

# BCTF Newsletter

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## Trustees also call for new minister

The B.C. School Trustees Association has joined the BCTF in calling on Premier Bill Bennett to appoint a new minister of education.

But the trustees have done so on the basis of a different, more complicated rationale than that of the federation.

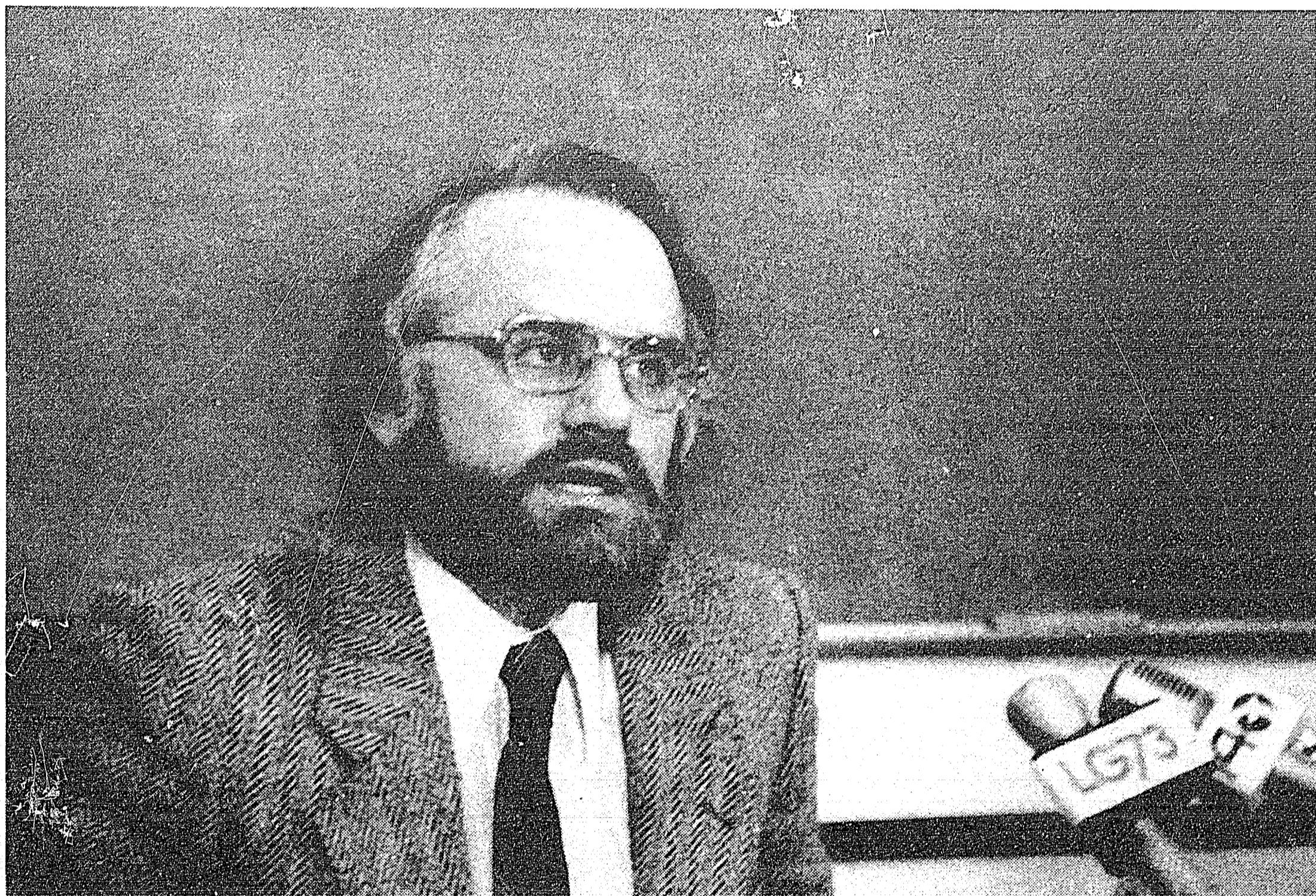
BCSTA President Gary Begin explained to a February 21 news conference that Bill Vander Zalm effectively removed himself from the office of education minister by, contrary to the School Act, personally injecting himself into a Smithers teacher discipline case and that, consequently, trustees have asked the premier to appoint another member of his caucus to "fill the office left vacant by Mr. Vander Zalm."

Begin referred to a February 10 BCSTA letter to Bennett — as yet unanswered — which read in part:

"Mr. Vander Zalm was in total transgression of his duty and office recently when he told a school board that a teacher 'should be suspended without pay.' According to the School Act, the minister of education does not become involved personally in such matters but has a duty to 'arrange for the examination and investigation'... The reason that the minister must maintain this personal distance becomes clear when we examine the quasi-judicial duties which fall to him under the Act — specifically, in the matter of appeals and of assuring due process for teachers suspended or dismissed by school boards.

"In utter disregard of due process, Mr. Vander Zalm publicly tried, convicted and issued sentence on the teacher in question. I ask, had the school board followed Mr. Vander Zalm's suggestion, to whom would the teacher have appealed under Section 129(1) of the School Act to obtain a fair and unbiased hearing? Both morally and ethically, Mr. Vander Zalm's actions

*See "Vander Zalm laughs" page 3*



*Charging that Vander Zalm has abused his power, alienated almost all teachers and undermined public confidence in the education system, President Larry Kuehn informs the news media of the BCTF decision demanding that the minister be fired.*

## BCTF urges premier:

# Fire Vander Zalm

In an unprecedented action, the BCTF has called on Premier Bill Bennett to fire Education Minister Bill Vander Zalm for abusing his power by constantly attacking teachers and announcing arbitrary changes in the public school system.

