

Gentle Comox gets angry

What made the usually-docile Vancouver Island local turn tiger this year? Lots of things, as *BCTF Newsletter* reporter Ralph Maurer found out on a recent trip to Courtenay. His story is on page 3.

Surrey to act on Nov. 19

Surrey teachers have voted to withdraw their services from their schools on Wednesday afternoon (November 19) to show the provincial cabinet how they feel about pension indexing.

The cabinet will be holding its annual meeting at Fort Langley.

The Langley local had organized a workshop for Metro local presidents and pension committee representatives that day. The group planned a half-hour cabinet lobby as part of the day's activities.

Surrey teachers have decided to participate en masse in the demonstration. They have also decided to take a full day off to visit Victoria for the opening of the legislature December 4.



Blow-up of photo taken at 1971 pensions strike dominates the stage as former BCTF president Adam Robertson speaks at Orpheum rally. Behind him are Larry Kuehn and Al Blakey.

Giant rally kicks off pensions campaign

2,500 teachers show their resolve to fight limit on indexing

Nearly 2,500 teachers roared out their determination to fight to restore full pension indexing at the BCTF's big Lower Mainland rally November 6.

The rally was the first major public event in the federation's pensions campaign.

Despite a drenching rain, teachers from all Metro locals (and some from as far as Revelstoke and Prince George) filled almost all the 2,788 seats in the elegant old Orpheum Theatre to hear the pensions story.

But one seat was conspicuously empty — a chair on the stage kept vacant for Provincial Secretary Evan Wolfe, the minister responsible for teachers' pensions who had turned down an invitation to debate the pensions issue. (See story, page 4.)

The teachers heard a moving address by Adam Robertson, now retired in Creston, the former BCTF president who, in 1972, led the province's teachers into their first unified political campaign under the slogan, "We will not live with it."

That campaign, as First Vice-president Larry Kuehn, the rally chairperson, pointed out, helped topple the former Social Credit government of W. A. C. Bennett.

The teachers also heard a rousing call for action from President Al Blakey. He called on teachers throughout the province to develop local pension action plans and "to make sure that the kind of protest and the kind of actions we are taking are heard loud and clear" by the provincial government.

At the rally's end the teachers shouted out a unanimous "Aye!" to a resolution: "That a telegram be sent from this meeting to the provincial government demanding the return of full indexing and clearly indicating the intent of those present to do all in their power to bring such a return."

The federation has been trying to save indexing — inflation-proofing through quarterly raises in pensions in line with increases in the cost of living — since Bill 29 was introduced by Wolfe last spring.

Bill 29 puts a ceiling on indexing for teachers. Wolfe estimates his new indexing fund will cover inflation only up to 8 per cent, far below current levels.

Quiet lobbying and direct representations to the government by the federation failed to get the ceiling removed or lifted. But noisy protests and walkouts by public-service workers, also threatened with an 8-per-cent limit, got their ceiling raised; adding, as Blakey told the rally, insult to the teachers' injury.

Teachers have been subsidizing the industrial development of B.C. for decades, Blakey said, through the investment of their pension funds by the

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34 contracts settled

With three days to go before the November 15 negotiations deadline, 34 associations have a settlement or agreement-in-committee for 1981 contracts. The figure includes 13 that

are in the second year of a two-year deal made last year.

All six districts in the East Kootenay have settled at between 12.7 and 13 per cent. Prince George, Burns Lake, and Peace River North are in at 12.5 per cent. Kitimat and Queen Charlottes settled at 12.7 per cent. In several others, precise figures are not known yet.

Seven associations have agreed to varying forms of satellite arrangements, where their increases will be determined by regional or provincial averages. Most of these incorporate some degree of catch-up or scale readjustment.

—Mike Midzain
Economic welfare division

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Report reveals absence of due process

The review commission inquiring into my dismissal from the Peace River North school district is now complete. Many of you have already read its report or will do so. At this time I would like to make some personal comments.

Leading up to the commission's report were six months of hard work; endless hours of tense concentration and often nagging fatigue built the case, many months after.

As teachers in this province you will know of, and share, the frustrating anger which is often the outcome of dealing with the bureaucracy. Many of us find ourselves in situations where we

have to fight for the obvious on a daily basis.

Can you imagine how difficult it is to fight for your own worth, your integrity, when on a probationary appointment? As it stands today, a teacher on a probationary appointment has no right of review, no right to appeal when the board and district staff decide dismissal.

Where does this leave you?

You can either pack it in, preferably quietly. Or you can say "no" and face "no."

The report describes what it means to say "no." It addresses itself to the

appalling absence of due process for teachers on probationary appointment. It examines how evidence against a teacher can be collected, can be interpreted, and can be used, and how this looks like in my case; how the procedural outlines in the School Act can be followed, on the surface, and the law's spirit adulterated.

But then, absence of rights does not have to mean absence of possibilities and resources. The structure exists within our federation and our society to pursue them until they do lead to established rights. Grabbing your backpack leaves merely a draft.

This is not martyrdom, but a memo to reality; we must care about each other, probe our resources, explore our potentialities, and, most of all, use them. If it requires thousands of hours to persuade the turtle to stick out its neck — so be it.

You will be alone at times, but there are people willing to help; there are colleagues who are turtles themselves, there are parents, and there is the BCTF.

I want to say thank you to Laurence Greeff, who acted as my teacher

advocate. He gave his support unselfishly and in return has been subjected to a brutal attack on his integrity. It is my hope that the executive will launch an investigation into the violations of Greeff's rights as a teacher.

I want to say thank you to my colleagues Olga Kudyba, Chris Siddle and Ken Best, who also assisted us in the preparation of my case.

I want to say thank you to the BCTF executive for providing the first objective forum for all of us on a probationary appointment, the inquiry commission.

