

BCTF Newsletter

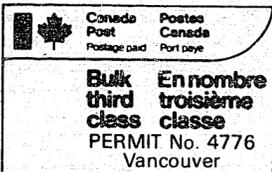
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Bill Vander Zalm may be winning Sacred votes from the "cuckoo right", but he's creating havoc and dismay in the public education system. See story pages 4-5. Josh Berson photo.



Free bargaining frustrated, 62 locals go to arbitration

The vast majority of teacher contracts will have to be resolved through compulsory arbitration this year because the provincial government has blocked the free play of bargaining, says BCTF President Larry Kuehn.

He was commenting on the fact that, with the passage of the deadline for negotiated settlements, 62 local teacher associations — the largest number in two

decades — had reported that they would have to go to arbitration.

Only six local associations, representing 973 teachers, have accepted contracts offered by their school boards. Another seven locals, representing 2,200 teachers, still have at least a year to run in their multi-year contracts.

"The provincial government ensured that no real negotiations took place this

year," said Kuehn. "The government now dictates school board budgets and thus makes it impossible for school boards to negotiate in any real sense."

Because of this, he said, most school boards offered teacher associations "nothing or less than nothing."

Only one, Vernon, offered its teachers a salary increase for 1983 — two per cent — but effectively it was an illusion. The board wanted essentially to take the money back by making teachers work four more days without pay, in addition to the six days imposed by the new School Services (Interim) Act.

In most of the other districts, boards proposed a salary freeze for 1983, with some suggesting cuts of as much as nine per cent. "In Vancouver," said Kuehn, "with the largest number of teachers in the province, their best offer was minus eight."

Still, despite the government's frustration of bargaining, Kuehn suggested that

Apology demanded of Vander Zalm for statements about teacher

The B.C. Teachers' Federation has demanded, through its lawyer, that Education Minister Bill Vander Zalm issue a public retraction and full apology for "defamatory" statements he made about a Prince George teacher.

The demand was made as a result of a front-page article in the November 10 Vancouver *Province* ("Vander Zalm

flunks student for poor grammar") which quoted criticisms made by the minister of a letter purportedly written to him by an unnamed student of Susan Ingraham in her Grade 7 class at Hart Highway Elementary School.

The article noted that the minister's

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See "Bargaining" page 2

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"Bargaining was really about level of education funding"

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arbitration boards would see merit in teachers' demands and would likely award some salary increases.

And arbitration boards, he noted, usually confine their review to the economic indicators. These favour a better deal for teachers than the "negative increases" offered by boards in negotiations: inflation is currently at about 10 per cent, other wage settlements are averaging about 10 per cent and two teacher locals are to get the Consumer Price Index rate (or about 10 per cent) in the second year of their multi-year agreements.

In addition, Kuehn said, arbitration boards have historically given teachers a pretty fair shake and the indications are that this will continue even in the face of the government's controls program.

"I think the key to that was in the decision by [arbitrator] David Vickers on the nurses' case on October 18 when he said, essentially, that it is not the business of the arbitrator to accept the ability-to-pay argument from the employer," said Kuehn. "In the public service it is not up to those who provide the service to pay for it, and if you accept the ability-to-pay argument, in effect what you are doing is saying that the employees are to subsidize the service. Arbitrators have traditionally rejected that argument." Vickers refused to be influenced by the Compensation Stabilization Plan guidelines and regulations.

Kuehn conceded that the Cariboo-Chilcotin negotiated settlement, whereby the local agreed to no salary increase for 1983 and the granting of a further six days work without pay, would likely cause

other locals some trouble during arbitration. "Obviously school boards are going to be using that, just as the minister of education has used it to try to hound everyone else into submission."

Unfortunately this year arbitration is not the end of the process, he added. The arbitration awards will be subject to review by the government's Compensation Stabilization Commission, which has the power to refer back to the arbitrators or reduce awards it considers excessive, and the School Services (Interim) Act will lop 2.5 per cent off whatever salary increase the commission allows, by forcing teachers to work five days in 1983 without pay.

But, Kuehn said, locals are likely to emerge from the arbitration process, and possibly the Compensation Stabilization Commission (which has been approving increases of six and seven per cent) with salary increases — and cuts beyond this would clearly underline the extent of political interference in the process.

"It's totally unpredictable in this province these days whether there will be [further] political interference," said Kuehn. "We know that the government intentionally set up a climate to make teachers fearful about jobs and to make them fear that any gains they made, or even if they stayed even, would mean job loss. We, for example, received a letter from the minister yesterday [November 16] that had been written on October 28 in response to a letter from me asking for written confirmation of his statement at our rally that there would be no layoffs of teachers because of budget cuts during this school year. His response, which says that there will be no layoffs this year because of budget cuts [with a few weasel words in it] was dated October 28, but not mailed until November 15. Clearly the government recognized that bargaining this year was really the government versus the whole BCTF over a question of how much funding was going into education. Because if we got even three per cent, four per cent, after all of the things operated, that means the government has to put more money into the system in order to meet that commitment that the minister has made. That's really what bargaining was about this year. It wasn't about teacher salaries at all in the same way it traditionally has been, it was really about how much financing there is going to be for education in this province."

And that, he noted, currently remains an open question.

The six local associations that have come to contract agreements with their school boards are Cariboo-Chilcotin, Golden, Creston-Kaslo and South Cariboo, all agreeing to salary freezes, while Burns Lake and Central Coast have agreed to accept the provincial average of other teacher settlements. At least one of those locals achieved important concessions in non-salary areas.

The locals still in multi-year agreements are Abbotsford, Sooke, Campbell River, Mission, Queen Charlottes, North Thompson and Cowichan.

Several of the locals going to arbitration have agreements, or agreements in committee, covering clauses on seniority, sexual harassment, picket line protection, substitute hiring and availability, part-time teaching, access to budget information and other matters.

B.C. settlements average above 9%

The pattern of recent B.C. wage settlements confirms that teachers are being victimized by the provincial government.

While teachers continue to fight rollbacks, other employee groups are achieving settlements that either match or better the inflation rate. Lately it was the turn of B.C. locals of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union winning increases averaging 10.8 per cent in the first year and 9 per cent in the second year of their new contract. It was just one more in a series of settlements that dramatically underscored the punitive selectivity of the provincial government's "restraint" policy.

This is what the pattern of settlements looks like, in part, according to a November 2 report by the Employers' Council of B.C.:

Month	No. of contracts	No. of employees		% increase		Total
		Public	Private	Public	Private	
August	8	450	7,130	12	9.2	9.3
September	17	2,230	789	10.3	11.3	10.5
October	15	1,471	51,080	11.3	12.1	12.1
Last 12 mos.	118	51,412	90,667	16.1	13.3	14.3
Last 3 mos.	40	4,151	59,005	10.8	11.7	11.7

Even if the 40,000-member construction trades settlement is removed from the October report, private sector increases in the last three months average 11 per cent.

A BCTF survey over the same period of August to October for eight large employee groups (500 or more employees) reveals a first-year average settlement of 9.6 per cent.

"If you play with fire, you're going to get burned"

From page 1

staff had found 18 spelling and grammatical errors in the student's letter and quoted a letter from Vander Zalm to Ingraham saying in part: "If this is a sample of the work of a Grade 7 student, then it truly puts the effectiveness of our educational system in question." The *Province* story also said that the minister had asked the chairperson of the Prince George school board to check the writing skills of all Ingraham's students.

