

Surrey maximum class size reduced

Surrey, the second-largest school district in B.C. will reduce the maximum size guideline for its kindergarten classes to 20 by next January.

Surrey school board voted to reduce the maximum class size guideline from its present level of 25 in accordance with a recommendation by the Surrey kindergarten class size commission, established jointly by the board and the BCTF in May.

The class size reduction will take place in two stages: to a maximum of 22 pupils per class by September, down to 20 the following January. Now, 54 of Surrey's 119 kindergarten classes have more than 20 pupils.

BCTF President Al Blakey praised Surrey school board for its decision. "Surrey will now be one of the leaders in meeting the needs of kindergarten children in this province," he said after the board took the action June 9. "I hope other school boards are quick to follow Surrey's example."

The kindergarten class size commission was established following grievances filed by teacher Sheenagh Leggat that her kindergarten classes were too large. The commissioners — former University of B.C. education dean Neville Scarfe, Surrey trustee Toni Berger, and UBC childhood education professor Hannah Polowy — visited 30 Surrey kindergarten classes, met two groups of 60 teachers, and held three public hearings attended by 145 people. They also received written briefs and petitions containing 796 signatures.

Their report, presented to the board on May 26, urged the trustees to reduce the

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Demonstrators against pensions bills applaud remarks by labor leaders at June 16 rally in Victoria.

4,000 demonstrators march on legislature

Message to Bennett is clear:
Beware of next election

Thousands of workers, said to be the largest crowd ever assembled in front of the provincial legislative buildings in Victoria, demonstrated on June 16 against the Social Credit government's plans to limit indexing on pensions.

The crowd, consisting mostly of members of the B.C. Government Employees' Union, was estimated to be between 4,000 (the most conservative estimates of rally organizers) and 6,000 (the police estimate). Teachers, ferry workers and other employees affected by the government's pensions legislation were also represented.

"I think this shows that Bennett made a serious miscalculation when he decided to attack our pensions," said BCTF President Al Blakey, who was part of a group of about 100 active and retired teachers taking part in the rally.

"I think he figured that people wouldn't care, that people would see these as insignificant changes, affecting only a few people. But the people who have come out for these rallies are clearly upset and angry."

"These rallies and our pensions lobby last month probably won't deter the government from passing this anti-indexing legislation, but the long-term effect will be significant. This will give the government something to think about when it calls a provincial election. Our people won't forget this."

BCGEU workers shut down government offices on the day of the rally, and the demonstrators assembled at the McPherson Playhouse in downtown Victoria, where those who could fit into the theatre heard speeches from Ray Mercer, regional director of the Canadian

Union of Public Employees, and Dave McIntyre, the secretary-treasurer of the B.C. Federation of Labour.

Escorted by one police car, another policeman on a motorcycle, and a third in a three-wheeled cart who cleared the street of traffic, the demonstrators then marched a half-mile down Government Street, through downtown Victoria, on past the Empress Hotel, and assembled in front of the steps of the legislative building. There Norm Richards, president of the BCGEU, and Jim Kinnaird, president of the B.C. Fed, made short speeches before the crowd broke up.

The rally was the last and the largest of a series of 17 held throughout the province since the pensions legislation was announced in May. Earlier, 4,000 workers had gathered in Vancouver to protest the pensions changes, which would diminish the protection from inflation which public sector and teacher pensions now have. Teachers participated in most of these protests.

The labor leaders were granted a meeting on June 17 with Premier Bill Bennett and Provincial Secretary Evan Wolfe, the

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Teachers out in force in Prince Rupert rally

By Larry Kuehn
First Vice-president

Presence at a milestone event produces excitement and positive feelings. Being the BCTF representative at the Prince Rupert job action in protest against the loss of full indexing of pensions was one of those unique occasions.

On June 3, Prince Rupert teachers left their classes at 2 p.m. to attend with government employees and CUPE members a rally against limits to pension indexing.

The liquor store employees were the first to arrive for the rally at the Fisherman's Hall at 1:45. An afternoon without alcohol would make sure that citizens

knew someone thought something was wrong.

By 2 p.m. most of the government employees and CUPE municipal workers were gathered in the hall — 330 strong. But where were the teachers? Avoiding the action?

