

# BCTF to have non-partisan role

By PAT BRADY  
BCTF President

This is an important election for education and for us as teachers.

An election campaign provides an excellent opportunity for public debate on educational issues. Teachers should be trying to get commitments from party leaders and from individual candidates to support education policies that we believe will help us to provide quality education for all our children.

But the role of the BCTF in this campaign will be non-partisan. We will not be endorsing or supporting any party.

The provincial Executive Committee and staff organized regional meetings for the 79 local associations. The meetings were held April 10 and 11 and were designed with two purposes in mind: to help locals bring education issues forward and to ensure that teachers, their relatives and supporters all cast their ballots on May 10 (preferably for

candidates who are committed to the support of public education).

We have asked local associations to set up communications networks to ensure that the teacher vote is cast on May 10. With our 30,000 members we constitute one of the largest organizations in British Columbia and we believe that teachers, their families, the parents of the children in our schools and other taxpayers who support public education can have a significant impact on the results of this election.

Teachers played a significant role in the 1972 provincial election. Teachers will play a significant role in 1979. That role will be different, however.

The 1972 election brought together a rare coalition of forces. Teachers of different parties worked in support of the candidate most likely to defeat a government candidate.

The 1975 election was conducted with the BCTF in its traditional non-partisan role.

Although the 1979 BCTF role is again non-

partisan, we will be actively working to see a government elected which will support quality education.

Your action as an individual citizen and voter can only be partisan. Work and vote for the candidate of your choice.

What can you do?

• Know the record in education of each party, what they promise, and what they have delivered.

• Volunteer to work on behalf of a candidate; inform the candidate about the issues in education and seek commitments.

• Ensure that all candidates know that teachers are playing a significant role in the campaign because education is an issue.

• Be sure to vote on May 10. Get your relatives and friends to vote also.

If you don't become active in the next few weeks, you may regret it for the next five years, regardless of which party wins. There must be evidence that teachers once again made a difference.

Let's get out and work!

# newsletter

BRITISH COLUMBIA TEACHERS' FEDERATION

Vol. 18, No. 13

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APRIL 26, 1979

For B.C. campaign

## Exec picks issues

The BCTF Executive Committee has identified three significant issues which ought to be addressed by politicians of all parties during this election campaign, and which should be considered by teachers when making their electoral choices.

Those issues are local autonomy in the school system, education finance, and support for public education.

### Local autonomy

We believe that everyone benefits when decisions that affect the educational development of students are made as close to the classroom as is possible and practical.

This is not to deny that school administrators, district

authorities and the Ministry of Education have appropriate roles to play. However, we note a growing imbalance in those roles. Things which ought to be the prerogative of the classroom teacher or of the school or district are increasingly occupying the attention of, and resulting in dictates from, the ministry.

The process is a subtle one. Individual pieces of evidence may not seem very significant. But when the jigsaw puzzle is even partly assembled it seems clear that a good deal of control has been assumed by the ministry and that more is in prospect.

The picture is clouded by the fact that some ministry decisions purport to decentralize things but — because of strings attached or lack of adequate financial support — in fact provide only the appearance of local control without the substance.

For example, the ministry has decided to integrate handicapped children into the mainstream of school life; the

education of these children has been decentralized. But the ministry has failed so far to provide appropriate financial support to school boards, inservices for the handicapped children.

Similarly, the ministry's new credit allocation plan would give more control of textbooks to local authorities. But according to federation experts the plan is too inadequately financed to be successful.

Another "decentralist" proposal from the ministry would allow districts with as few as 4,000 students to employ their own district superintendents. But the fine print indicates rather rigid centralized control by the ministry, particularly with regard to salaries.

Teachers are becoming concerned with the emphasis given by the ministry to such matters as

1. the increasing use of provincial assessment programs;
  2. the detailed procedures for obtaining approval of locally-
- (Continued on page 4)

## Volunteers sought

The following committees are looking for teachers to serve on them.

Please check the bulletin board in your staff room for information on applications.

• Learning Conditions for Vancouver Island Central (one opening), Metro (1) and North Okanagan (1).