In a letter to the minister, BCTF lawyer David Yorke said he was advised by the teacher that "the letter to you published in the *Province* was not prepared in her class and has never been seen by her." He noted as well that neither the teacher nor the school board had been contacted prior to publication by Vander Zalm or his officials to check on the validity of the offending letter.

Yorke also pointed out that Susan Ingraham is highly regarded by her colleagues and the community and has an excellent record as a teacher.

"Your action in releasing material to the press, without checking your facts, and without any consultation with the

teacher or relevant officials, in my opinion appears expressly calculated to injure the reputation of the teacher in her professional capacity," Yorke said in his letter.

"The letter attributed to you is, in my opinion, a defamatory allegation in respect of the professional capability of the teacher, made recklessly, without regard to its truth or falsity."

Yorke concluded by requesting Vander Zalm to "immediately issue a complete retraction of your letter and full apology to Susan Ingraham for the damage it has done to her reputation" and that this be made available to the Prince George school board and the Vancouver *Province*.

But two days later, on November 12, Vander Zalm indicated he was not about to apologize. He told CKNW news: "I don't believe that when you involve yourself in that sort of action you can expect to be immune from whatever the results ... You play with fire, you're going to get burned a little bit and that's what she was doing, using the kids to send the letters home to have them involved in a letter writing and I responded to the letter. Fair game."

TPC to critically assess teacher assessment system

Ralph Sundby
Teacher Personnel Services

The Teacher Personnel Committee is taking a critical look at the teacher assessment system in B.C. and exploring possible options.

Legislation, federation policies and current practices are being examined in consultation with the principals' and vice-principals' PSA.

AGM policy 1.B.07 (1980) established "that the evaluation of teachers should be based on the assumption of professional competence and hence formal evaluation should not occur unless the assumption is questioned or a formal evaluation is requested by the teacher."

Common practice has teaching reports being filed on a semi-regular basis at the discretion of the superintendent. Often this means a report in the first year in a given teaching position and every three years thereafter as suggested by Regulation 93. That regulation also provides for the report writing process to be undertaken upon teacher request or upon the initiative of a principal or a school board.

The committee is seeking to generate discussion of the topic which will test the feasibility of implementing statement 1.B.07. To this end it will be distributing a discussion paper in 1983 and soliciting feedback.

A variety of concerns have been voiced about reporting on teaching performance as it is currently carried out.

Inordinate quantities of time and energy are consumed in an activity seen to be of doubtful value. Some estimate 8,000 to 10,000 reports are prepared annually. An average of 20 hours per report works out to 160,000 to 200,000 hours and a cost of several million dollars.

Triennial reports are viewed as providing only minimal reinforcement of good teaching, a necessary function which should be a much more frequent and regular occurrence in an effective supervisory program. The present system provides little or nothing by way of growth and development of teaching skills and methodology.

Absence of agreement on a common philosophical base results in lack of definition of criteria and standards upon which to base assessment. Legislation is vague and assessment processes are poorly defined. Although most teaching reports are conscientiously prepared, current guidelines do not provide adequate assurance of fair appraisal and due process in this important matter.

TPC would be pleased to hear from those members who wish to provide input.

Metro presidents to —

"Speak out for public education"

Vancouver-area parents are being urged to "speak out for public education before the very concept is just a memory."

That is the urgent message teachers in the metropolitan region are taking to their districts in a massive joint informational campaign. The campaign involves newspaper and radio ads, school-based and zonal public meetings, shopping mall and door-to-door distribution of leaflets by teachers.

The united campaign is an unprecedented move for metro teachers, Delta Teachers' Association President Cal Moore told a news conference November 8 at which metro presidents outlined the need for the blitz. He explained that in the past teachers had shied away from becoming involved in political activities, believing that as educators they should be apolitical.

"All this has changed," declared Moore. "I believe I can speak for my entire profession when I say we are fed up with teacher-bashing and with the education minister's mindless bungling."

He attacked the minister's unplanned and arbitrary imposition of budget cuts, and the singling out of education for particularly harsh treatment. And he questioned whether the BCSTA really supported public education or not.

"By and large they [the BCSTA] have made noises indicating that they oppose the cuts, however, they're prepared to act as surgeons under direction, provided they're equipped with a sharp enough scalpel to do the job," said Moore. "When are they really going to come on side as trustees of public education and stop acting as agents of a non-caring government?"

The campaign involves, including Delta, 12 other metro locals. Representatives of 11 of the organizations (Coquitlam Teachers' Association President Gordon Wickerson could not attend) were also on hand to give reporters an up-to-date picture of the damage cutbacks were doing in their districts. (See follow-up stories, page 7.)

Socred convention:

Vander Zalm cheered, social reformers spurned

The Socred convention got under way in Vancouver on November 12 with a rousing roar of welcome for Education Minister Bill Vander Zalm and an opening address from Premier Bill Bennett.

The premier devoted a good portion of his speech to education. He alternately criticized teachers with the usual statistics about the decline in the PTR and the increase in teachers' salaries and praised them for showing, "after much heat we see what has always been the case that teachers are just as caring and just as concerned."

He singled out as an example, and was roundly applauded for mentioning, the settlement by teachers in the Cariboo-Chilcotin. He concluded his remarks on education by stating, "we never set out as a government to confront but only to get co-operation."

The man he appointed as minister to get that "co-operation", along with other cabinet ministers, held a question and answer seminar for delegates. Responding to a number of questions, Vander Zalm repeated his promise to restore provincial exams as a means of measuring the effectiveness of pupils, teachers, schools and school districts. He promised a white paper on the School Act for January or February which will contain a range of options for discussion. (This was in

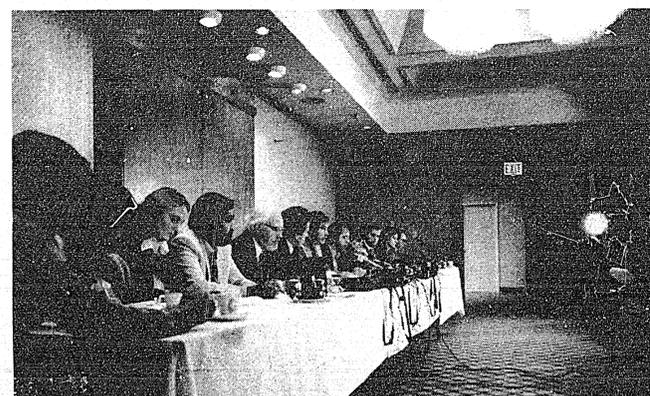
Increasing class sizes and erosion of special education services are the main concerns in Surrey, said STA President Moira Mackenzie. Despite a 1,000 increase in enrolment this year, she said the district has 15 fewer teachers — and next year the ratio is likely to get worse.

"If funding isn't adjusted," she warned, "we could lose over 200 teachers from our school system — that's more than one-tenth of our teaching force."

Mackenzie pointed out that the minister's promise not to allow cuts in ministry-funded special education programs did not amount to much. "In our district only a little more than half of those [programs] are funded by the ministry," she said. "The rest are developed and funded locally and don't fall into the ministry approved category." Inevitably the board will look to make cuts in these areas, she said, and the affected children will be "placed back in regular classes of growing size or placed on long waiting lists, wondering when they would get the special services they need."

Picking up on the class size problem, Langley Teachers' Association President Don Bennett pointed out that for Langley to meet its government-imposed budget shortfall of \$2 million to \$2.6 million, upwards of 50 classrooms will have to be closed in January and more than 100 will have to be closed if the board waits until June to act. This will likely mean, he said, that "our classes, which average 30 pupils and more, will be at least 15 percent larger."