No. They were out in the Overwaitea parking lot picking up the signs lettered with felt pen on poster paper by creative teachers after their general meeting the night before. Signs that said:

BILL NOW
POOR LATER
FULL INDEXING
IS A WARM FUZZY

OLD TEACHERS DON'T DIE
THEY JUST LOSE THEIR
PENSIONS

OUR PENSIONS BUILT DAMS
DAMN BILL 29

WILL YOU STILL NEED ME
WILL YOU STILL FEED ME
WHEN I'M 65?

BCTF

C

G

CUPE

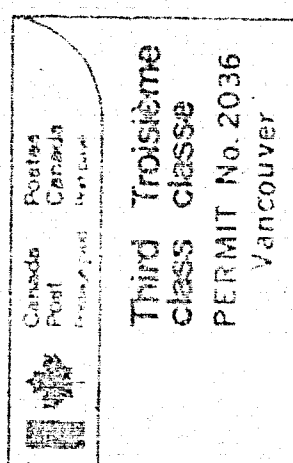
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SOLIDARITY

EVEN TEACHERS
ARE UPSET

At 2:15, 140 teachers came marching in to the cheers of government employees and CUPE municipal workers. A few jaws of hardened labor veterans dropped

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Ministry official's memo 'a snow job'

I am concerned that ministry officials are getting involved in the debate on fully indexed teachers' pensions.

The June 6 memo from J. L. Canty, senior superintendent, legislative services, attempts to explain what Bill 29, the Pension (Teachers) Amendment Act, means.

He states that the ministry "has been asked" to inform teachers about the act. Regarding indexing, the memo states:

A revised system of pension indexing which will ensure that future pension adjustments will be properly funded. Under the new system, cost of living related increases will be granted annually and will be pre-funded out of funds accumulated for that purpose through 1 per cent of salary contributions by both teachers and government, plus an additional amount reflecting part of the interest earned on fund assets which are related to pensions in force.

Of course no mention is made of the fact that our guaranteed full quarterly indexing of pensions is being cut. No mention is made of the hundreds of millions of dollars of teachers' money that has been invested in low-yield B.C. Hydro and B.C. Rail bonds. Instead we have a ministry official trying to give us a snow job on the effects of Bill 29.

A few questions arise. Who asked Canty to send the memo? Was it Bill Bennett, in an attempt to reach the "teacher rank and file" he believes don't want full indexing? Or Provincial Secretary Evan Wolfe, who admits to cutting indexing because of pressure from private corporations?

If memos like this were sent to employees during a labor "problem", it would be considered an unfair labor practice.

Teachers know we want full indexing and we should let the government know loud and clear that we are prepared to work to retain it.

Geoff Peters
President, Coquitlam Teachers' Association

Government went back on its deal

Until 1969 the BCTF accepted without question that the amount of pensions paid should depend on the amount available in the fund.

It finally dawned on slow-learning teachers that low-yielding government-guaranteed investments were keeping pensions at a low level.

So we evolved the policy of pension guarantees in return for government use of the money. We achieved that bargain in 1974.

Now in 1980 we have legislation which turns the clock back to 1969. The size of pensions cheques will be a function of the interest earnings of the fund.

So long as this legislation remains on the books, the BCTF can no longer remain complacent about the investment policy of the fund. We are forced to demand a measure of real control over investments — not observer status.

We did not ask to get into a business in which we lack expertise. We have been forced to obtain both the right and the ability to control investment policy.

Either that — or give us back guaranteed pensions.

D. J. S. Smith
Life Member

Free speech

I am astonished and saddened by the suggestion of some letter writers that the interests and ideals of the BCTF can best be served by muzzling free speech.

Let's suppose this monstrous letter was the most disgusting piece of racist, et cetera tripe (actually I don't think it was intended that way), I would still defend the writer's right to be wrong to the death.

Editorial committees sound all right but they're not. The grandest tyranny the world has ever seen is run entirely by committees: there is very little truth in *Pravda* and hardly any news in *Isvestia*. Destroy free speech, and you destroy just about everything else that is worth something in society. Remember Sakharov!

If some person writes a disgusting piece of tripe, the proper way to deal with it is to write an article denouncing the disgusting piece of tripe by calling it a disgusting piece of tripe, not by introducing mechanisms to pre-laundrer articles.