• Agreements Committee for Okanagan (1) and Fraser Valley (1).

• Professional Development Advisory Committees for Peace River (1), Metro (1) and West Kootenay (1).

• Judicial Committee (3).

• Ombudspersons Committee (one person) for North

Coast, North Central and Peace River areas.

• BCTF Newsletter Editorial Board (2).

• B.C. Teacher Editorial Board (1).

• Education Finance (1).

• Finance (1).

• Income Security (3).

• Investigation (1).

• Learning Conditions (3).

• Pensions (3).

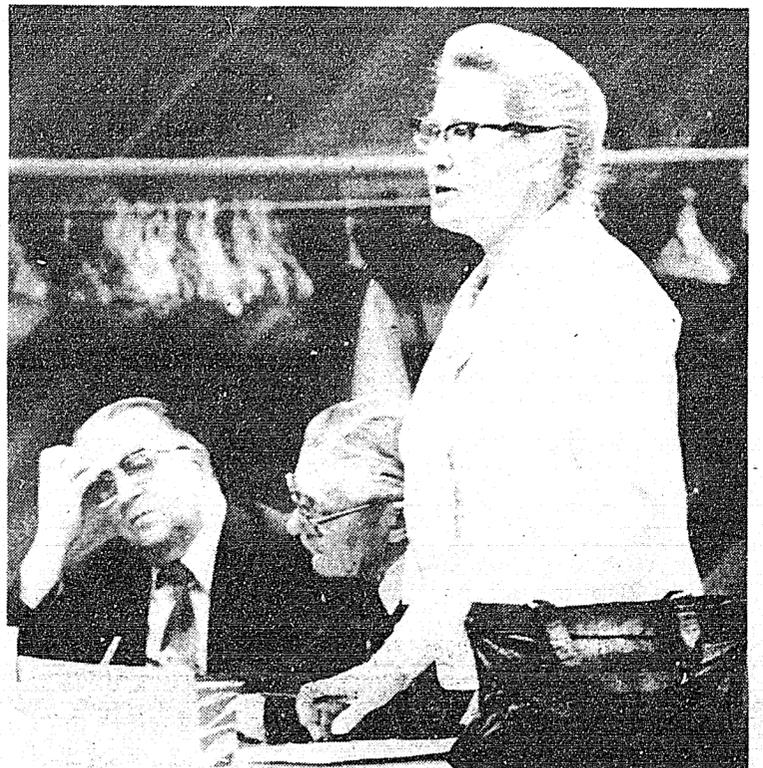
• Policies and Procedures (3).

• Political Action (5).

• Professional Relations Advisors Committee (4).

• School Buildings, Grounds and Facilities (3).

• Teacher Education (2).



Ona Mae Roy, chairperson of the Langley Commission on Education, at a recent public hearing on learning and working conditions in Langley. Commission members Adam Robertson and Frank Beinder are on the left. The BCTF-appointed commission's report will be released next week, following its presentation to Education Minister Pat McGeer, the Langley school board and Langley Teachers' Association.

## Langley teachers win court battle

The Supreme Court of B.C. has set aside as unlawful the suspensions of two teachers by the Langley school board last summer.

The judgment was given April 11 by Mr. Justice Davie Fulton. The teachers are Mrs. Doris Ferry of Wix Brown School and her daughter, Mrs. Anne Johnston of Belmont Elementary.

The two were suspended Aug. 21 for not complying with a summons to appear before the board to explain their alleged involvement in problems at Belmont during the previous school year.

The teachers were on vacation at the time of the summons. They objected to innuendoes contained in a letter from R. A. Weibelzahl, the secretary-treasurer of the board, calling them to the meeting, and declined to submit to what could amount to interrogation. They were given no inkling of the conduct in question or the nature of the board's concern.

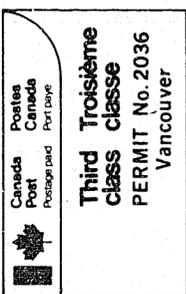
When the concern was finally identified the teachers agreed to meet with Dr. Len Sampson, the district superintendent of

schools. At that meeting the "problems" were satisfactorily explained and resolved. The teachers were reinstated in September. However, their records had been tainted by the suspensions and Johnston had been penalized by the loss of several days' pay.