Kitty O'Callaghan, president of Vancouver Elementary School Teachers' Association, noted that Vancouver has suffered budget cuts of \$2.1 million last February and \$4.2 million in August and faces another chop of \$6.1 million in January. One result, she said, is much larger class sizes, "many in fact in violation of our contract." In addition, field trips have been cancelled and supplies greatly reduced. "The government," she protested, "is taking the tools of my job away and I'm expected to continue to do a good job."



Metro presidents announcing information blitz are (left to right) Tom Westwater (NwTA), Karen Chong (MRTA), Kitty O'Callaghan (VESTA), Amrit Manak (RTA), Bill Friesen (NvTA), Ivan Johnson (BTA), Cal Moore (DTA), Mike Gregory (VSTA), Heather Walker (WVTA), Don Bennett (LTA), Moira Mackenzie (STA) and Bob King (VSA).

prejudice and discrimination are a result of the competitive nature of our social, political and economic system, and currently advocating far-reaching fundamental reform of that system; Be it resolved that the Government of British Columbia, and particularly the Ministry of Education, put FREEDOM first and cease encouraging and responding to self-interest groups advocating further government intervention to promote "social justice."

—West Vancouver/Howe Sound
A number of observers had difficulty translating that until the comments of various speakers made it clear that Socreds resent having government money used to finance multicultural groups and those involved with human rights issues. "We should," one delegate noted, "clean out this kind of garbage." No one spoke against the resolution and it passed unanimously.

Amnesty International sets teachers' meeting

Teachers and their friends are invited to an introductory meeting with Amnesty International representatives in the BCTF auditorium on Thursday, December 2 at 8 p.m. BCTF executive director Bob Buzza will chair the meeting.

A politically-independent world-wide movement, Amnesty International seeks the release of men and women detained anywhere for their beliefs, colour, sex, ethnic origin, language or religion, provided they have neither used nor advocated violence.

Teachers from outside the Lower Mainland who wish information about the movement may write directly to Amnesty International, P.O. Box 503, Station A, Vancouver, B.C. V6C 2N3.

Referring to the supplies reduction, Mike Gregory, president of the Vancouver Secondary Teachers' Association, said that a further \$9 million cut in Vancouver's supplies and services budget is impending. This will greatly reduce the availability, he said, of duplicating and audio-visual equipment, speech and hearing materials, library books, classroom, art and performing arts supplies.

"What this does is effectively reduce or eliminate the effectiveness of such programs as art, music, physical education and many other elective areas," Gregory said.

In addition to these problems, Burnaby Teachers' Association President Ivan Johnson said the lack of substitutes was becoming a particular concern to teachers in his district. When a teacher in a secondary school is absent, he said, no substitute is provided for the first two days, which means that other teachers, in addition to handling their own duties, have to also cover for the ill teacher. "They end up babysitting the class and the students do not get the instruction that they have a right to expect."

Heather Walker, president of the West Vancouver Teachers' Association, said that the firing of 52 teacher aides in her district has had a "devastating" impact on the operation of school libraries, learning assistance centres and career resource centres. Together with the elimination of funds for textbooks, library books and field trips, the cuts have seriously undermined teacher morale.

"I have never seen teachers so tired," she said. "I have never seen such a lack of energy and enthusiasm for teaching in a group of people that I have known for years and have always admired for their enthusiasm and for the brightness they brought into their classrooms."

Karen Chong, president of the Maple Ridge Teachers' Association, agreed that low morale was becoming a serious problem and that it does affect teaching. "Teachers do care about students," she said. "What we need to know is: does anybody else care?"

North Vancouver Teachers' Association President Bill Friesen took issue with Education Minister Bill Vander Zalm's published remarks to the effect that the public school system isn't good enough and that students aren't required to know much to pass their grades. Friesen pointed to research that demonstrates that "students in 1982 outperform student graduates of an earlier era in both quality and content. We're proud of this achievement and so should the minister of education."

Amrit Manak, president of the Richmond Teachers' Association, protested that the minister's challenge issued earlier this fall for teachers and trustees to resolve local budget reductions was a "charade", since Bill 89 was imposed even though most districts, through various means, cooperatively achieved reductions. "It is time," he said, "for the minister to create a positive atmosphere of cooperation and consultation, rather than confrontation."

Bill 89 was also attacked by Tom Westwater, president of the New Westminster Teachers' Association, who stressed that it did much more than eliminate teachers' rights to free collective bargaining and violate their contracts.

"It wrote blackmail into law," Westwater said. "Bill 89 ordered teachers to agree to taking an unpaid day off school, which we did not want, or have another six days' pay deducted. That is blackmail; it's legal blackmail, but it's still blackmail."

Vancouver School Administrators' Association President Bob King pointed out that, bleak as the situation now is, teachers and principals are even more fearful of what is in store after December 1, when the provincial government makes known how much — or how little — funds it will give school districts in the coming year.

"That's what angers us and that's what scares us," he said.

BCTF Newsletter
BRITISH COLUMBIA TEACHERS' FEDERATION
2235 Burrard Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6J 3H9

CLIVE COCKING
Editor

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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Jim Bowman
Government Division

The government MLAs were introduced one by one at the opening of the recent Socred party convention. My neighbor, a media type, and I agreed that the warm reception that the MLAs were getting would climax with the introduction of Bill Vander Zalm. But even we were stunned at the nature of the rapturous welcome that was given the minister of education.

For minutes the delegates stood, applauded, whistled, cheered and stomped, expressing adulation for their hero. Not even the premier and Grace McCarthy, perennial favorites of the party, got anywhere near the reception accorded Vander Zalm. Every Socred in the Hyatt was letting the minister know that his smiting of the Philistines (that's you!) was the best thing that has happened since the emergence of Jerry Falwell and the Moral Majority.

It was a great moment for Vander Zalm but a sad one for public education; a triumph for the minister but not necessarily for his leader, the premier.

While the zealots were raising the roof, this observer was wondering what thoughts were passing through Premier Bill Bennett's mind. He is the one who loosed this tiger on the public schools of the province.

Every time Vander Zalm opens his mouth to condemn some feature of the public education system he intensifies the support he receives from a large minority of the population. Conversely, though, those same pronouncements reinforce the sense of alienation another significant minority is experiencing. That minority — which might be loosely termed liberal in its thinking — is almost at the point of becoming an observable political force. Certainly observable enough to show up on those very sophisticated polls to which the premier subscribes.

This "liberal" group normally sits in that mass of undecided voters in the centre of the political spectrum; the ones who will decide the outcome of the next election. Vander Zalm is winning applause but is he capturing votes? Those who cheered him most vociferously will vote Social credit anyway. He may bring back a few votes from the cuckoo right — those who flirt with the Western Canada Concept tend to be tuned in to Vander Zalm's wavelength — but is he impressing the voters in the undecided middle?

One can only speculate that though the premier loosed this tiger, he didn't expect to be riding its back in the middle of November, careering off into the political jungle. My guess is that he appointed Vander Zalm to be minister for no more than a week or two, until an election (with seven extra seats and a favorable outcome) would allow him to appoint a new cabinet, preferably without Vander Zalm in any portfolio — or in the legislature for that matter.