Now, of course, if the next feature article denounces the BCTF and calls teachers a bunch of incompetent bums, I shall be the first to suggest not only one but two editorial boards (one to check the ideological soundness of the other), but I really doubt whether our editor has such plans. On the other hand a dash of self-criticism wouldn't be such a bad idea, now that Dr. McGeer is gone.

Jack Boulogne
Surrey

Vouchers

The *BCTF Newsletter* of May 26 contains a report by Mike Zlotnik of a Family Choice schooling symposium at SFU. In this it is stated that Donald Fisher pointed out two allegedly erroneous assumptions made by advocates of the voucher system, but his objection on that account is based on his own erroneous assumption regarding their general attitude.

This advocate of voucher financing of education does believe that education is

integral with all aspects of our civilization. If ever we are to eradicate underserved poverty and oppression from the lives of mankind's great majority, we must see to it that our children learn to think, weighing an argument on its merits rather than adopting a partisan attitude based on emotion.

Consider the position of a parent whose children attend public schools where opinion is taught as dogma to be ingested and later regurgitated — a situation that might possibly arise in the teaching of social studies. Such a parent might believe that deleterious social consequences are likely to arise from a partiality and bias that are akin to brainwashing, and this parent might want to have his children taught in a school where there is no attempt made to enforce conformity of opinion to the common media norm. Such a parent might see the voucher system of financing education as a means of resolving a dilemma: whether to create a fuss that would result in his child being singled out for harsh treatment from peers and teachers, or whether to keep silent and see his offspring degenerate into a malleable, mentally amorphous proletariat being moulded all around.

To come to specifics: many social studies teachers have been teaching the Malthusian theory of population as gospel truth, in spite of the fact that way back in 1879, Henry George in his book *Progress and Poverty* gave a most convincing disproof of this theory. Darwin's still unproved theories are similarly offered as ultimate truth. Syllogistically our young people are led to believe that we live in a democracy; that democracy is the most perfect form of human social organization; ergo our system of government is perfect and must not be criticized.

Parents who take their responsibilities seriously, naturally would like to be able to choose a school — public or private — that does not encourage ideas that to them are anathema. The voucher system allows this choice. It allows the voice of dissent, from which all social progress has had its beginning, to be heard and its ideas to be examined. It is essential for beneficial social change.

E. A. Bryan
Aldergrove

Hargreaves a pure delight

It is indeed unfortunate that it is pure frustration with the cloned responses ("Hargreaves in poor taste", "Hargreaves 2", et cetera) printed in the last two newsletters which motivates my belated accolade.

Geoff Hargreaves's articles are pure delight. Most staff meetings are far more offensive and less professional. Any teacher who cannot recognize him- or herself and his or her colleagues in these clever ramblings is bound to take the satire seriously and totally circumvent the writer's intent.

Janette E. Scott
Powell River

Substitutes

As a member of the executive of the Burnaby Substitute Teachers' Association, I am heartened and encouraged by the current BCTF policy recognizing the growing needs of substitute teachers.

However, the contemporary situation for substitute teachers remains dismal and depressing. The title of a recent letter to the editor reflects the wages and working conditions of subs: "Substitute

teachers get shaft" (*BCTF Newsletter*, May 26).

The most appropriate manner of addressing this state of affairs is to actively encourage the organization of subs in all school districts. Several similar associations have already been formed and may serve as models or sources of information and support: the Coquitlam Substitute Teachers' Association, the Vancouver Substitute Teachers' Association, the Burnaby Substitute Teachers' Association, et cetera.

A priority must be established to get all substitute teachers into contracts locally. Substitute teachers should be strongly encouraged to join both the BCTF and their local association(s).

It is a promising sign that the BCTF held a special day-long workshop on substitute teachers on June 14. I hope to see several strong, positive and constructive recommendations coming out of this meeting.

Ken Schadt
Burnaby

Safety first

I am attempting to compile lists of the common safety practices for elementary and secondary school sports activities.

Although guidelines for safety are readily available, specific recommendations and practices as regards the use of protective equipment, procedures, and organization do not appear to be.

The information sought is not in high-risk activities, but is in the everyday sports and games — such as softball, skating, floor hockey, etc.

In particular, I am trying to establish what is and what should be common practice in games (e.g. the use of protective equipment by softball catchers, and the need for helmets by recreational skaters).

Any assistance from readers in gathering together this information would be appreciated.