The BCTF Executive Committee approved a request for legal aid to help the teachers fight the suspensions. Their position was upheld by Mr. Justice Fulton. His decision is being appealed by the Langley school board, but the grounds for appeal are not yet known.

In his 27-page judgment, Mr. Justice Fulton held that the board had no legal authority to summon the teachers to explain their conduct. That kind of investigation, he said, should be carried out by the district superintendent rather than by the board.

He said the Public Schools Act gives a school board power to set general policy and to supervise generally the educational process within its jurisdiction. But the board's function "is not to run the schools and discipline teachers on a day-to-day basis."



IF UNDELIVERED, return to 2235 Burrard St., Vancouver, B.C. V6J 3H9

# THEIR PROMISES . . . AND THEIR PERFORMANCE



By Pat McGeer

This government recognized the public concern that our educational system in B.C. was not meeting basic requirements for academic development on a uniform basis throughout the province.

Among the programs already instituted by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to remedy this problem is the core curriculum. It contains material judged to be fundamental to cope with present-day society.

This core curriculum does not inhibit the opportunity for teachers to exercise judgement or schools to respond to particular needs of their students. Nor does it inhibit school boards from providing programs which are appropriate to local requirements.

As part of the top priority given to upgrading academic standards, the Provincial Learning Assessment Program has been developed by the ministry to uncover definite weaknesses in the system. The curriculum branch responded immediately to weaknesses in the language arts by developing an improved program to overcome deficiencies in reading and writing skills. The assessment program will be a continuing one so as to monitor closely provincial educational standards.

I would like to emphasize that both these approaches have been designed to improve the overall quality of education in this province, and in no way should they be interpreted by the individual competent professional teacher in this province as a general condemnation of their performance in the classroom.

This government has also taken positive initiatives to expand opportunities by providing a core curriculum in the French language and second language programs at all levels.



PAT McGEER  
... education minister

The following are points for the future of education in B.C. under a re-elected Social Credit government.

**Kindergarten to Grade 12 Program**

1. Strengthening of the program of teaching fundamentals in the school. This includes enhanced academic standards in every grade.
2. The introduction of standardized methods of grading and promoting students.
3. The development and implementation of programs to challenge gifted youngsters.
4. The in-service training of teachers to screen for children with treatable learning disabilities. The establishment of diagnostic centres for confirming the diagnosis of learning disabilities.

The policy statements of the Social Credit, Progressive Conservative and Liberal parties were prepared in response to requests from the BCTF Newsletter.

The NDP platform was drawn from Policies for People: Policies of the British Columbia New Democratic Party 1961-1978.

abilities and special classes for their treatment.

5. The establishment of interministerial teams for the appropriate placement and teaching of handicapped children.

6. The introduction of programs at the secondary school level designed to develop marketable skills in all students.

7. The strengthening of curriculum development at the provincial level to improve quality, to enhance relevancy and to reduce overhead costs.

8. The reform of faculties of education to enhance the quality and training of future teachers.

9. The doubling of the value of Grade 12 scholarships.

10. The introduction of more standardized achievement tests to establish the expectations for teachers and students in key academic subjects. This process has begun in mathematics and English.

11. Reduction in the cost of administration in the school system by the introduction of modern business administrative systems.

12. The introduction of greater efficiency in the purchase and distribution of text books to bring savings to the taxpayer.



By Brian Westwood

## I. CURRICULUM

1. Return to emphasis on basic skills, including music and the arts.

2. Increased provincial standards; the re-emergence of the competitive factor.

3. The termination of government-approved no-value elective courses.

4. An emphasis on courses promoting the free enterprise philosophy, teaching the many benefits and opportunities of independent business.

5. Automatic provincial pre-screening of primary school children to pick up learning disabilities and audio-visual problems.