Don't forget that just before the minister's transfer from Municipal Affairs to Education he had called the

premier and his colleagues "gutless" for not proceeding with his controversial land use act. In the old parliamentary tradition, ministers whose plans were thwarted so obviously resigned, and if they quarrelled with their colleagues publicly they were fired. But Vander Zalm knows that resigning leads to stagnation in the political wilderness of the back benches and Bennett knows that he can't afford to fire someone so popular with the workhorses of the party.

So whatever the premier's private thoughts, he had to keep Vander Zalm in the cabinet although the premier is not one to forgive and forget lightly, as Jack Davis can verify. But to give him the education portfolio! It either had to be a punishment for both Vander Zalm and the teachers, or Bennett was calculating that a few weeks of the new minister blundering around the china shop of the public school system, prior to an election, would incense the profession. Teachers would in response sink to the same level and thus alienate themselves still further from the electorate, most of whom have been brainwashed to believe that public school teachers are either on strike (one day in 60 years) or rapidly increasing the rate of illiteracy while drawing down princely salaries. Whatever the reasons for Vander Zalm being given the education portfolio they had to be political ones.

As a choice for reasons other than pure political vindictiveness or strategy, selecting Bill Vander Zalm is utterly incongruous — the tiger has been given the run of the village.

Vander Zalm is a man of strong convictions and beliefs, many of which he will continue to hold whatever evidence is offered to the contrary. That's fair enough — the rest of the world is made up of flawed people as well.

The problem arises when someone with Vander Zalm's biased views on education and society — he sounds like your average raucous hot-line commentator — gets to be the boss and can inflict his views and policies on the lot of us, whether we like it or not.

And that's not just political sour grapes. Bashing the BCTF and the BCSTA and vice-versa is fair game and keeps the political process healthy and alert, but holding the education portfolio also involves a responsibility to an institution of the state. The public education system's *raison d'être*, when all else is stripped away, is to be the guardian of the mores, customs and political ethos (as opposed to partisan politics) of the state. Thus it is hoped that the state will endure, whatever the fate of political parties. Indeed it is doubtful that a

BILL VANDER ZALM

Darling of the Socreds, disaster for education



modern state of any social or economic consequence can persist without a flourishing system of universal public education as its foundation.

Its teachers, for better or worse, are instruments of the state. Their quality, and particularly their morale,

should always be of concern to those who are in temporary charge of the ship.

And teachers have been bedeviled for some time. They are assailed with the demands of those nostalgic reactionaries who want the system to return to a time

that never was when all students could read and write, spell and compute impeccably. At the same time they are confronted with the pressures of modern society which, in its technological advances, may soon place our schools in an anachronistic backwater and smother the world with robot values. The last thing that teachers need, as the school system inevitably flounders around trying to come to terms with a new industrial society, marked by pluralistic values, changing family patterns and lifestyles, and students acculturated by TV and video games, is a leader who denigrates their work and their attitudes. What general inspires confidence in his army by telling his troops that they should return to the battlegrounds of yesterday and that they are lousy soldiers anyway?

Public education in B.C., as in other western liberal democracies, needs a leader sensitive to those fundamental social changes that impinge on schools and children, and who can "change to preserve," to use an old conservative dictum. Instead, we have a leader who seems not to care about the great questions plaguing the system because he's sure he's got all the answers.

We have strayed from the simple verities of the past, pronounces the minister, but a good dose of provincial exams, the Lord's Prayer, picking up papers with pointed sticks and having teachers face students for 12 minutes and 48 seconds more per day, will soon get the education system back on the right track.

The minister is a fascinating but alarming mixture of 19th century "muscular Christianity" and 20th century American ballyhoo. He's a media man's delight and he knows the value of a headline to the nth degree. With the public school system as a game preserve, 30,000 teachers interacting with half a million students will provide the minister with examples of every human foible and shortcoming if he wishes to hunt down the evidence to support his reactionary dogma. He's tailor-made for a society that feasts on sensationalism and if there's one sure bet this winter it is that he'll be by far the most-heard-from cabinet minister in British Columbia.

But as Bill Vander Zalm was receiving the worship of his acolytes at that convention, and having his prejudices buttressed, I wondered if Bill Bennett was feeling as morbid as this observer about the winter of discontent and disruption facing the public education system.

It is doubtful if the premier will call an election in the next few months that among other things would allow him, or us, a chance to influence Vander Zalm's political destiny.

He can't dump him now that he's the darling of the party. He's stuck with him and unfortunately so are we. But for how long can the state, its teachers and its students afford to have the results of this political miscalculation inflicted on them?

Premier Bennett is as aware as we are that not only are teachers tired of the constant political fighting of the past year but that their morale is at an all-time low. Inevitably, if you treat people as being less than worthy for long enough, they'll come to believe that they are and behave accordingly. And no amount of pious protestation from Bennett or his minister of education that it is all the fault of the militant BCTF will wash with the vast majority of teachers anymore.

The past year, whatever else it has done, has revealed the Social Credit government's attitude towards public education very clearly. The constant attacks on teachers, their salaries and their working conditions, the statistics quoted about them that are distorted out of proportion, the eulogizing of independent schools, the very appointment of Vander Zalm as minister, are not the offshoots of a restraint program but rather evidence of a fundamental contempt for a pillar of the state.

It is ironic indeed that Bennett closed the Socred convention with some fine words about the future prosperity of British Columbia depending on its leadership in the field of high technology. If that is to be anything but rhetoric then the premier had better take steps to ensure that the public schools become places of intellectual vigor and experimentation, not a pale reflection of the past or a model of the minister's reactionary beliefs.

And some long-overdue care and attention will have to be given to the development of those things of the human spirit that will allow us to master that technology and harness it for a better life for all.

Whatever its failings, public education has been in the main a resounding success and it ought to be a priority of whatever government is in power to maintain pride in our schools.

But to this disillusioned observer of the Socred faithful gathered in conclave singing the praises of a minister who sees little merit in our schools, the chance of restoring pride and raising morale is remote indeed.

But if I were in the premier's shoes I would have been watching the Vander Zalm "love-in" with a somewhat jaundiced eye.

The political mood is very volatile and nowhere more so than in the world of education. There is lots of temporary kudos to be gained clobbering teachers and schools and it distracts the public from some glaring inadequacies of government.

But sooner or later the tide will turn and the groundswell of opposition from the liberal centre, as communities rally to protect their children's future, may sweep Vander Zalm away and with him the rest of Premier Bennett's government.

Bureaucratic ministry is anti-education, anti-democratic

Mike Zlotnik
Professional Development

Public education in British Columbia is clearly in jeopardy. But government budget cuts and Bill Vander Zalm's populist posturings are only part of the reason for concern. There is a deeper, more potent threat: bureaucratization.

The bureaucratization of B.C. education has in fact been growing insidiously for years. It has become the enemy of our democratic values and beliefs. Bureaucracy is antithetical to public education. It places teachers at the end of a long chain of decision-makers, interspersed with experts, consultants and researchers who are not really accountable to teachers, parents or the local community. The educational consequences are a decline in efficiency and an undermining of productive relationships among teachers, students and parents. The economic consequences are that per student costs rise as the specialization of teaching and the emphasis on *administration* intensify. The political consequences are a decline in public support for public education.

That is where we are today. And that is why I believe it is vital that we concern ourselves with the issue of political control — with the three Rs of *rights, responsibilities* and *relationships*. The prerequisite for a good

educational system is that the rights and responsibilities of, and the relationships among, students, parents, teachers, local citizens, school boards and centralized levels of government must be appropriate. By that I mean, fair, just and democratic.