P. Rallings, Principal
Decker Lake Elementary
Box 625, Burns Lake V0J 1E0

No complaints

I am replying to the letter, "Substitute teachers get shaft" in your May 26 issue, as most subs won't get a chance to. They don't get your newsletter.

Once again, statistics have been used indiscriminately to strengthen a viewpoint. How ridiculous to compare an average substitute's salary with a teacher's salary and to moan about "poverty line" earnings.

Many subs are homemakers with young children who are available only two to three days a week to earn some extra money. They enjoy the flexible hours and freedom from responsibility — tests, reports, long-term plans, proD, parent interaction — of full-time teaching. Many do not want the commitment which organization and contracts bring.

I have subbed for two years in the past, and enjoyed keeping a hand in teaching. Now that I have a bona fide teaching position once more, it is easy to compare the two positions: they are totally different jobs.

Helen Pauls
Langley

Summer hours

The Teachers' Investment and Housing Co-operative will be open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday to Friday, during July and August. It will be closed on June 30 (Canada Day) but will be open the preceding Saturday, June 28.

That lonely feeling

Tahsis teachers find their isolation incentives threatened

By Ralph Maurer

Teachers usually have to be offered an incentive to be lured to remote towns like Tahsis. Now they're finding that those incentives may be eroded because the school board thinks the teachers have no other place to go.

Teachers in Tahsis, a small town on the west coast of Vancouver Island, are facing a school board that wants to raise rents on their teacherages by as much as 50 per cent, largely, it seems, because trustees think they can get away with it.

Low rent and other incentives for luring teachers to the remote town are no longer necessary, and therefore no longer justifiable, in the opinion of John Shivas, chairperson of the Vancouver Island West school board. "The incentives were put in way way back when, one, we couldn't get any teachers, and two, when we didn't have a road into Tahsis," he says from his office in Gold River, 42 miles of twisting gravel road from Tahsis — the only road out. "The isolation isn't what it used to be."

"Seven or eight years ago teachers weren't making the bucks they are making now; they're making the bucks now to carry their own load," he continues.

The 21 teachers in Tahsis's one school, who all live in rental accommodation provided by the district, are furious at what they see as efforts to take money out of them through higher rents that the board couldn't get from the teachers during salary negotiations. Why, they ask, should they pay four to five times what Tahsis sawmill workers pay for housing that doesn't come close to what the millworkers enjoy?

A confrontation seemed inevitable when trustees let it be known that rents on the teacherages, not covered by rent controls, would go up by about 50 per cent next fall.

Teachers headed that confrontation off for now when they decided on June 11 to establish a two-person committee — one trustee, one teacher — to make recommendations on suitable rent levels. But, say the teachers, big rent increases next year could start an exodus out of Tahsis.

Shivas says the board just wants to get its money's worth out of the property it owns. The teachers say the rent increases are just the board's way of taking their isolation allowance away.

Tahsis (population 1,700) and Gold River (population 1,900) are the two largest communities in the Vancouver Island West school district, which serves just 6,000 people and 1,100 pupils.

Almost everybody who lives in Tahsis and Gold River work for, or depend for their livelihood on, the Tahsis Company. Shivas, the school board chairperson, works for the company. Two other trustees are married to company employees. Tony Ellis, Tahsis's trustee, is a log salvager — a beachcomber — who sells the logs he finds to the Tahsis company. Only Chris Jules, the Kyuquot Indian band's board representative, is not somehow connected to the company.

Like most remote school districts, Vancouver Island West pays its teachers well. Murray and Terry Shold, one year out of the University of Victoria's B.Ed. program, earn more than \$19,000 a year, comparable to what the lowest-paid millworker, represented by the International Woodworkers of America, earns in Tahsis. Only eight school districts in B.C. would pay the Sholds more.