6. A ministry-mandated kindergarten curriculum.

7. A provincially-mandated daily physical education program.

## II. FINANCE

1. The return of the referendum on capital spending.

2. The ministry would expand its research, and would provide school boards with multi-year provincial education spending forecasts, to allow the boards to make long-term plans.

## III. SCHOOL BOARDS

1. Increased autonomy in hiring policies at all levels.

2. Collective bargaining free of compulsory arbitration. The reference to schools would be removed from the Essential Services Act.

3. An automatic one-year probation period for all new education employees.

4. School principals would be excluded from teachers' bargaining units. They are management and should be allowed their own bargaining unit, independent of that of the teachers.

5. All management personnel would be on two-year contracts, with conditions to be determined by local districts.

6. An increase in trustee indemnification to municipal levels to encourage young aggressive citizens to participate in the education process.

**IV. THE MINISTRY**

1. A reorganization of the ministry into primary, secondary, vocational, and university and college divisions, each headed by a deputy minister with special expertise in their area, totally accountable and responsible to the minister.

2. A visible, high-profile minister maintaining strong liaison with locally-elected boards and the lay public.

3. The minister must maintain a continuing liaison between school districts, teacher-training institutions and the BCTF, in order to rebuild the bridges which no longer exist.

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## I. GENERAL EDUCATION PRIORITIES

An NDP government will give top priority to reorganization of the education structure with the following guidelines:

A. Decentralization of administration and curriculum to encourage

1. individual and group initiative;

(b) the retraining and re-employment of teaching and ancillary personnel;

(c) any other pertinent or related concerns.

(1978 provincial convention)

An NDP government will limit class size to not more than 25 pupils.

(1965 provincial convention)

The provincial government should act to reduce class size in B.C. in accordance with the available evidence, such reductions in class size to be tied to improved teaching and learning performance.

(1972 provincial convention)

The Department of Education . . .

(a) should institute an initial screening of all kindergarten children for possible detection of any type of special learning needs;

(b) should require that all practising teachers and teacher trainees take mandatory courses to train them to recognize and provide for special learning needs.

(1975 provincial convention)

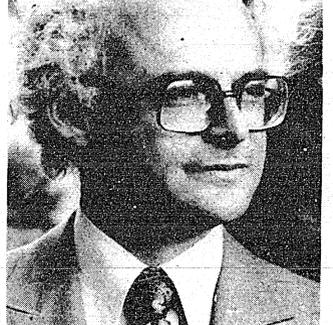
**IV. AUTONOMY**

The NDP condemns the Social Credit government for

1. the lack of meaningful and effective public involvement in setting goals for public education;
2. the use of a centrally-determined and centrally-imposed curriculum and learning assessment program;
3. the lack of respect by the Social Credit administration for the right to locally determine basic education requirements;
4. the deception of the public by the minister of education in pretending to establish new so-called "core curriculum."

The NDP affirms the right of parents and the public to locally determine the goals of public education through appropriate local processes in consultation with professional teachers.

(Provincial council, 1977)



GARY LAUK  
... NDP education critic

2. willingness to experiment with different forms;

3. greater involvement of parents, community, students and teachers;

4. a more earnest striving for excellence;

5. a generally more stimulating atmosphere in education.

G. Recognition that local control does not require that the local area be a major contributor to the cost of education.

H. Recognition of students' needs and purposes rather than the present government's philosophy of serving business and industry's purpose.

(Passed at the 1969 provincial NDP convention)

## II. FINANCE

... be it resolved that the NDP oppose as strongly as possible the declining financial support of public schools by the provincial government.

(1978 provincial convention)

... an NDP government will remove school taxes from the family farm and owner-occupied home over a five-year period. The costs of education will be financed out of provincial general revenues. The home-owner grant will be used solely to offset municipal and regular taxes.

(Provincial council 1972)

**III. QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

... be it resolved that the next NDP government will establish a commission to examine the problem of declining school population and prepare written recommendations on

(a) the appropriate use of the school facilities;

(b) the retraining and re-employment of teaching and ancillary personnel;

(c) any other pertinent or related concerns.