I want to say thank you to the Concerned Citizens of Hudson's Hope who, above all, cared for, and insisted on, a good educational climate at the Hudson's Hope Elementary-Secondary School.

What next? I will continue working with the executive until teachers on probationary appointments have rights of appeal and review. It is my intention to do this from within the school system.

Peter Cincer
Hudson's Hope

Resolution 113: Puetz repudiated

I am alarmed by the tone and content of Siegfried Puetz's letter. As a parent and a teacher, I want children to grow up in a community which challenges them to be the best possible person they can be. Part of this challenge is to define for themselves a moral code which enables them to make choices that increase their understanding, creativity and respect for one another. We guide our children toward a moral code by our actions and tone towards others. When we make superficial judgments against a person or group we teach our children that morality is based on superficial assessments. When we discriminate against a person or a group because of their lifestyle, we ignore the deeper, more important questions that our children should experience.

Sixteen hundred years ago this same kind of debate raged and I believe these words still apply: "What does it matter by what road each man seeks the truth? By no one road can man come to the

understanding of so great a mystery." (*Symmachus, 383 AD.*)

Resolution 113 does not protect the incompetent or the classroom proselytizer. I abhor banner wavers of any description. At issue is whether a good teacher should be defended against discrimination when their lifestyle does not conform with the community norm. Let me make clear the implications of Resolution 113 for Mr. Puetz *et al* — it is a statement whereby the BCTF proudly and clearly reiterates its goal to eliminate discrimination, in all its destructive forms, from our school system.

Let us work together, Mr. Puetz, to encourage an atmosphere wherein our children gain a quality of education. Let us help to eliminate the hurdles to moral growth that our children face — and let the first hurdle be undue intolerance.

P. A. Rexin
Kamloops

Letter does persecute

Siegfried Puetz's letter (*BCTF Newsletter*, October 9), regarding homosexuality and teachers, threatens the livelihood of many of our colleagues and the psychosexual development of many of our students.

After a letter which denounces, insults and attacks homosexuals, Puetz cautions that we should not "persecute them." He's right, we shouldn't persecute them — but he does.

And his is not an abstract attack on a fictional group of people. On the contrary. While research has not been able to pinpoint the precise percentage of homosexuals in our society, most studies suggest gay people make up between 3 and 10 per cent of the adult population. We have no reason to believe there are fewer gay teachers than truck drivers, secretaries or doctors. So many hundreds of our colleagues have been vilified in Puetz's letter.

David Chudnovsky
Surrey

The little local that could

Once a quiet association, Comox is now making noise

Things had been quiet in Comox, quiet for too long. Suddenly, this year, the polite little 390-member local on the east coast of Vancouver Island got pushed around once too often; it decided to hold its ground and to confront the bully. Now a surprised, blinking school board is staring at an effective and popular work-to-rule campaign, and the possibility that every trustee at the end of a term will lose in the November 17 election.

In classrooms in Comox, Courtenay, Royston, and Union Bay, teachers get used to the feeling of being known as militants. It's a role they are not familiar with, not comfortable with. They wonder how their work-to-rule will end. They marvel at the support they get from their students, parents, and the rest of the community. They're sure they've finally done the right thing.

It wasn't any one incident that turned the mood of the teachers. But there are many different theories about what was the pebble that triggered the landslide; as many theories as there are grievances.

"Our salaries are among the lowest in B.C.," says Bill Dale, a teacher at Courtenay Junior Secondary. "And I think people got fed up with the treatment of temporaries."

"We've tried to put our faith in the trustees and we've had arbitration 10 times in the last 16 years," says Ella Clarke, who teaches at Vanier Senior Secondary.

Says John Ward, of Lake Trail Junior Secondary: "... Frustrations have been brewing as the result of a board which is arrogant from having power too long.

Gwyn Reilly: "We wanted somebody to go to bat for us."



They've been unchallenged in elections for about 14 years now."

"The negotiating committee went to the board with a couple of minor issues that wouldn't have cost the board anything," says Peter Mazzochi, a counsellor at the same school. "They absolutely refused to even talk about them. It was that that brought a lot of teachers to realize that we just can't deal with those people."

Class sizes that are consistently among the largest in B.C. Lack of preparation time. The desire for duty-free lunch periods. The need for new school facilities — while the board approves an addition to the district offices. Intimidation of teachers. And more.

"The board literally forged a militant association by its personnel practices," says local president Bob Reilly. "You can make an analogy by saying that the Tsar Nicholas was the real creator of the Russian revolution." The board's favorite tool for intimidating teachers, say members of the local, was its temporary appointments policies. In recent years, the number of temporary appointments was often triple the number of teachers on leave. Last year, one in five teachers in the Comox Valley was on temporary appointment, including one teacher who has been a temporary for five years. Recalling one incident involving a teacher run-in with the board, Reilly observes, "The moral of the story was, teachers who work in district 71 should be prepared to sacrifice their freedom of speech and freedom of association as conditions of employment."

Class sizes are consistently among the largest in B.C. The average elementary class size in the district ranked between 70th and 75th out of 75 districts every year since 1974; in September 1979 (the latest figures) the district had the second largest average elementary school class size in the province. High school class sizes aren't much better. They ranked between 67th and 72nd every year since 1974. Fifty per cent of Comox's kindergarten classes are bigger than the BCTF-recommended standard; 46 per cent of primary grades exceed BCTF standards; 24 per cent of intermediate grades exceed the standard. Parents are getting into the fight, and the large class sizes became a public issue late last school year.