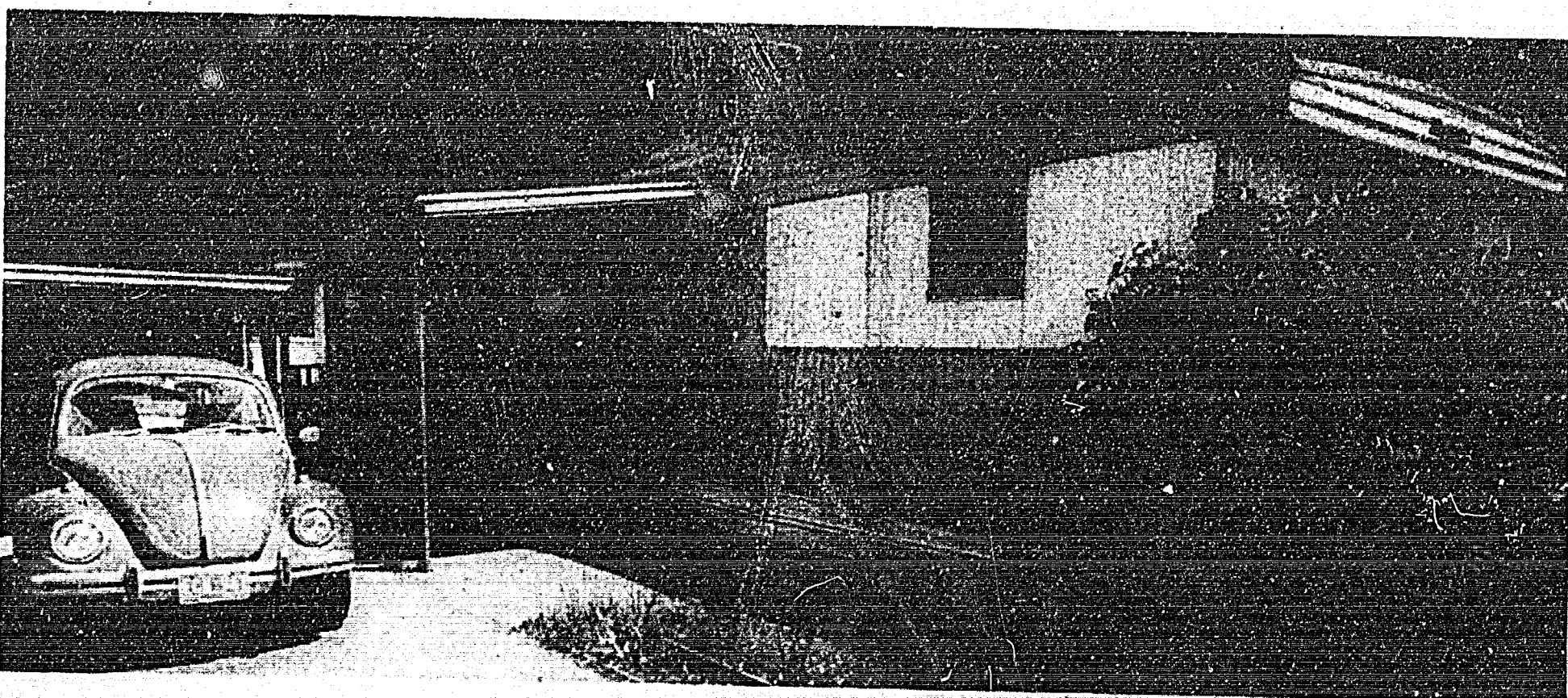
The \$689 isolation allowance that Tahsis teachers get also helps them overlook the fact that there's no shopping centre in town, only one mechanic, no appliance repairman (if your washing machine breaks down, you pack it to Gold River for repairs), and fresh vegetables are available only once every two weeks, when a greengrocer drives in from Gold River. "The

only place that's wellstocked here," says Murray Shold ironically, "is the liquor store. You can get anything you want there."

The isolation allowance was an issue in last fall's negotiations. The school board argued that because of the 42-mile gravel road, Tahsis could no longer be considered isolated from Gold River, whose teachers get no such allowance. The contract went to arbitration, and the arbitration panel disregarded the board's arguments and left the allowance intact. Teachers were awarded a 9.79 per cent raise, slightly higher than the provincial average for teachers of 9.61 per cent.

Two months ago, Ellis, a former teacher himself and with a reputation as a trustee fighting for teachers' interests, told the Tahsis teachers to expect a big rent increase, maybe 50 per cent, because the board had discovered that rent controls don't apply to teacherages. "We didn't get you last fall, so we're going to get you now," staffers quote Ellis as saying. Shivas issued a denial for Ellis, who is out on his boat a lot and difficult to reach: "I don't think Tony said that. If that's what we were going to do, we would have done that last January."