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(Provincial council, 1977)



By Jev Tothill

Liberals in the provincial legislature would work to reverse the recent trends of reducing local autonomy and increasing the financial burden on the local taxpayer.

We do not believe in removing school taxes completely from property because trustees must be able to respond to local needs and aspirations.

We believe that more of our educational resources should be concentrated in the early years of education to reduce problems in the later years.

Teachers throughout B.C. are taking an active part in the May 10 provincial election campaign.

Members and members-elect of the BCTF Executive Committee, members of the Political Action Committee and BCTF staff members are acting as contacts and resource persons for local associations, which are carrying the main burden of political activity.

On April 10 and 11, barely a week after the election was called, the BCTF held 10 regional briefing sessions for local association presidents and their designates.

Purpose of the sessions was to review key education issues and to assist the locals in organizing their own campaigns.

The meetings were held at Courtenay, Duncan, Vancouver, Kamloops, Kelowna, Fort St. John, Prince George, Fairmont Hot Springs, Castlegar and Terrace. All but five locals or sub-locals were represented.

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The information presented below is an attempt to compare the performance of the last two provincial governments in the field of public education.

The New Democratic Party government under Premier Dave Barrett served from Aug. 30, 1972 to Dec. 11, 1975, when it was succeeded by a Social Credit government under Premier Bill Bennett. The years in which NDP policies were in effect, therefore are 1973-74-75, and those under Social Credit policies are 1976-77-78-79.

In some cases baseline data from 1972, the last year of the W. A. C. Bennett Social Credit government, have been included for comparison.

## Education finance

### Direct provincial government grants to local school boards for elementary and secondary education (in millions):

1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
SC	NDP	NDP	NDP	SC	SC	SC	SC
\$188	\$209.5	\$251.5	\$340	\$375.5	\$401	\$415.5	\$437

### Basic levy (provincial education tax, raised locally) in mills:

1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
24.7	24.7	24.7	26.5	32.5	37.5	39.75	41.0

### Value of basic levy (in millions of dollars):

1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
\$165.4	\$202.1	\$243.6	\$273.1	\$351.3	\$421.5	\$488.1	\$557.2

### Provincial share of Basic Education Program:

1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
51.3%	48.3%	44.2%	48.4%	46.7%	44.7%	41.9%	39.0%

### Homeowners' Grants:

1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
Under age 65: \$185	\$200	\$200*	\$200*	\$280	\$280	\$280	\$380
65 and older: \$235	\$250	\$250*	\$250*	\$380	\$430	\$480	\$580

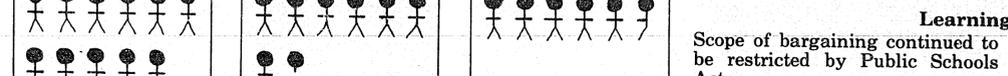
\*For two years the Homeowners' Grant was supplemented by a School Tax Removal Grant, to cover 20% of school taxes in excess of the Homeowners' Grant with a maximum of \$40 in 1974, and to cover 40% of the excess with a maximum of \$80 in 1975.

### Pupil/teacher ratios

1972-73	1973-74	1974-75	1975-76	1976-77	1977-78	1978-79
Enrolment 514,942	521,573	523,982	525,344	518,425	510,419	500,197
Staff 22,702	24,189	26,431	27,455	27,858	28,181	28,086
PTR 22.68	21.56	19.82	19.14	18.61	18.11	17.81

Reduction from 22.68 to 19.14 required an additional 4,291 teachers at an annual cost of \$86 million.

Reduction from 19.14 to 17.81 required an additional 1,950 teachers at an annual cost of \$43 million.



### Changes in education finance formula

1973-75	1976-79
Ceiling on school board spending raised.	Unchanged
Ratepayer referenda abolished; budget authority restored to school boards.	Unchanged
Number of elementary students required for each Instructional Unit (IU) reduced to 20, from 25.	Unchanged
Additional IU awarded for each school in district.	Unchanged

### Special education

Special education approvals initiated to enable schools to establish learning assistance programs.