In a democratic society no centralized representative body has total power to define these rights, responsibilities and relationships. Indeed, we describe societies in which government has such power as "totalitarian." If government has the unfettered power to define the powers and obligations of individuals and associations such as, for example, trade unions and local school boards, then there are *no rights*. By "rights" we refer to powers of individuals and groups with respect to government as well as to other individuals and groups.

This is a difficult matter to appreciate for those with excessively "tidy" minds. They want to base human rights on some *institution* such as parliament, the legislature, the constitution or a bill of rights. But democracy is a "messy" commitment which is incompatible with sovereignty residing in any single institution. Rather, it is the people — all the people — who are the foundation of democracy.

Our vision for public education *presupposes* a commitment to democratic values. This commitment entails that the system for governing, administering and operating education should also be democratic.

This does not mean that centralized governments, by majority vote, establish a uniform curriculum, program or system of administration. That would be *state* schooling. On the contrary, there should be a decentralized and pluralistic control over education reflecting divergent cultural traditions and differing community circumstances to the end that all citizens have an equal say and stake in their society. The responsibility for education must be *shared* among the teaching profession, local community representatives, individual teachers, individual parents/students and the senior levels of government.

The basic responsibility of the provincial government is *not* to run the school system, or determine the curriculum, or supervise teachers, or evaluate students — it is to ensure that resources are adequate and equitably distributed and that the rights and responsibilities of the other parties to the public educational process are appropriate and are upheld. Given a proper balancing of the rights and responsibilities of children, parents, individual teachers, the teaching profession and local school trustees, our public education system will realize the high expectations we have for it. This enforcing of appropriate rights and responsibilities should be the central task of the Ministry of Education.

Instead, we have a ministry that is marked by increasing bureaucratization. It is within this context that Premier Bill Bennett has introduced his budget cutback program and Education Minister Bill Vander Zalm has launched a radical centralization of the political control over education. Actually, Vander Zalm's program is deeply incoherent. He criticizes the bureaucrats and appeals to the populists rather than to the experts but every move transfers power to the centre. Moreover, his plans for province-wide examinations will require more bureaucrats. Therefore, the effect of Vander Zalm's transformation of the education system: is to weaken both community and professional participation in educational policy — to make education less democratic and more totalitarian.

The conflict over educational policy at this time includes disagreements over the level of financial support but it also, and even more fundamentally, is a contest over basic moral and political values. Vander Zalm claims to represent the public interest as opposed to the sectoral interests of teachers. However, the articulation of the political content of the public interest should be done by the community or its representatives. The control over teaching within the guidelines established by political bodies is the prerogative of the teaching profession and not of bureaucrats. The medi-

ation of the relationship between local teachers' associations and local communities should occur through collective bargaining — not through bureaucrats.

Assuming that Vander Zalm has a considered plan for B.C. education, and not simply a perverse desire to shake everything up and upset everyone, his aim is to transform the public education system into a tightly controlled state system. The only remaining place for local control and pluralistic values will be the private schools which he so favors. In other words, basic political and educational rights will be for sale in the educational marketplace.

What can teachers do to oppose this illegitimate power play? One action is to refuse to co-operate with the officials and procedures of the Ministry of Education. By refusing to co-operate we concretely express our conviction that the ministry has lost its moral legitimacy. When the government tramples on the principles of collective bargaining, equality before the law and local autonomy, they break the social contract. When the confrontation is finally resolved it must be on the basis of a system of political control consistent with our vision for public education. This means more than the restoration of funds: it means the protection of the rights of students, parents and teachers; it means substantial local autonomy, collec-

tive bargaining, responsible professional autonomy and the abolition of bureaucratic power. Crucially, it means that the arbitrary and free-wheeling conduct of the minister of education will be restrained or curbed by a proper appreciation of *shared* power and control.

Is this simply a negative response? Does it mean that teachers no longer work on curriculum development and programs of instructional improvement? Not at all. The BCTF has, or can soon put into place, teacher or teacher/community-initiated approaches to curriculum development and educational evaluation. The fundamental differences between ministry versus professional- and community-initiated approaches are in the more appropriate accountability and more productive relationships of the latter.

Finally, teachers have a task of advocacy for restoring the "three Rs" and a morally legitimate basis for public education. This means that teachers have a responsibility to speak out — in conversation with friends, in political arenas and in the mass media — in support of democratic values and institutions. To remain silent is to risk not only the quality of education in our schools but to abrogate our responsibilities in guarding the most basic rights of our democratic society.

Why the new social studies is unworkable

John S. Church
Professional Development

Frank Shepherd, Centennial Secondary School, Coquitlam, and George Major, Chilliwack Junior Secondary School, have recently completed a major critique of the proposed new secondary social studies program. The critique has refocused the attention of many teachers on the fact that the November 1981 meeting of the Representative Assembly asked the ministry to scrap the present proposals and to restart the entire process. To date, the ministry has ignored the BCTF request.

Shepherd and Major assert that the proposed program is philosophically flawed. They contend that "history should be the major discipline of social studies, especially in the early school years." They insist that it is important for people to have a sense of their roots. They suggest that students cannot comment intelligently on contemporary problems unless they have a clear understanding of the events and ideas of the past and of different ways in which these events can be analyzed.

The authors criticize the fragmented and episodic scope and sequence. "It is unworkable," they say, "because it lacks continuity of concepts and content from year to year." Specifically, they are skeptical that jumping themes from People and Places in Grade 7, to People and Cultures in Grade 8 to People and Resources in Grade 9, to People and Government in Grade 10 and to World Issues in Grade 11 will provide students with the opportunity to acquire a grasp of the uninterrupted nature of the unfolding of human events. Their skepticism is intensified by the fact that each year has a unit entitled "Canada Past," a second, "Canada Present," a third, "World Past," and a fourth, "World Present." They compare the situation to four different boxes each year and wonder if students and teachers will be able to weave it all together into a meaningful tapestry of understanding.

Shepherd and Major question the appropriateness of an expenditure of at least \$12 million (in 1982 dollars) for text-

Sanitized social studies:

The Holocaust is totally ignored

by George Major
Two University of Toronto professors have been justly appalled by the trivial treatment Canadian social studies textbooks give to the slaughter of six million Jews in the Second World War.

Reporting on their study of Canadian texts, Alan Bardikoff and Yaacov Glickman, told the *Globe and Mail* that "the Holocaust was being totally ignored or inadequately treated." A check of B.C.'s texts confirms their conclusion. As one colleague put it, "Outside of some gory pictures and limited commentary, there is little on this murderous event."

Bardikoff and Glickman are likely to be even more appalled by B.C.'s controversial new social studies curriculum. *The Holocaust is not even mentioned*. Perhaps this is just a temporary, if lamentable, oversight on the part of the curriculum developers. I am, however, left agreeing with those University of Toronto professors who crisply state that: "To avoid or ignore an event in history, especially one of this magnitude, is to court disaster."

The glaring gaps in the new curriculum do not end with the Holocaust. John Patton, a noted social studies teacher

from Ontario, easily listed 13 significant omissions in the historical field alone. Those omissions included:

- the history of ideas and their influence;
- the history of the United States and Canada-U.S. relations;
- the great Depression;
- the development of parliamentary democracy in Britain;
- the history of western civilization from Rome to the Renaissance;
- the history of French-English relations in Canada, especially since 1949;
- a unified history of British Columbia.