The teacherages are in eight trailers, one owned by Ellis and rented to the school district for \$330 a month, and the old high school, which has been converted into



\$202 a month pays for the teacherage, above. Tahsis millworker might pay as much as \$175 for the house at right. It isn't fair, the teachers say.

four living units. Rent ranges from \$149 for a one-bedroom unit in the converted school, to \$202 for a trailer. Up until this year the board provided sparse furnishings but now has stopped that policy. As furniture wears out, it is no longer replaced.

The high pay and low rent provides plenty of incentive for teachers like the Sholds to settle in towns like Tahsis for a few years. "In a couple of years, we'll have saved up enough to build a house in Cowichan," says Murray. "That's the place to live." If it weren't for the isolation incentives, would the Sholds stay? "We'd move," he says without a moment's hesitating. "Either of us could get a job in another community right away. It would hurt to lose one salary, but . . ." He pauses. "Every now and then, we wake up on a Saturday morning, and we have to get out of this place so bad we could scream. So we hop in the car and drive that road to Gold River, then to Campbell River."

"We're lucky. We had a good winter this year. When there's a lot of snow, that road is impassable."

Even with the isolation incentives, it's hard to keep teachers there. Last year, the staff lost eight experienced teachers; another half dozen plan to be elsewhere this September.

Because of the reaction of the teachers, the board postponed its decision on the rent increase, deciding instead to set up the trustee-teacher committee.

"The rent on the units we have there should be the same as to the rent people pay on equivalent accommodation in Tahsis," says Shivas. "Equivalent" to him is "privately-owned." The privately-owned rental suites go for \$300-plus for a three-bedroom trailer or apartment, but little privately-owned accommodation is available there. Most accommodation is company-owned.

Not only is Tahsis company-owned housing cheaper — ranging from \$71 for a one-bedroom bungalow to \$185 for a large, 10-room house with a basement — but it's far better than what teachers get. Except for the single men who live in bunkhouses, Tahsis workers live in houses, with their own yards. Wayne Nicholson, a barker and an 11-year man with the company, considers the low living expenses one of the best features of the job. "We know one teacher, and she lives in a trailer," he says as he works on a small vegetable garden in front of his small house. "It's nice, but I like it here." He gestures toward the house.

Tina Johnston, who has three children in Tahsis school and who has lived with her husband and family for eight years in Tahsis, feels the isolation more than some. She doesn't drive, and her husband works Saturdays, so she has to catch rides with neighbors to

do her weekly shopping in Gold River or Campbell River, 100 miles away. Almost everybody in town does all their shopping in one of those two towns.

"We wouldn't," she says flatly when asked if her family would stay if they had to pay about \$350 a month rent, the going rate for a privately-owned house the same size. They now pay \$175.

Meanwhile, the Tahsis teachers are digging in for a bitter fight over their rents. The teachers' housing committee plans to campaign to have the rent controls extended to teacherages.

Dave Went, the Tahsis agreements chairperson, sees a definite link between the bargaining climate and the pressure on the rents. "Their attitude is, there are so many teachers on the market now that they can fill the holes anyway, so what the heck," he says. "It's contractual on the board to provide housing. It's not contractual on us to accept it, but there's really nothing else here," he says. The alternatives are private homes, which cost \$40,000 to \$50,000 — a lot for a young teacher planning to stay just a few years — or an apartment in an expensive building which Murray Shold calls "a slum; where you go when you absolutely can't find anything else."

BCTF Newsletter

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Letters to the editor must be signed by and bear the address of the writer. The Newsletter may edit letters for brevity, clarity, legality or taste. Letters to the editor and signed articles contained herein reflect the views of the authors and do not necessarily express official policy of the BCTF. Unsigned articles are the responsibility of the editor.

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Substitute teachers meet in Vancouver

Representatives of substitute teachers and local associations met informally on June 14 at the Vancouver Teacher Centre. The meeting was jointly sponsored by the BCTF and the metro associations; Vancouver, Burnaby, Victoria, Coquitlam, Delta, Kamloops and Sooke participated.

Topics discussed included salaries, experience credit for salary and other purposes, cash payments in lieu of benefit packages, holiday pay, how to get the ear of the minister in substitute teacher concerns, professional development, and information sharing.

It is probably the first time a group like this has met. Three background decisions paved the way. The first was the 1979 AGM resolution that qualified substitute teachers should not be excluded from automatic membership. The second was the legal decision that local associations can bargain for certificated substitute teachers. The third was the recent Representative Assembly recommendation that salaries and experience credit for substitute teachers be a bargaining priority for the upcoming year.