\$7 million provided to upgrade school libraries.

School boards obligated to establish kindergartens wherever a minimum of 10 children could use them.

Funding provided.

Policy continued.

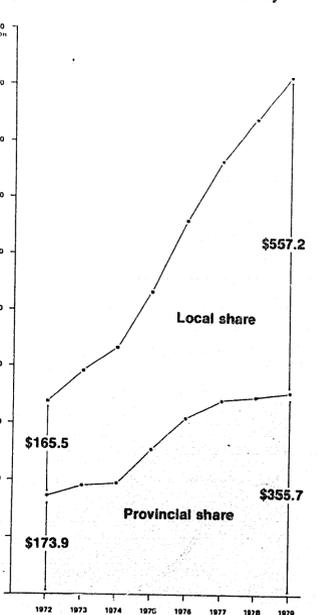
Funding continued.

Private schools

NDP provided free textbooks and transportation for private school students; no direct subsidy.

Social Credit government in 1978 introduced government subsidies for private schools. \$9 million allocated for grants of approximately \$500 per pupil to 100 schools. (Note: government contribution to public schools averages \$678; 18 districts receive less than \$500 per pupil.)

## LOCAL-PROVINCIAL SHARING OF BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAM (MILLIONS OF DOLLARS)



### Federation membership

Compulsory membership in BCTF for public school teachers restored. Unchanged

Unchanged

Teacher tenure

Principal's tenure (as principal) removed. Term appointments permitted by legislation.

Learning conditions

Scope of bargaining continued to be restricted by Public Schools Act. Unchanged

Salary bargaining

Removed 6% ceiling on salary increases imposed by previous government.

Bargaining zones established; districts permitted to opt out.

Teachers' pensions

Full pension available after 10 years' service to teachers aged 60, and to those aged 55 who have 35 years' service.

Reduced rate available to teachers aged 55 to 59, with 10 to 35 years of service.

1973: Existing pension increased retroactively by 3 per cent annually from 1950-1971, to a maximum of 66 per cent.

1974: Quarterly adjustments in line with cost of living index initiated. Purchase of wartime service permitted.

Full portability with other B.C. public service plans and with federal public service.

Pension agreements with most other provinces.

Highest average salary based on five years.

Changes in the Teachers' Pension Plan, requested by the federation's recent Annual General Meeting, have been forwarded to Provincial Secretary Hugh Curtis, the minister responsible for the plan.

Curtis has assured the federation that, if he and the Social Credit government are returned to office, he will seek policy direction from the cabinet on these changes and will meet with federation representatives immediately afterward.

Discussion of pension plan changes had been going on for several months until they were interrupted by the election campaign.

BCTF President Pat Brady said he hoped that, no matter which party forms the next government, the amendments the federation seeks will be enacted this year.

APRIL 26, 1979 - 3

# Teachers can swing close races

Teachers are a powerful force in B.C. provincial politics.

The BCTF has approximately 30,500 active members. In addition there are approximately 4,400 retired teachers and another 840 associate members. Together with members of their families, friends and neighbors, and others they can influence in their communities, teachers can muster a massive vote at the polls.