Salaries are also consistently below those earned by teachers elsewhere in B.C. Their salaries rank 62nd out of 75 districts. Pay is marginally lower than the zone average, and their zone, along with Fraser Valley, has traditionally had the lowest salaries in B.C. Out of the last 16 years, the district has gone to binding arbitration 10 times. The last freely-negotiated settlement came in 1972.

"The dissatisfaction was there," says Ella Clarke. "Finally we're being vocal about it."

"There was a sense of suppressed frustration for years," says president Reilly. "From now on there's no way they can keep the lid on. The 'climate of fear' thing is broken."

The turning point for the district came last spring, when they decided that their new president would be a full-time president. "We wanted somebody to go to bat for us," says Gwyn Reilly, a teacher at Union Bay Elementary, and the local's learning conditions chairperson. "The board has three full-time officers, versus one now for us."

"People had the foresight this year to put their fees on the line to pay our president full-time," says John Ward. "You can literally wear teachers down if they have to teach at the same time as they are president of the local."

On October 21, more than 300 parents and teachers demonstrated at the school board meeting, at which the trustees ratified a decision made late the previous week converting the last of 54 temporary appointments to continuing ones. That leaves 22 temporaries in the district, matching the number of teachers on



Demonstrating students badger Terry Sankey, Comox's superintendent of instruction.

leave. "It appears they acted in anticipation of that rally," Bob Reilly says.

But if they anticipated that the action would deflate the teachers' campaign, they were wrong. There were still enough grievances to persuade the teachers to go ahead with their plan to start a full-scale ban on extracurricular activities the following week, on October 27. The work-to-rule was eventually relaxed a little; noon-hour supervision was reinstated in the vain hope that the board would respond to the conciliatory move. But across the district, dances, sports programs and other plans were cancelled.

A visit to the district by Ministry of Education official Joe Phillipson has apparently failed to bring about a resumption in negotiations.

A surprising aspect of the Courtenay dispute is the fact that the community has jumped into the battle on the side of the teachers. On October 27, several hundred high school students held a demonstration in

Bob Reilly: "The board forged a militant local."



front of the school board offices, taking the teachers' side in the dispute. Parents participated in both that rally and the one a week earlier. The local newspaper has come out against the board in its pages.

The community's support has a lot to do with another dispute the board is embroiled in. A few parents complained about their dissatisfaction with the busing of kindergarten children, and asked that the service be extended to pick up their own children. The board's response was to threaten instead to eliminate the service entirely.

"It's demonstrative of the way in which they've operated with us," says John Ward. "This year they're treating everybody that way." Adds Tony Worthington, another teacher at Lake Trail Junior Secondary. "The board has upset the general public a lot more than it has in the past."

The struggle has entered a lull, with both sides apparently awaiting the school board elections and expecting those results to point the way. Whatever happens, the Comox local will feel the impact of this year's militancy for many years to come. Comox's revolution has forever changed one little fragment of history.

—Ralph Maurer
Editorial Assistant

Pensions: an example of 'mass manipulation'

There are many among us who are disturbed and distressed by the rumblings of strike, the Sodomy of homosexuality, the communistic call for more day care centres and other such subversive and destructive philosophies which emanate from the governing body of the BCTF. The organization is heading on a suicide course, eventually taking with it the public schooling system as it expires. The momentum seems to be increasing as every election of officers by a small vocal minority turns out to be more supportive of the left-wing thinking of the presidency.

As one example of mass manipulation, the pension furor has been well-orchestrated and fostered by the present executive. For those who desire to get the facts on the real situation you may phone the government superannuation department at 387-6761. Mr. Turner (Deputy Superannuation Commissioner) will tell you the BCTF plan was in deep financial problems. The BCTF itself came and asked for and agreed to the plan which has been offered.

A number of facts you will learn from Mr. Turner should show you that the plan as offered is good for us, is more fair to taxpayers than open-ended indexing, and may be further negotiated as times change.

In the first place, teachers operate under a different financing formula than public employees. Teachers have

higher salaries and remain to pensionable age more than public employees. Money for pensions must come from someone's pay cheque.

Secondly, the government upped its contribution to our pension fund and now exceeds our contribution by nearly 3 per cent. This doesn't sound fair to the taxpaying public.

Third, the government offered the teachers the same deal as the public employees have, i.e. more contribution, more indexing, and it was refused. The classroom teacher has not been informed of this.

In fourth place we should know another plum has been ours for many years, namely the government contribution to our pensions is retained by the BCTF pension fund when a teacher withdraws from the plan.

It seems only fair that both sides of the question be fully aired. As for me, I would rather take care of my own money. I don't trust the government any more than I trust the BCTF with the management of my finances. How about a genuine effort to free those of us who desire to manage our own lives?

As part of the taxpaying public and the teaching force of B.C., I consider we have been offered a good deal. For one of many, I refuse to go on strike. I consider it to be immoral and immature.

Lila O. Stanford
Langley

Public television

As a teacher in Victoria I have become excited and involved with the establishment of a commercial-free television station located in British Columbia and fulfilling the unique expectations of British Columbians.

The CFRE Public Broadcasting Society is dedicated to establishing a commercial-free VHF public broadcasting station that will provide British Columbians with independently produced educational and cultural

programming. These programs will be of local, national and international origin and will fill the gap that private commercial television leaves open.

If you are interested in supporting the concept or would like more information, please write to the CFRE Public Broadcasting Society, P.O. Box 202, Main Post Office, Victoria, B.C. V8W 2M6.

Harry Lewis
Victoria

BCTF Newsletter

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Wolfe willing to talk — but not to listen

BCTF President Al Blakey and Provincial Secretary Evan Wolfe can't seem to get together to talk about teachers' pensions.

They both keep offering to meet — but with pre-conditions.

Wolfe, the minister responsible for teachers' pensions only wants to talk about the "improvements" he's made to the plan through his Bill 29.