The BCTF Executive Committee will be requested to authorize the formation of a small steering group, including substitute representation, to pull together the threads of substitute teacher activities and to make recommendations. It is hoped that, should the Executive Committee agree, a full-scale provincial organizing meeting for substitute teachers can be planned.

Teachers interested in aspects of the organization of substitutes should drop a note to Tom Hutchison of BCTF staff, who will provide a list of contact persons.

—Tom Hutchison
Government Division

RTA against order

Revelstoke's teachers want their school board to acknowledge that extracurricular activities are voluntary, and to withdraw its order that teachers must carry out extracurricular activities.

The board issued that order during contract negotiations last fall when teachers launched a short work-to-rule campaign when talks bogged down.

At their recent annual general meeting, the Revelstoke teachers passed a motion demanding that the board withdraw that motion, or teachers will not assume any extracurricular activities in the fall.

The board's order, and its underlying assumption that extracurricular activities are a required part of a teacher's job, angered the Revelstoke teachers, who returned to those activities only reluctantly after getting advice from the BCTF staff that the Public Schools Act (now the School Act) gave the school board the right to order them back.

The BCTF Executive Committee at its May 28 and 29 meeting passed a motion apologizing to Revelstoke teachers "for the failure of the federation to give them effective support in their confrontation with the board."

Courtenay fights back

Teachers in Courtenay are taking steps to reverse several years of apathy, poor learning conditions and insensitive personnel practices. At a well-attended general meeting on June 10, teachers voted up to full time off for their president in 1980-81 and up to full time off for their agreements chairperson from September to December, 1980.

Outgoing president Darryl Pippin told members that the past year has been one of extreme frustration for the local association. He described numerous problems that the local had encountered this year, including a poor negotiating climate, the worst class sizes in B.C. and an excessive number of temporary appointments.

Pippin called on members to become politically active to make changes that will benefit teachers and students.

Bob Reilly was elected president for 1980-81.

—Wes Knapp
Learning Conditions Division

Teachers join Prince Rupert rally

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in amazement that teachers had finally taken the step of protesting with unions concerned about a common issue.

The rally proceeded with speakers from the B.C. Government Employees' Union, CUPE, and myself representing teachers in Prince Rupert and the BCTF.

The message from each was different, but the theme was the same: the government is taking away indexing of pensions of public employees; the choice is between retirement in dignity or continuous reduction in the value of pensions.

The choice of that audience of mostly young people was clear: teachers and other public employees must be able to retire in dignity.

After the speeches, the 500 protesters marched down the main street of Prince Rupert to the provincial court house where signs were left for the government agent to forward to Evan Wolfe, the provincial secretary.

How did teachers get so involved?

Morris Sobool, Prince Rupert District Teachers' Association president, took

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part in the BCTF lobby in Victoria on May 28. Rick Monaghan, Prince Rupert GR, was present at the pensions discussion at the Representative Assembly on May 29. Both returned to Prince Rupert convinced that joint action with the unions was necessary. They put that position forward at a special executive meeting on June 1. A special general meeting on June 2 voted more than 80 per cent to walk out and join the union rally.

At 1:45 on June 3, 140 Prince Rupert teachers left their schools to protest the limits to pension indexing. School principals and a few other teachers stayed behind, supervising those students left in school, as the Prince Rupert District Teachers' Association had announced to reassure parents that their children would be cared for.

PITA meets in fall

Teacher effectiveness expert Madeleine Hunter will be the keynote speaker at the Provincial Intermediate Teachers' Association fall conference, October 3 and 4 in Fraser Lake, in the Nechako school district.

Register early; registration is limited to 400 people. For more information, contact Martyn Kitson, Fort Fraser Elementary School, PO Box 94, Fort Fraser.

COTA starts fund

Kelowna teachers have created a political action fund to be used to support candidates in the next provincial election who oppose the limit on pension indexing now in a bill before the house. Not likely to qualify for such support is the riding's current MLA, Premier Bill Bennett.

The fund, to be built by donations from local association members and any grants available from the BCTF, is to be used for publicity and lobbying in favor of full indexing of pensions, in addition to supporting candidates for provincial office who also favor full indexing.