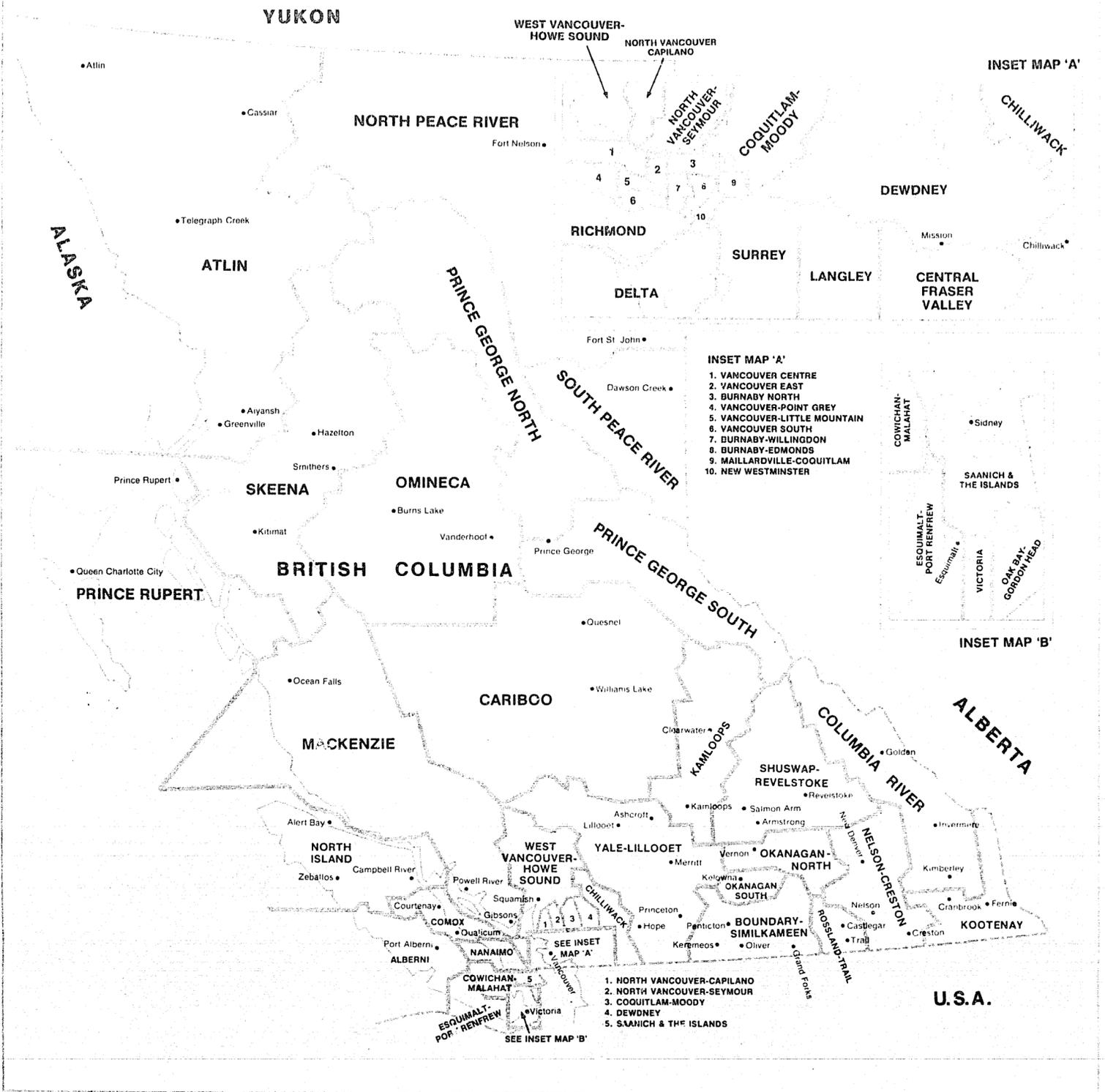
Teachers had a decisive influence on the 1972 election. This time they could be the deciding factor in many marginal ridings.

There are 57 legislative seats at stake this year in 50 electoral districts. The Redistribution Act of 1978 wiped out four old seats (Vancouver-Burrard, a two-member riding, Fort George and Revelstoke-Slocan), altered the boundaries of many others, and added six new seats (Central Fraser Valley, Maillardville-Coquitlam, North Island, Prince George North, Prince George South, and a second seat for Surrey). The net effect was an increase of two seats.

The current ridings are listed below with the approximate number of active BCTF members in each.