Blakey doesn't want to talk until Wolfe is ready to undo one of his "improvements" — the ceiling on indexing. And Wolfe won't consider that.

But the two may eventually meet on television.

Blakey began by inviting Wolfe to debate the pensions issues in public, at a teachers' rally in the Orpheum theatre.

Wolfe declined. He didn't think that was "a proper forum to discuss a technical, complicated question like pensions."

The rally went ahead without him.

On the day of the rally, Blakey, appeared on the Jack Webster television program from Vancouver to discuss pensions with Webster and John Fryer, president of the B.C. Government Employees' Union (The BCGEU got a much better indexing deal than teachers by staging a series of protest rallies and walkouts during the summer.)

The day after the rally Webster's guest was Evan Wolfe. Webster questioned Wolfe at length about his pensions policy, and the bottom line was "No" — no restoration of full indexing for teachers, and no bargaining on pensions.

The next day — a cold, rainy Saturday — 220 angry teachers gathered on the steps of Vancouver's old court house to

demonstrate their concern about the loss of full indexing.

Wolfe, who was attending the Social Credit convention in the Hyatt Regency nearby, was invited to talk to the demonstrators. Surprisingly, he accepted.

But he made no concessions. He outlined what he said was his motive in capping the indexing of teachers' pensions: a desire to make the fund secure so



At court house rally Wolfe offered to meet Blakey — on certain conditions.

that teachers could count on drawing their pensions in the future.

Wolfe refused to "negotiate" with Blakey in the court house downpour. Instead, he invited Blakey to meet him in his Vancouver office on Monday, November 10, for a private discussion.

But Blakey, wasn't drawn in. Unless Wolfe had "something new to put on the table," Blakey said, he wouldn't be at the meeting. Teachers had had enough of the minister's "pious platitudes."

It was clear Wolfe had nothing new to offer. On Monday Blakey kept a pre-

viously scheduled engagement in Port McNeill while Wolfe expressed to the news media his "dismay" at Blakey's failure to meet him.

So the stalemate stands. But a face-to-face discussion between the two may be in the cards. Wolfe promised Webster that he would return to debate pensions with Blakey on the TV show when, as Webster put it, "the heat's up again."

Teachers throughout the province seem to be intent on raising the temperature gradually over the winter.

Education Minister Brian Smith is about halfway through a tour that must be unique to this or any other province. So far, he has held meetings or visited schools in the Kootenays, the Okanagan, the Peace River, Kamloops, South Vancouver Island and the North Coast. He has met with hundreds of students (a somewhat lesser number of parents) and more than 1,000 teachers.

By his own admission, and in stark contrast to his predecessor, he is seeking to listen and learn from those interested and involved in education before he makes decisions that could affect the lives of students and teachers. He should be congratulated for his initiative, envied for his stamina and admired for his open-minded approach.

However, somebody in his entourage should be berated for the timing of the professional forums. Two-thirty in the afternoon is not the best of times for teachers, some of whom have to drive two hours after school to get to a meeting, and two of the meetings have been arranged for noon. As Mr. Smith is finding out, teachers get supervision, not martinis, for lunch.

Despite the dumb scheduling, the minister is getting to hear from the profession, for not only are almost all those in attendance at the professional forums teachers, but so are the majority at public forums.

A list of the topics raised reads like a dictionary of educational terms and, to the credit of the teachers, most if not all of their presentations have been short and to the point. Many of the teachers' comments have been elegant in their phrasing and telling in their simplicity.

This reporter has been moved, exhilarated, amused, delighted and only occasionally bored or angered by presentations. It will be a long time before I forget the hush of the crowd and the poignant words of Dave Elliot, a Saanich Indian: "A way of life is almost coming to an end. We are a people sitting at the point of oblivion — people who have lived here for thousands of years."

Or the applause and laughter when a teacher from Salmon Arm told the minister that help for teachers is like foreign aid "where the majority of the benefits do not go to the intended recipients."

Or the cool, clear voice of the curator of the Kelowna museum talking about children and curiosity, pride and imagination. And it was as if all those turkeys who have been gobbling about "back to the basics" for the past years had been toppled from their roosts by those splendid words.

Or the teacher in Duncan, who, in five minutes of a magnificent, sardonic presentation, draped the threadbare scarf of the ministry's textbook policies and procedures around the minister's neck.

Or the teacher in Penticton, nearing retirement, who summed up all the gaffes of the Soereds, past and present, on the pensions issue by asking the minister, "Why pick on us?"

There are topics that recur again and again, constant themes that assail the minister's ears. You can bet the farm that letter grading in the primary grades will not be centrally mandated by the ministry. Yet teachers should be vigilant to see that the responsibility is not neatly shifted

The minister's forums on education:

Smith should be envied for his stamina,
congratulated for his initiative



In stark contrast to his predecessor, Smith is willing to listen.

to school boards rather than left to professional judgment.

Smith must be as sick of hearing about the complex procedures for capital expenditures as the petitioners from the school districts have been frustrated by them. The new "blue book" is being touted by the minister as a panacea for building ills but it seems to be having a longer gestation period than an elephant. Let's hope it's not a white elephant like the present book.

The ministry is reeling from the battering it has been deservedly getting on the textbook business. Not just the credit allocation plan has been clobbered, but numerous complaints have been registered about the non-arrival of books by late October. Expect some action on this front.

The private school people seem to be at every forum. They appear to want to keep all the privileges they now have and in addition get additional public funding for operating costs, to be able to use public school buses and resources centres and even time allotted in the administrative handbook for the teaching of religion. They want more public money for more private purposes and without many of the restrictions that exist for their public school counterparts.