One key reason why such blindness and insensitivity to significant historical events has been allowed to develop lies in the fact that history as an academic discipline in the school system has often been ignored. Instead it has had to serve as the handmaiden of some other goal. Thus at the turn of the century history was used as a vehicle to ram virulent nationalism down unsuspecting students' throats.

The new social studies curriculum follows in that same "handmaiden" tradition. It throws history (and geography) the task of being "prime

organizers of knowledge and learning activities." (Translation: most of the students' contact with history will be in memorizing lists of dates, names of locations and important events.) Historical data and perspectives have been shoved about like so many buns in a bakery.

The new social curriculum bombards students with a wild collection of topics that will only confuse them. What they need is a coherent set of historical perspectives that will enable them to draw lessons from the past. And that can only be achieved if the curriculum faces the record of the past squarely. The stuff of history, after all, is humanity with all its warts, embarrassments, contradictions and wrinkles.

When one looks over the bloody record of mankind and the challenges before us, should such a study be any less?

George Major, who teaches social studies at Chilliwack Junior Secondary School, was co-author of a critique of the new social studies curriculum with Frank Shepherd of Centennial Secondary School, Coquitlam.

books at a time when teachers have been ransomed to surrender between six and 11 days' pay during 1982-83 to cover a \$60 million shortfall by the ministry. They conclude their critique with the assertion that the proposed revision "is certainly unworkable given this time of massive financial restraint and this new curriculum's gold-plated approach to implementation. It is finally unworkable given the need for extensive and expensive teacher retraining."

The critique has forced ministry officials to appear on various TV and radio programs to defend the proposed revision and to defend the action of the ministry when almost two years ago it announced that the time for public and teacher debate was now over. (The ministry re-

cently announced a postponement of further contracts for materials for social studies revision and the striking of a "select committee" to review the secondary portion of the curriculum.)

The resurfacing of the debate suggests that in an area as controversial and as close to people's values systems as is social education, the time for closing a debate is never. Rather the renewal of the debate causes one to question if consensus can ever be reached; no, to ponder seriously, if consensus should be reached.

In the earlier process initiated by the ministry, there was a considerable degree of agreement on the broad goals of social education. The debate and disagreements developed on the specifics of content and

relative emphasis to be given to various disciplines, issues, concepts, generalizations.

The debate suggests the need for a new process. Does it not make abundantly clear the need for varying levels of decision-making? For example, goals statements and operational guidelines determined provincially, with the specifics developed within the provincial framework worked out by parents and teachers at both the school district and school levels. In a province characterized by massive historical, economical, cultural and geographical diversities, might it not be appropriate to start in the social studies to model the process of public and teachers and where suitable, students, involved in seeking their own decisions?

and 14.4 per cent for those below that figure (19 contracts have been signed for 1983 at the Winnipeg CPI of 7.8 per cent plus 1.5 per cent, a level acceptable to the government), budget grants to school boards are being held at 9.8 per cent.

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The Montreal conference was chaired jointly by Greg O'Keefe, president of the Canadian Teachers' Federation, and Yvon Charbonneau, president of the Centrale de l'Enseignement du Québec. The conference adopted a series of recommendations aimed at increasing public awareness of the education crisis, putting

pressure on government to change cutbacks policies and returning to true free collective bargaining. Two particularly noteworthy recommendations included endorsement of the BCTF proposal to file formal complaints with the International Labour Organization where provinces contravene the right to free collective bargaining and a commitment to develop a system for exchanging information to "counter biased and misleading comparisons being issued by various governments which support each other's positions of forcing teachers into a position of retreat."

BCTF President Larry Kuehn, named to a five-person co-ordinating committee, described the conference as a significant step toward developing a united front of teachers across Canada in defence of education and bargaining rights.

European seminars set for teachers

Teachers interested in learning about European history, culture, education systems and teacher training programs are invited to attend a series of two-week seminars in Europe in the spring and summer of 1983.

Organized around lectures and excursions, the seminars are being offered in West Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands from March to July.

Further information and application forms are available from Tom Hutchison, Government Division, BCTF.

Cutbacks now cutting into academic core

It is 1:30 p.m. when a student at Sentinel Secondary School in West Vancouver tries the doors to the school library and finds them locked.

"Sorry," says principal Doug Player, who is standing nearby with a visitor. "The library's closed."

All three of the district's secondary school libraries are closed during part of the school day as a result of the provincial government's cutbacks. Heather Walker, president of the West Vancouver Teachers' Association, said the partial closures result from the dismissal of 52 teacher aides in August. When the libraries do open their doors — Sentinel's for 6½ hours between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. — "the librarians ... are now acting as desk clerks and security guards," said Walker, "rather than doing the important work of being with children and developing new curricula and new materials for students."

Player said the librarian can't possibly do all that is demanded of her: filing, shelf-stocking, cataloguing, and assisting students. "The library serves 80 to 100 kids every lunch hour and there's no way one person can deal with all that."

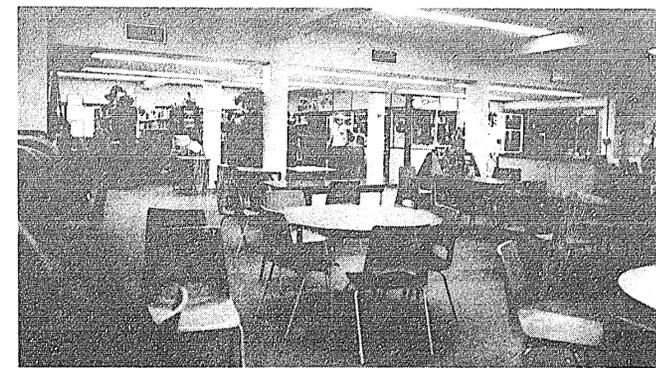
Last year the library had 34 hours of aide time each week. The aide filed, typed catalogue cards and handled circulation from sign-out through reshelving. This left librarian Dorothy Robertson free to carry out professional duties such as ordering and cataloguing materials for the 22,000-volume centre, assisting students and working with teachers.

But this year Robertson has found that "the administrative things must be done before you can do other things." The cataloguing and filing can't be ignored or the library will slip into chaos.

"I don't have time to help all the students who need help in any given block of time," she said. "There's always someone left standing by the time they have to go to their next class."

There is also very little chance to do co-operative planning with teachers on library research and study skills projects. In the past, Robertson had been able to work on such activities with teachers of English, social studies, science and family studies. "Fairly frequently [this year] we've had a whole social studies class in here and I've had to be pulled away to work at the desk."

Kit Kreiger, head of the social studies department, said the situation amounts to "a tremendous waste" of library services that have been improved substantially over the past eight years.



Sentinel principal Doug Player (centre) says loss of aides has meant closure of library during librarian's lunch hour. Back from lunch, librarian Dorothy Robertson (right) must function as check-out clerk.

"It's as if we built a rapid transit system here and now have been forced back to the horse and buggy," said Kreiger. "Libraries make students more independent ... in where they go to find information. We're going back to the situation where students found the teacher to be the principal source of information. But a teacher can't make up for what a library offers."

Kreiger said that practically every unit of his social studies course involves some library assignment. In the past, he kept Robertson informed of the sequence of units he was covering and she made sure the necessary books, periodicals and subject files were available. However, he said, "It's at the point now where I hesitate to bring Dorothy work, because she's overwhelmed."