A special general meeting of the Central Okanagan Teachers' Association chose political action over a protest strike or work to rule as the best method of influencing the government on the pensions issue. Those supporting the fund proposal said that if they were giving up pay, they wanted it to have a long-term effect.

They also decided to ask Bennett to meet with the COTA executive. "We hope the premier will listen to us this time," said COTA president Pat Clarke, who faced a chippy Bennett during the BCTF pensions lobby in Victoria in May.

During that confrontation, Bennett told Clarke that his own teaching friends support the government's pensions legislation. However, a vote at the June 16 COTA meeting was unanimous in opposing the indexing provisions in Bill 29. Evidently, the premier's friends were not among the 500 teachers present.

—Larry Kuehn
First Vice-president

Mainstreaming cited

A BCTF questionnaire inviting teacher proposals for a study or studies in the learning and working conditions area has resulted in a flood of responses, surprising even the joint learning conditions/professional development subcommittee that initiated it.

A clear pattern of concerns has not emerged but mainstreaming has been mentioned by a large number of respondents.

The subcommittee will continue to receive questionnaires and comments until October 31. It will then complete a

report with recommendations to the Executive Committee for possible action.

The process arose out of the federation's challenge to former education minister Pat McGeer to join in a class-size study to deal with the minister's contention that class sizes don't make an educational difference.

Since then, however, the Gene Glass-Mary Smith meta-analyses of class size and achievement, and of class size and classroom processes, teacher satisfaction and pupil effect have emerged. Both strongly support small class sizes.

The subcommittee no longer sees the original challenge as a matter of major concern but is looking at other areas of possible study based on first-hand reactions from teachers in the field.

—George North
Learning Conditions Division

Arbitration is next

The 1980-81 collective agreement between the BCTF Professional Staff Association and the federation will be concluded by binding arbitration.

Negotiations which began in March have resolved a number of issues, mostly non-monetary. There is agreement-in-committee on a revised grievance procedure, job definitions and a salary classification system.

Left for the decision of an arbitration board is the rate increase to be applied to a revised salary schedule, vacation entitlement, and the composition of the bargaining unit. (The Executive Committee wants the general secretary out of the bargaining unit, while the staff association is insisting that he stay in.)

This will be the first-ever arbitration between the parties. The association has appointed lawyer Brian Prentice as its nominee. The federation nominee is lawyer Barbara Blumen. If the two cannot agree on a chairperson, the minister of labor will be asked to make the appointment.

The probable date of the arbitration hearing will be mid-July, in the BCTF building. Advocates will be Mike Zlotnik, Jim Cairnie and Jurd Kirby for the association, and Kerry Gibbs, Don Walmsley and Frances Worledge for the federation.

The term of the agreement is from July 1, 1980 to June 30, 1981.

Rally draws 4,000-plus

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minister responsible for the pensions and the legislation. But that meeting is not expected to change the government's plans.

McIntyre said the pensions legislation is part of a government campaign to weaken and divide labor in B.C.

"We almost defeated that government the last time out because we stuck together and worked together," he said. "We don't care if he (Bennett) hangs on to the full five years to which he's entitled... he's going to face a united labor movement. Every time he does something stupid like this he pulls us together and makes us stronger."

"We don't need these pension bills," Mercer told the crowd at McPherson playhouse, "and there's another Bill we don't need either."

The pension plan, he said, is paid for by people who worked hard to give B.C. a high standard of living, and they deserve a secure pension.

Richards expressed anger that the pensions changes were sprung on his union without any consultation or warn-

ing. "That's why we're here, to tell the government we're fed up and we're not going to take it anymore."

He disputed the contention that the pension plan was financially shaky, the rationale offered by the government for the changes. "Our plan is in better financial shape than any other pension plan in the country," Richards said. He said that in the past two years workers have contributed \$81.1 million to the plan, and pensioners have drawn just \$50.3 million. There is now \$687 million in the plan, he said.

Kinnaird warned the government to "keep your hands on your own business, or else you're going to have yourself a major confrontation." He also warned the Socreds about their fate in the next provincial election, after which "there will be no more Wolfe at the door, no more rotten Bills."

"Until that time," he told the crowd, "be prepared to fight; stay angry, because we need to be."

Surrey kindergarten

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size of kindergarten classes to a maximum of 20 students. It noted that Surrey has "one of the worst records so far as kindergarten class size was concerned."