The minister must be aware of the growing outrage in the profession about pensions. Speakers at the forums are well applauded when they mention them. Smith neatly dodges the issue when he

says he'll make a statement on pensions at the end of his tour. What's he going to say in December that he couldn't say now? Don't bet on him saying that Mr. Wolfe and the government of which he's a member were wrong. He should give us his position now, and if he's not on our side, then we have a chance to debate with him and challenge the government's position.

The issue of centralized direction versus local control is usually raised and provides the minister with one of his more plausible lines. He notes that he is told he should decentralize a lot of decision-making by the same people who want him to dictate a family-life program.

Politically astute as he is, the minister has created an escape hole through which he could steam the B.C. Ferries fleet and at the same time get a lot of sympathy for the position that his critics want him to take. He's very cleverly evading the real issue, which is what the minister, with all his resources, and from his provincial quarterdeck, should do to navigate the ship of education into the 1980s.

He's in favor of prescribed English teaching. Does he know anyone who isn't? But when it comes to social problems — family life, sex education, the alarming statistics on teenage pregnancies and disease — he says that's a matter for local initiative. We must not let him evade these issues.

There are a number of major themes which are heard at every forum. The

problems caused by mainstreaming handicapped students, the need for elementary school counsellors, changing family structures, the multicultural nature of society, alienating and dehumanizing influences in life are problems creating stress for students and teachers.

Those major themes are tributaries of perhaps the most dominant theme in our education system and thus inevitably of these forums. Times have changed and teachers are bedeviled by the hopes and expectations, the complexities and the problems thrust upon them by society.

Smith has repeatedly stated that he has empathy with teachers who catalogue the demands of implementing new curricula, school assessment and accreditation, in-service meetings, archaic personnel practices, mainstreaming, problem children, crowded classrooms, inadequate facilities and equipment, non-appearing textbooks and the dictates of a system that preaches individual attention but feeds on standardized test results.

The minister has heard part of the solution. Teacher after teacher has told him that they need time to prepare, to consult, to mark, to think. A duty-free lunch hour, a break from the strains of handling large numbers of volatile students. Teacher after teacher has told him that they need to be able to bargain for something more than salaries. All kinds of people can make decisions that affect the lives and careers of teachers, yet teachers are the ones who have to live with those decisions and somehow try to make them work. I think that Smith is getting the message that teachers have had enough of being forever below the salt.

Some cynics have suggested that the minister is engaged in a public relations gesture, a little *noblesse oblige* for the peasants and then back to the real world with his political status firmly up — one member of the cabinet with his feet on the ground instead of in his mouth.

Whatever his motives, and I suspect that they range from the obvious one of learning about his job to the political one of image-making, Smith, by the very conduct of these forums, has raised expectations in the minds of teachers that somebody will do something to assist them with their difficult task in this uncertain world. He has tapped into the deep well of caring about children that has long dignified our profession. A less sensitive man than the minister would be learning that the well is in danger of running dry.

I have no doubt that the "easy" decisions will be made — go slow on mainstreaming, no letter grades for primary children, an overhaul of the textbook business — but it's the big decisions that will test the mettle of the minister.

Can he, by making significant changes to the School Act, allow teachers some control over their professional lives, some say in their own destiny? Can he lead us into a system of education designed for the 1980s? Can he replenish the well from which teachers draw their strength and on which the health of the system ultimately rests?

If he can't, then his forums will be remembered more for their glitter than for their gold.

—Jim Bowman
Government division
NOVEMBER 14, 1980/5

Pensions draw 2,500 to Orpheum rally

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government in low-interest loans to public corporations.

"We've got a piece of the rock," he said. "B.C. Rail, B.C. Hydro and a number of other 'git-edged' investments ... All we are asking is that we get our share in return."

In fact, he said, B.C. teachers have taken a pay cut as a result of Bill 29. Teachers' pension contributions on November 1 went up to 7.5 per cent of their salary (from 7 per cent). "We're paying more and getting less."

Teachers cannot afford to sit quietly and "wait for the next falling axe," Blakey said. "If we do nothing we invite further disaster ..."

"This meeting is a statement of intent that we're going to do more than talk.

We're going to act. We're going to get our indexing back (and) we're going to get the right in the future to bargain (for pensions) so that we don't have to go through this every 10 years."

The audience obviously supported his tough stand. Blakey got a 45-second standing ovation. And television interviews with departing teachers produced such comments as:

"They're trying to treat the teachers as second-class citizens and I'm sick and tired of it."

"They're a government of economics and not of morality."

"I just think it's totally unjustified, what they've done."

But would teachers dare to strike again, as they did in 1971, to restore indexing? Said one teacher: "You bet your life.

Any time. Right now. As long as they need it. Out for good."

Adam Robertson made it clear that although he and Blakey have always been on opposite sides of the political fence they are united on the pensions issue.

He spoke of the federation's long tradition "that in all pension negotiations and discussions, the top priority would always be protection and care for those people who are currently on pensions."

"That is our historical position," he said. "We've honored it throughout the decades. And tonight we start a new movement to prove to the public of this province, and the government in particular, that we stand by that commitment."

He spoke of 1971, when the government offered improvements in future pensions for teachers then working, but offered a "cruel and callous" increase of only \$7 a month to those already retired.

"I think the government misread us," he said. "I really believe that they thought we'd put dollars before principle ..."

First the federation tried lobbying; it

failed then too. Then it "went public to advise the public of the shoddy treatment that this government had afforded our pensioners ..."

Finally, on Friday, March 19, 1971, the teachers staged a province-wide one-day strike.

"That was the day the membership turned its back on its duties and responsibilities in the classroom and the offices of the public school system ..."

Robertson spoke of the anguish that teachers suffered in a "battle of conscience" before walking out that Friday morning.