"We just got it — then it was gone"

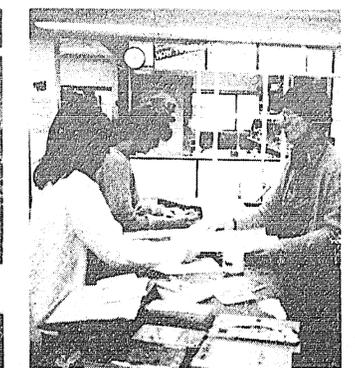
Three computer-terminal-equipped Career Resource Centres are standing almost unused in West Vancouver's secondary schools because there are no teacher aides to staff them.

Doug Player, principal of Sentinel secondary, said his school's centre is used only occasionally, when a counsellor has time to put a class through it. The centres are stocked with pamphlets and other reference materials on post-secondary career and educational opportunities. In each centre there is a "Choices" computer terminal on which students were supposed to

punch in their interests and aptitudes. The computer was to respond with information assisting students to narrow career options and to select post-secondary institutions that offer appropriate training.

"We had been pushing for years — literally years — for the Choices terminal," Player said. "We just got it [in April] and then it was gone."

He said the loss is especially serious for Grade 10 students, who are at the point in their education where important choices must be made with respect to career and educational aims.



No aides ... no career "Choices" program.

New Westminster Teachers' Association president Tom Westwater describes the overall situation this way: "In the core subjects, we have English teachers, mathematics teachers, and science teachers who are on a two-day cycle teaching 200 students and up. That is almost a conveyor-belt system. It's impossible to get to know 200 students in the course of two days, and just dealing with the marking becomes horrendous."

Marg McKee, a mathematics teacher at NWSS, works with students in grades 8 through 11. Four of her six classes exceed the BCTF's class size guideline of 30, a circumstance she endures while contending with a shortage of graph paper and blank stock for supplementary work sheets. "I know things are going to get worse," McKee said. "I can see the signs."

Canada's teacher organizations unite to defend education

George North
Bargaining Division

Canada's teacher organizations are united in their opposition to federal and most provincial economic policies that are threatening educational services across the country.

Meeting in Montreal November 1 and 2, representatives of 21 teacher groups with 300,000 members heard detailed reports from every province and the two territories before deciding to recommend to member associations that they "support the struggles of teacher organizations in each province to defend public education services and to fight against the deterioration of working and learning conditions in the schools."

Delegates were shocked at the severity of provincial government attacks on public school education in B.C. and Quebec in particular. Other provinces face problems but in no case have salary cuts been proposed. Delegates specifically voiced strong support for B.C. teachers who are currently being battered by the most severe budget cuts and restrictive legislation of any other province in Canada.

The main brunt of the massive cutbacks legislated in Quebec will come in 6/NOVEMBER 24, 1982

January 1983 when teacher salaries will be rolled back by 18 per cent, with a formula for determining subsequent increases over the next three years related to CPI or other salaried groups, whichever is the less, minus 1.5 per cent. The government wants class size and other changes that will mean 8,000 to 10,000 fewer jobs. A common front of public-sector unions held a one-day strike as one step in their fight against controls.

Ontario is under controls for contracts expiring after October 1 at a nine per cent ceiling in the first year and five per cent in the second.

The situation in other provinces is:

Alberta — Premier Lougheed has rejected six and five but expressed the hope that increases will not exceed nine per cent; education grants to school boards will range between five and eight per cent.

Saskatchewan — no legislation but a suggestion that increases be limited to the average CPI for Regina and Saskatoon minus one per cent, an increase that will also be applied to government public sector expenditures.

Manitoba — an increase of eight per cent for those making \$35,000 or more

and 14.4 per cent for those below that figure (19 contracts have been signed for 1983 at the Winnipeg CPI of 7.8 per cent plus 1.5 per cent, a level acceptable to the government), budget grants to school boards are being held at 9.8 per cent.

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El Salvador teachers target of brutal right-wing attacks

Members of the teachers' union in El Salvador continue to be targets of attacks by the extreme right in that turbulent country.

The World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession (WCOTP) has recently documented "a case study in repression" involving the arrest and brutal treatment of 23 El Salvadorian teachers.

WCOTP representative Marc-Alain Berberat has reported that on August 14 a meeting in a school of members of ANDES, the teachers' union, was raided by police and 23 teachers were arrested at gun-point. One was Maria Lidia Escalante de Serrano, director of the school and the wife of the vice-minister of education, a member of the Christian Democratic Party. The chief of police claimed that the participants were members of communist, revolutionary and liberation fronts and that they were planning subversive activities.

On August 29, all but one of these teachers — who remains in the hands of

having been laid, seven of the teachers were released. The remaining 16, including Maria Serrano, were kept in prison where they suffered various types of torture in a bid to extract "confessions."

Berberat, who met with the teachers, reported that: "The women were punched in the head and stomach. One of the teachers had had an operation shortly before and the scar burst open as a result of these assaults. The men, as well as being punched, suffered electric shock treatment and one of them was drugged. For many days, the detainees were isolated, and eyes, ears and mouth[s] were covered with sticking plaster and cotton wool and their heads [were] put in sacks. The police organized a simulated execution for the whole group."

Berberat, said that Maria Serrano was "the victim of worse treatment than the others and this only ceased when the U.S. ambassador intervened."

On August 29, all but one of these teachers — who remains in the hands of

police — were transferred to the prisons of the minister of justice.

"The episode of the 'Republica Federal de Alemania' school is just another attempt by the Salvadorian extreme right to do away with ANDES 21 de junio and to neutralize teaching circles," wrote Berberat. "The extreme right does not hide

its intentions and prints publicity pages in newspapers which quite clearly urge the murder of teachers. We should not forget that up until now 300 of our El Salvadorian colleagues have been assassinated, others have disappeared or are in prison. Only very strong international pressure may be able to help our colleagues."

Alberta teachers oppose introduction of comprehensive examinations

Alberta Teachers' Association has served notice that it will resist provincial department of education efforts to have proposed comprehensive examinations administered in Alberta classrooms.

ATA President Arthur Cowley told a recent news conference that the teachers' association opposes department of education comprehensive examinations and will urge teachers to discourage students from writing them in 1983. He said the association will continue its efforts to have provincial resources redirected from comprehensive examinations to diagnostic testing.

The proposed comprehensive examina-

tions would be offered only to university-bound graduating high school students and would sample mastery of curriculum from all high school years.

Referring to unanimous decisions of the ATA Provincial Executive Council, Cowley told reporters that the association has urged teachers not to mark or supervise the writing of comprehensive examinations unless directed to do so by a lawful order of their school boards.

Calling the comprehensive examinations "an insult to the professional integrity and competence of teachers," he said they contribute little to a student's education, while not even representing sound evaluation practice. "Evaluation," he said, "should be part of the educational process and not independent of it."

To underscore its opposition, the association will withdraw its support of comprehensive examinations technical review committees.

Part-time teaching earns pension credits

Substitutes and part-time teachers should note that they can earn pension credits through part-time work. Bruce Watson, Government Division, advises that:

Even if you contribute to the Teachers' Pension Plan as little as one day a month, you will receive credit for that month in determining your eligibility for a pension.

If you teach less than half time, just ask your board to deduct the necessary contributions each time you work.

The minimum number of months for any teacher pension plan benefit is 100 months of contributions. Although the benefit will be based on the equivalent number of full-time months, it is definitely worthwhile to be a contributor whenever you work in anticipation that you might have sufficient months to add up to 100.

Consultants' study confirms inadequacy of pension indexing

A forecast made by Paterson Cook Limited in a special study of the future operation of the indexing system prepared for the federation this fall supported the views expressed in 1980 that the revised indexing system would not provide full CPI protection over the long term and should be amended to remove the inadequacies in the present legislation to ensure that the provision for indexing to full CPI was met through appropriate measures.

