning in 1975. 'We were dismayed when the Social Credit government reneged on a commitment of the Coalition government, which had promised us matching contributions in perpetuity. The Socreds froze the government contribution to the pensions fund in 1961, and that action severely restricted the pensions the fund was able to pay.'

'We are therefore very pleased that the present government has seen fit to match our contributions by 1975 — two years ahead of its own schedule for doing so.'

MacFarlan expressed one disappointment in the legislation. 'We had hoped the government would agree to recalculate for teachers already retired the basis on which their pensions are based. Unfortunately, we are unable to achieve this objective.'