And a new generation of teachers may soon face the same crisis.

"Once again ... we have been challenged by another Social Credit government," he said. "... Once again the battle lines have been drawn."

"As a retired teacher, the federation is my voice, because I'm speechless ... I have confidence in the federation and its leadership. I am assured that our cause rests in good hands."

chairperson Ray Brydon, trustees reconsidered their position and finally decided to rehire Russell Martin and put Warren back in school.

Brydon says that while the board may not be legally responsible for educating a child as severely handicapped as Warren, trustees feel "moral responsibility" to look after special education for him.

District staff have been told to develop a special education program for children such as Warren in time for next school year. In the meantime, Warren would be provided with the services he received last year.

This year, Russell Martin's aide's salary is paid by the Ministry of Human Resources. "I would think," Brydon says, "that there is some kind of feeling on

behalf of the Ministry of Human Resources that they have some responsibility."

"I'm happy that Warren's needs are being met," says Russell Martin. "The only thing I'm not happy about is that I'm still on temporary contract. With the number of years I've been teaching here I should have the same sense of security other teachers have." She has taught in the district for three years.

"Warren is getting exactly the program I had asked for," says Dolly Lowe. "But I need some kind of agreement from this school board that they are not going to pull this program out from under Warren in June." She has withdrawn her complaint of discrimination, and says her lawyer, David Vickers of Victoria, is still working on the family's behalf for a satisfactory solution.

Autistic Ashcroft boy back in school

The controversy over the schooling of the autistic Ashcroft child Warren Lowe has been resolved, at least temporarily.

The 12-year-old severely handicapped boy is back in Coppervale Elementary School for this year while the South Curiboo district staff decide what to do in the future. The boy's parents and teacher are apprehensive, and the school board isn't happy either, accepting responsibility for Lowe's education only reluctantly.

The district provided facilities, a teacher and an aide for Lowe last year, 4/NOVEMBER 14, 1980

but this summer ended the program, because, they said, Lowe "is not educable within the public school system" and not their responsibility.

The boy's teacher, Maria Russell Martin, was dismissed.

Warren's parents, Evan and Dolly Lowe, publicized their son's case when they filed a complaint under the B.C. Human Rights Act that Warren was the victim of discrimination. An investigation was begun.

Meanwhile, according to school board

CTF president likes proposed constitution

The Canadian Teachers' Federation has thrown its support behind the Trudeau government's inclusion of protection for minority language education, non-discrimination, and equalization of resources in a revised Canadian constitution.

"The resolution, currently being debated, gives recognition to three key policy objectives of our organization," says CTF president Paschal Chisholm.

In a letter to Trudeau, Chisholm says that the CTF "heartily endorses the entrenchment of minority language rights

in the constitution." He points out that the teachers of Canada have for several years advocated the policy that "the equality of rights and status for those who are English-speaking and for those who are French-speaking is a major goal, requiring the safeguards of laws and of the constitution of Canada."

"However," adds Chisholm, "the section on language rights should also include a statement to the effect that those whose mother tongue is neither English nor French should have the right to affiliate with either an English-speaking

community or a French-speaking community according to their choice and to have their children educated in the language so chosen... as long as the provision of such opportunity is not made in ways which jeopardize the linguistic or cultural integrity of schools which serve a linguistic minority."

In addition to language rights, the Canadian Teachers' Federation also supports the inclusion of the statement on non-discrimination rights. CTF policy, however, would go further to prevent discrimination on such grounds as socio-economic status, physical handicap and marital status.

On the entrenchment of the principle of equalization, Chisholm states that "edu-

cation is one of the essential public services which must be available, in reasonable quality, to all Canadians."

"Only the federal government," he says, "has the moral, if not the constitutional, obligation to all Canadians, the taxing capacity and the redistributive machinery necessary to compensate for interprovincial differences between financial ability and costs per unit of educational need. It follows, therefore, that the federal government has a specific financial obligation to education, namely, to establish a system of equalization grants which will enable each province to provide an adequate and comparable standard of education per unit of need, with comparable financial effort."

Ministry establishes technology group

Education Minister Brian Smith has appointed a three-person task force to examine present and future needs for technological training in B.C.

"It is necessary for us to ensure that our requirements in the area of technological training in B.C. are met now," says Smith. "We must identify our needs and the best methods of making certain that we have

trained technologists to meet future challenges.

"This task force has broad terms of reference including a role to determine the number of technologists and the nature of training required by B.C.'s industrial and business communities and to review all requirements for student access and mobility within and among post-secondary institutions. Hearings in

major provincial centres as well as the calling for briefs and submissions will be among the methods used by the task force to gather data for its report."

The Ministry of Education task force on technological training in engineering, health science and related fields comprises chairperson John T. Sample, director of TRIUMF (Tri-Universities Meson Facility) at the University of B.C.; Dr. Earl Shepherd of Kamloops, a physician and pathologist who serves on the educational council of BCIT, has served as curriculum chairman for the medical laboratory technician program at BCIT,

and was a member of the board of directors for the Canadian Society of Laboratory Technicians; and Fred Ote, manager of distribution for B.C. Hydro and Power Authority, who is an electrical engineer and member of the Society of Engineering Technologists Accreditation Board.

As well as examining existing programs and determining the numbers of technologists required by business and industry in B.C., the task force will examine the role and position of B.C. in Canada and the world as a producer of technologists.

News briefs

EC takes stand on metric system

The BCTF Executive Committee passed a motion at its November 7 and 8 meeting that the federation encourage its members to teach, and to foster the use of, the metric system.

First Vice-president Larry Kuehn said the BCTF must take a stand on the issue because metric conversion has become a political issue and many people, including most recently the Social Credit party's women's auxiliary, have announced their opposition to it.