Alberni	676
Atlin	101
Boundary-Similkameen	526
Burnaby-Edmonds, Burnaby North, Burnaby-Willingdon	1,348
Cariboo	956
Central Fraser Valley	517
Chilliwack	519
Columbia River	324
Comox	421
Coquitlam-Moody and Maillardville-Coquitlam	1,347
Cowichan-Malahat	570
Delta	1,045
Dewdney	738
Esquimalt-Port Renfrew	458
Kamloops	1,149
Kootenay	463
Langley	694
Mackenzie	488
Nanaimo	749
Nelson-Creston	486
New Westminster	284
North Island	578
North Peace River	413
North Vancouver-Capilano and North Vancouver-Seymour	1,174
Oak Bay (see Victoria)	---
Okanagan North	1,414
Okanagan South	142
Omineca	336
Prince George North	81
Prince George South	1,155
Prince Rupert	346
Richmond	1,048
Rosland-Trail	430
Saanich and the Islands	454
Shuswap-Revelstoke	559
Skeena	681
South Peace River	334
Surrey (2 seats)	1,680
Vancouver Centre (2 seats), Vancouver East (2), Vancouver-Little Mountain (2), Vancouver-Point Grey (2), Vancouver South (2)	3,468
Victoria (2 seats)	1,438
West Vancouver-Howe Sound	556
Yale-Lillooet	380

## New B.C. Electoral Map



## Issues: autonomy, finance, support

(From page 1)

developed courses and textbooks;

3. the draft proposals for common entrance requirements for B.C. universities and BCIT;

4. the involvement in such matters as reporting procedures, letter grades, etc.

We think that these symptoms of a desire for regulated conformity presage a malaise that will not be good for education in this province.

### Education finance

In the area of education finance the evidence is much clearer. The basic levy has been raised by the provincial government from 26.5 mills in 1975 to 41 mills in 1979. The

provincial government has decreased its share of the basic education program from 48.4 per cent in 1975 to 39 per cent in 1979. That shift in costs has been accompanied by a barrage of gratuitous comments about fiscal irresponsibility allegedly practiced by a majority of school boards.

A January statement by the minister of finance bears repeating in part as it effectively outlines the government's view of education finance. That statement raised the ire of the BCSTA as well as of the federation.

"1. Municipal councils will be requested to meet with local school boards to work out a program to minimize local school district tax.

"2. To improve school districts' fiscal management:

"(a) The Ministry of Education will accelerate the development of the budget performance evaluation program, including incentive provisions for school districts showing excellent fiscal management.

"(b) The following Ministry of Education processes shall be expeditiously implemented:

"• five-year budget forecasting by school districts;

"• distribution of analyses of five-year forecasts showing

each district where they stand;

"• development of key management efficiency indicators including numbers of professional staff, non-professional staff, and other major expenditures;

"• use of provincial funding to provide incentives for improved performance;

"• disclosure of provisional school budgets to municipal councils before school districts set final budgets.

"3. Present pupil/teacher ratios shall be considered as a floor, with every effort being made to improve development of current staff to improve productivity.

"4. Administrative salaries that are too high by provincial standards will be identified and brought into line."

It is worth noting that the costs of operating the Ministry of Education went from \$5,429,925 (1977-1978 estimates) to \$6,604,988 (1978-1979 estimates), an increase of some 21.6 per cent. If the ministry were not so busy meddling in areas that it should stay away from then perhaps it could practice the fiscal restraint it preaches so continuously to the school boards.

### Support for public education

Candidates should be questioned as to their views on local

autonomy and education finance. They should also be asked to comment about the lack of ministry support for public education. We have seen more support both in rhetoric and in dollars for the private schools than we have for public education.

Most enterprises operate best in a climate of encouragement and support from those charged with the responsibility of governing those enterprises. Schools and the teaching profession have been subject to well-nigh constant and virtually unjustifiable attacks by the present minister of education. He has lent credence to that bigoted minority always ready to blame teachers for the ills, particularly economic ones, that beset society.

Modern society has not yet found a consensus on the educational verities needed to live and cope with the complex demands of today. We have had a surfeit of what one political candidate called "good politics and bad government."

We would welcome, from whichever party forms the next government, leadership that is constructively critical and yet supportive of the efforts of the many thousands of dedicated teachers in this province.

## Vacancies

This issue of the BCTF Newsletter has been devoted to coverage of the election issues in the May 10 provincial election.

The next regular issue of the BCTF Newsletter, which will feature a complete list of teaching vacancies throughout the province, should reach you within two weeks.