The consultants conducted a simulation of how the indexing system, brought in by the government over the objections of teachers in 1980, would work over the long term.

Their findings are that with continued high inflation, the present pension indexing system is expected to produce annual adjustments equal to the increases in the Consumer Price Index until 1997 after which time the adjustments will drop gradually and level off at about 3 per cent per year less than CPI increases. If inflation is reduced gradually to around 5 per cent per year, adjustments equal to the increase in the CPI could be given until 1991 after which time the adjustments will drop gradually and will level off at about 2½ per cent per year less than CPI increases.

New pensions brief seeks gov't changes

Pensions are still a topic of great interest to the federation.

A detailed submission to government was approved on October 30 by the Executive Committee which, if implemented, will bring about improvements for many members. Among the changes being sought are:

- improvements in the reinstatement provisions;
- a higher rate of interest on refunded contributions and on voluntary contributions;
- the opportunity to take the pension on a 15-year guarantee basis;
- and improvements in the portability agreements.

If the refund interest is increased, there will also be an increase in the interest charged for repayment of refunds and for periods when a person is able to make a double contribution while on unpaid leave of absence.

The Executive Committee also approved a submission in response to the government's green paper of last June entitled "Developing a Pension Policy for the Future." This submission included general recommendations on pension plan coverage, inflation protection, portability and vesting, retirement age, adequacy of pension income, survivor benefits, funding levels, communications and administration.

The Pensions Committee is continuing its work on a new pension policy.

8/NOVEMBER 24, 1982



Commission vice-chairperson Joy Langan (left), chairperson Tom Alsbury (centre) and member Tom Hutchison (right) explain to reporters how restraint is depriving citizens of needed services in all areas of public service.

Cutbacks commission finds:

Restraint policy translates into unmet needs, hardship

Arbitrary provincial government cuts in social and education spending translate into a devastating picture of unmet needs and hardship for ordinary citizens.

That is the central finding of the report of the Public Commission on Social and Community Service Cutbacks, reviewing the results of public hearings in 11 communities around B.C. and the presentations of more than 200 groups and individuals. The commission, jointly sponsored by the B.C. Federation of Labour, the B.C. Teachers' Federation

and the Hospital Employees' Union, was given the mandate last spring of enquiring into the impact of cuts in spending on health, education and municipal services.

The 79-page report was released to the news media on November 17 by three of the four commissioners, chairperson Tom Alsbury, vice-chairperson Joy Langan and Tom Hutchison of the BCTF Government Division. (The fourth member, Gordon MacPherson was unable to attend.)

Joy Langan told reporters that the grim

picture presented by the report was based on conditions last spring and that the situation has "got to be twice or three times worse now and that is merely a reflection of how bad it was initially."

The impact of the cuts described to the commission by many citizens were alarming and occasionally tragic, she said. The most emotionally powerful, she noted, occurred in Kelowna. "There was a woman in a wheelchair from a private hospital who was unable to do anything for herself and who had spent years as a health care worker herself, who said that 'if they take away the help, who's going to help me blow my nose, who's going to help me do the basic simple things that allow me some dignity.' There wasn't a dry eye in the room."

Citizens are being deprived of needed services in all areas of the public sector where cuts have been made, said Hutchison. "The thing that worried the commissioners most was that there seemed to be no plan based on what the needs out there are. Simple arbitrary cuts have been made that translate in a devastating way to people."

The commission report, which will be submitted to the provincial government, offers a wide range of recommendations. The main recommendations it makes to the government call for:

- development of a financing formula for hospitals, auxiliary health services, school boards, municipalities and community social service organizations which will enable these bodies to maintain at least the level of service provided in 1981;
- immediate cessation of the divisive and destructive statements by cabinet ministers and ministry officials which attempt to make various sectors of the community to be "scapegoats";
- assurance that budgets, once set and agreed to, will not be arbitrarily changed;
- immediate elimination of all user fees and similar charges for health, educational and social services;
- abandonment of all artificial and arbitrary programs of public sector spending restraint.

Within the BCTF, the commission report will be distributed to local presidents, GRs, bargaining and PD committees and PSAs. Other members may request copies from the BCTF office.

Letters

Socred MLA claims editorial quoted him out of context

Your newsletter editorial of September 22, 1982 cannot pass without a rebuttal. I take strong exception to it, and urge you to give equal billing to my reply.

You used the old trick of quoting out of context to give a totally different slant to my statement. In doing so, you not only do a disservice to me, but you close the eyes of your professional associates to a very real deficiency of our educational system, which I am constantly seeking to emphasize.

My statement in *Hansard* (edition of June 18, 1980) dealt with the difference I see in the teaching of academic subjects as compared to vocational or practical subjects. I said that "anyone can teach" academic subjects, providing they have the appropriate university training and the proper certificate. But to teach vocational subjects to young students, you must be able to demonstrate a skill. That skill is not acquired by the absorption of written material, but is a product of years of practical experience. Historically in Canada, we have not given sufficient emphasis to training in the skilled trades, and this is a very real factor in our unemployment situation today. We must change this in order to create jobs for our people.

You chose to quote three words ("any-

one can teach") out of my 15-minute speech, the whole thrust of which was to urge a stronger role in our society for vocational training. In quoting those three words you call me "fatuous". The publication of this letter, on which I must insist, will allow your readers to decide who is fatuous.

My long-term stand on the need for greater emphasis on vocational training has already had some effect in British Columbia; we cannot ignore this need indefinitely and maintain what we have come to accept as a good standard of living.

George Mussallem, MLA
Social Credit, Dewdney-Maple Ridge

Mussallem quoted fairly, says writer

Mr. Mussallem takes exception to the comment in my newsletter editorial of September 22, 1982 that "Anyone can teach!" proclaimed the friendly car dealer from Maple Ridge in the B.C. Legislature (he excepted the vocational subjects)".

Having checked the appropriate edition of *Hansard*, I realize that there is not enough space to quote the whole of Mr. Mussallem's speech of June 18, 1980. However there is room to quote the relevant passage to which we both refer and I leave your readers to judge whether my memory or my comments have done them or Mr. Mussallem a disservice:

I have no fight with academics. The

reason that academics is so important and so carefully carried out in this province is because it's the easiest thing in the world to teach. There is no problem teaching academics. You can get a book almost anywhere and teach it. It's a solid, ironcast program. Training skills is another story. It is difficult, requires knowledge of the issue and somebody with a dedication. I don't say that we must remove . . . Don't let me say: "Mussallem is against academics." No way! I think it's wonderful and great, but it's easy to teach and easy to acquire. Trades training is difficult to teach and difficult to acquire. We need both. But we have pushed our people into the academic stream and it's an elitist program. That must cease, in my opinion. We must give the same importance to the worker that works with his hands. I appeal to the minister again.

I appreciate what he's doing and I appreciate his thinking, but I thought it was necessary that I bring it up on this floor. It's all right to talk with the minister, but I want to tell him from this floor that the time is long past due when we should recognize the importance of trades and learning to do something with the hands. Make that elitism. In some countries it is. Why not here? It's difficult to teach, that's why. Not many people can teach it. Anybody can teach school. If you go to university for four years and get a certificate, you're out teaching school. You can do a good job if you're dedicated, and that's necessary. But to acquire a trade requires specialized people.

Jim Bowman
Director, Government Division