President Al Blakey added that Education Minister Brian Smith, before he was elevated to the cabinet, made statements in the House that he is opposed to teaching the metric system in schools.

Theme issue

Articles are invited for a special theme issue of the *B.C. Teacher*.

The March-April issue of the magazine will feature the theme, professional development.

The editorial board invites manuscripts of up to 2,000 words on any aspect of the topic. Deadline for submissions is January 30.

Photographs to illustrate articles will be welcomed. All photos will be returned.

AGM motions

Deadline for submitting resolutions to the 1981 Annual General Meeting next April 12 to 15, is December 15. For more information on the procedure involved, contact Ken Aitchison at the BCTF offices.

Book festival

The National Book Festival is offering \$25,000 to fund classroom projects associated with its 1981 festival, May 11 to 17, in a location to be announced. 6/NOVEMBER 14, 1980

For more information about the festival and about the available funds, contact Ruth Clarke, Co-ordinator, B.C.-Yukon Region, National Book Festival, 3864 West 8th Avenue, Vancouver V6R 1Z4. Her telephone number is 732-4454.

Holiday homes

The Canadian Teachers' Federation has published a vacation exchange registry, which is now available.

The 16-page registry contains listings from all Canadian provinces and territories of teachers offering their homes for the summer for a vacation exchange. Copies of the registry were sent to all those listed in the publication. Additional copies are available free from R. D. Mosher, Deputy General Secretary, Canadian Teachers' Federation, 110 Argyle, Ottawa K2P 1B4.

Buildings

The Canadian Inventory of Historic Buildings, a branch of Parks Canada, is carrying out a study of early school buildings in Canada.

As a base for the study, the group wants to locate any school building built before 1930. If there is such a school in your area, please write to School Study, Canadian Inventory of School Buildings, Parks Canada, Ottawa K1A 1G2.

Dunlop award

The Florence Dunlop Memorial Fellowship Fund each year offers scholarships to teachers wishing to return to university for post-graduate work in elementary education. For more information about the fund, write to Alta Vista School, 1349 Randall Avenue, Ottawa, K1H 7R2.

Malaysian visits

A top official in the Peninsular Malaysian teachers' organization spent two weeks last month as a guest of the BCTF, getting a close look at how this organization works.

Nalla Nallathambi, deputy president of the National Union of the Teaching Profession in Peninsular Malaysia, arrived in early October, just in time to witness the fall Representative Assembly. From there, he sat in on a contract bargaining session in Burnaby, at which the Burnaby Teachers' Association made its case presentation, and later attended a metro zone meeting on bargaining aims. He also sat in on a number of meetings touching on every aspect of the BCTF's activities before he returned home on October 18.

Nallathambi's organization is trying to organize 70,000 teachers in Malaysia, and was visiting Canada for information and experience that will help him develop a program for his organization's recruiting drive.

New job for ex-GR

Owen Corcoran, a former geographical representative for Prince George, where he was a principal, is the first superintendent of the Stikine school district.

The huge but sparsely-populated district, in the northwest corner of the province, was formerly served on a part-time basis by the superintendent of the adjacent Fort Nelson school district. That superintendent also served as the district's official school trustee, but Stikine will elect its own school board for the first time this fall.

New times

Get ready to say goodbye to some old friends by the names of January, February, March, et cetera.

The all-numeric system of writing dates is becoming common. The Ministry of

Education has been using the system since 1977, and has urged the people and organizations it deals with to adopt it also. To help you learn this system, retired teacher Joseph Warner of Maple Ridge has published an all-numeric calendar.

Under this system, what used to be January 10, 1938 becomes 38-01-10. April 13, 1955 becomes 55-04-13. This newsletter was published on 80-11-14.

Warner is negotiating with the Ministries of Education and Universities, Science and Communications, to print and distribute the calendar. In the meantime, Warner is selling copies of the 1981 calendar, illustrated with B.C. history scenes, for \$2.50 each.

You can contact Warner at his home, 13751-232 Street, Maple Ridge.

English teachers

The 14th annual conference of the Canadian Council of Teachers of English will be held in Vancouver next May 11 to 16. A BCTF provincial specialist association, the B.C. English Teachers' Association, is co-hosting the conference.

The conference is designed for teachers of English at any level from kindergarten to university. Topics will include language acquisition, language growth through literature, the uses of language, and language and human growth and development.

For more information, contact Viviane McClelland, 6891 No. 3 Road, Richmond V6Y 2B9. Her telephone number is 278-9521.

Handwriting

Hannah Milner Smith's book, *The Hidden Meaning: A Guide to Handwriting Analysis*, is now available in B.C. bookstores, or from Gray's Publishing, Box 2160, Sidney, B.C.

A review in the September-October issue of *The B.C. Teacher* erroneously stated that the book should be ordered directly from the author.

New policy settles Revelstoke dispute

Revelstoke teachers and school board have agreed to a joint policy statement which settles the year-old dispute over whether extracurricular activities are voluntary.

Local association president Toni Johnston expresses reserved satisfaction at the agreement reached.

"We are pleased that the matter is settled although the joint statement is not as definitive as we would like it to be," says Johnston.

The words voluntary and compulsory are not used but the statement makes it clear that extracurricular activity participation is based on teacher initiative and on decisions made by teachers at the school level.

"We interpret this as meaning extracurricular activities are voluntary, not a compulsory part of teachers' assignments," says Johnston.

Teachers in Revelstoke are obviously still smarting from the "legal order of the board" which was slapped on them by their employer during last year's salary negotiations in response to teacher job action. The order included a list of more than 100 extracurricular activities which the teachers were ordered to undertake as a compulsory part of their job.

Johnston says she feels strongly that the School Act must be changed to limit, and to prevent abuse of, the apparently open-ended powers of the board with regard to teacher duties.

Johnston describes the School Act as ambiguous and lacking in internal consistency. "Lawyers asked to define the parameters of the teaching job were unable to agree on a consistent legal description," she says.

The joint statement now in policy is as follows:

"The Revelstoke Teachers' Association and the Board of School Trustees recognize that extracurricular programs are a significant aspect of the educational opportunities provided to students in this district. It is recognized that these programs are developed and maintained through the initiative of dedicated teachers.

Individual teachers initiate programs responding to interest and need in concert with students, colleagues, school principals and school staffs. The nature of a teacher's involvement alters from time to time according to individual choice and changing circumstances; no teacher is expected to automatically continue involvement in the same activity year to year. While the board has a vital interest in the extracurricular programs of the district, it recognizes that the decisions as to which persons are involved in particular programs are made at the school level.

Salary negotiations proceeded more smoothly this year in Revelstoke partly as a result of a teacher-trustee liaison

committee which grew in strength and relevance following last year's situation. This committee meets regularly to deal with a wide variety of concerns.

Revelstoke school board is currently part of the Okanagan zone for salary negotiations, but teachers opted out of the zonal arrangement a number of years ago. The RTA refused this year to negotiate with the outside agent who is under contract to school boards in the zone. As a result, board negotiations have been carried out by a succession of trustees with the agent being relegated to the role of resource person.

The parties have reached agreement in committee on the salary package and have agreed to conduct a further series on three additional provisions sought by the RTA: a clause to prevent unilateral changes of policy, a clause providing teacher protection in the event of a strike; and provision of preparation time for teachers.

—Ralph Sundby
Government division



Coquitlam teachers protested at October 28 board meeting.

Coquitlam substitutes 'strike'

Substitute teachers in Coquitlam have joined the trend toward militant action to publicize grievances. On November 3, Coquitlam's substitute teachers let the district's administration know of their unhappiness about contract negotiations by being unavailable to work that day.

Coquitlam substitutes want to get paid at the same rate as their full-time colleagues. They want 1/200th of a year's pay for each day they work; they now receive 1/286th. And they want to get paid for their qualifications and experience. Now they are only paid at Steps 2 and 4, but not at Steps 3 and 5.

Coquitlam's regular teachers are supporting their substitute colleagues. In fact, better pay for substitutes is the top priority in contract negotiations this year, and when the Coquitlam school board would not commit itself to improving pay for substitutes, a Coquitlam Teachers' Association Representative Assembly on October 28 voted unanimously to write to the board expressing its displeasure.

Later that night, a delegation of teachers crowded the room where the board was meeting and brought the matter up there.

Meanwhile, substitute teachers met on their own and decided on a one-day "strike." Most substitute teachers who were phoned November 3 to work that day would not make themselves available. About 15 ended up working, including those who had earlier committed

themselves to jobs that continued through November 3 and substitutes who could not be notified of the strike in time, as well as those who opposed the action. Coquitlam has about 110 substitute teachers.

Full-time teachers co-operated by reporting cases where substitute teachers were needed but not available.

The purpose of that action, according to CTA president Geoff Peters, was to demonstrate both the importance of substitute teachers and the other teachers' determination to back them.

"We think the board has recognized how seriously we take substitutes' rights," he said after the job action. He said it seems to have had the desired effect; some progress was made at the first negotiating session following the "strike."

Teachers don't like K-1 assessment

Many kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers who have been involved in answering the needs assessment questionnaire sent out by the Ministry of Education have written critically reflective letters to the BCTF.

One teacher commented that "the range of questions was comprehensive," though some "seemed not very important." Another teacher wondered "whether the parents would understand the importance of taking all that time."

This teacher regretted the degree of attention paid to screening in the 59-page

kindergarten questionnaire. A third wondered why the kindergarten questionnaire focussed so much on formal reading readiness.

Another teacher deplored the lack of a glossary to define frequently used terms such as "free play," "work period," "reading readiness," "readiness activities." The failure to assess the need for "early childhood education" was noted to be a serious omission. The teacher concluded that "kindergarten is a completely integrated program and as such must be

seen as a whole program in action, rather than artificial fragments on paper."

Other teachers commented on the futility of trying to rate programs on a scale. "The only way to describe the program is through observation," one noted.

Finally, one teacher wrote, "I am bothered by the assumption that a questionnaire... can determine the value or needs of the kindergarten program. There is no dialogue, debate, discussion. Teachers sit isolated in their classrooms, filling out questionnaires. Do we think critically and creatively? Yes/no answers defy it. They also defy feelings, beliefs, commitments. I want to communicate with those concerned about the issues that face kindergartens. Instead I am

handed a form that says, 'These are the questions. Answer them.'"

In whose interest is it to keep teachers in isolation answering yes/no and rating-scale questions? Why? And, if not these questions, why then the questions which crowd the pages of the elementary self-assessment questionnaire?

It is indeed unfortunate because the letters suggest that teachers, through their daily involvement and observations of students and through discussions and debates with their colleagues, are in the best position to assess the needs of students. The letters suggest the superiority of situational analyses and the serious limitations of empirical studies that focus on "counting noses."

—John Church
Professional development division
NOVEMBER 14, 1980/7

A night at the Orpheum, a day at the court house



Clockwise from above: Howe Sound teachers at rally expressed their feelings with placards; speakers elicited frequent ovations from crowd that almost filled Orpheum; two retired teachers confront Wolfe at court house rally; the Teachers' Viewpoint Glee Club fulfilled a dream by playing to a packed Orpheum theatre, leading the audience in protest songs; demonstrators in front of the court house; their expressions revealing their thoughts, teachers listen to Wolfe in the rain on the court house steps.