Describing Vander Zalm as "the most destructive education minister in any government," President Larry Kuehn told a news conference on February 17 that the education minister's speech the day before to the Victoria Chamber of Commerce was the last straw in that the minister was now proposing unilateral curriculum changes that would "destroy

the principles of a liberal education by reducing students' access to arts and humanities courses."

He informed the media that a letter had been sent to the premier demanding the dismissal of the education minister, the first time the federation has ever taken such a step. The letter said in part:

"Mr. Vander Zalm abuses his power by attacking individual teachers, shows contempt for the legal processes he has responsibility for carrying out, announces arbitrary and destructive changes to the school system as dictates which cannot be changed regardless of the damage to students, and frequently

uses his access to the media to make false statements about the public school system and teachers.

"Mr. Vander Zalm in his brief tenure in office has alienated almost every teacher in British Columbia, has dragged the profession of teaching into the gutter of his own political ambition, and is totally undermining the confidence of parents and the general public in our system of education . . .

"We call on you to remove him from office with all possible speed."

In his Victoria speech, Vander Zalm had returned to his attacks on teachers' salaries, arguing that a great many individual teachers would be pleased to forego a salary increase in 1983 to keep their jobs, but that the ministry's aim in this regard was being thwarted by "the big machine" on Burrard Street which is "more interested in power for the sake of power" than in ensuring that teachers keep their jobs.

He went on to express doubts about the value of a high school graduation diploma, maintaining that students have too many easy options and are not required to take enough basic education courses. Vander Zalm cited the case of his niece who, in Grade 12, was required to take only English 12, but for her other courses could choose from a wide variety of options such as "interior design and cooking and gourmet and sewing and life science sports and textiles".

Vander Zalm told the businessmen that his ministry was working on a new curriculum that would require students to

*See "Vander Zalm" page 2*

## *Executive okays action centre to serve unemployed teachers*

The Executive Committee has authorized the development of an unemployed teacher action centre in the BCTF building.

The decision, one of several taken by conference call on February 21, followed a unanimous recommendation from a meeting of 225 unemployed teachers held four days previous at the BCTF building.

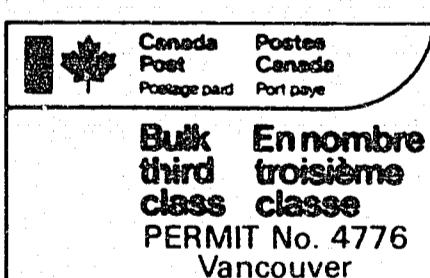
Speaking to that meeting, BCTF President Larry Kuehn pointed out that the federation has a \$100,000 fund for programs to provide support and services to unemployed teachers, and that the meeting was called to maintain contact with unemployed colleagues and to obtain suggestions on how the federation might be of assistance.

"We want to reach out, to give people an opportunity to get together among themselves and with the BCTF — to know that we do want to have you as part of the federation and to maintain people as part of the profession," said Kuehn.

The bulk of the meeting was taken up with small group discussion followed by recommendations and resolutions presented in a plenary session.

The unemployed teachers suggested that a wide variety of activities could be presented at the proposed centre. They included providing: advice on unemployment insurance, pensions, financial assistance; centralized job posting and employment counselling; emotional, moral

*See "Favourable" page 3*



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

# Vander Zalm tramples on rights of parents, students, teachers

From page 1

specialize and to be required to take more science and math courses.

"What we will seek is that students specialize, and it can be science or math or industrial arts or business, but if they do then certainly the courses they're provided with at school ought to be related to their specialty," he said.

He also said it was his ministry's duty to re-introduce province-wide testing of students.

At the news conference, Larry Kuehn also read a BCTF statement (see below) explaining why the federation objects so vehemently to the minister's new curriculum plans, emphasizing the fundamental complaint that they "mean that the basic goals and values of public education are to be altered by the fiat of a politician."

Beyond this, Kuehn pointed out that Vander Zalm's scheme would eliminate student opportunities in fine arts and humanities courses in favor of vocational and specialized studies and that this narrowing of choice is contrary to the basic principle that a democratic public education system exists to serve the good

## New curriculum will destroy principles of liberal education

Education Minister Vander Zalm's plans for a new curriculum mean that the basic goals and values of public education are to be altered by the fiat of a politician. The plans call for increasing the number of compulsory courses in Grades 11 and 12 from four to 12. They also introduce extreme forms of selecting and streaming students for particular occupational tracks and levels.

Vander Zalm's scheme cuts the choices available to senior students and does so in a fashion that strikes out many fine arts and humanities courses in favor of various vocational and specialized studies. Essentially, Vander Zalm aims to destroy the principles of a liberal education by reducing students' access to arts and humanities courses.

The consequences of this plan would be the elimination of many special services for learning disabled students and the cancelling of valuable locally developed courses serving particular communities, for example, native education programs. Drop-outs from high school would again become a serious problem and many students would be denied access to a university education, for which they are well suited, because of arbitrary, unreasonable and rigid course requirements. The student gifted in the humanities but weak in mathematics, for example, will be denied a chance to study the humanities at university.

Even if the plan had educational merit, it makes no sense economically, financially or practically. To implement the plan many millions of dollars would have to be spent on science labs, on new textbooks for the new courses, on curriculum guides and materials. Many teachers would have to be retrained for new duties but the ministry has forced cuts in the time and money available for professional development and training for teachers. To attempt to implement these plans next fall would create chaos in

# BCTF Newsletter

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

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.

MEMBER: EDPRESS

CLIVE COCKING  
Editor

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## Editorial

### Why Vander Zalm must go

Bill Vander Zalm is barely six months into his portfolio and he has already proved himself to be, as President Larry Kuehn has said, "the most destructive education minister in any government."

The final straw that prompted that label — and provoked the BCTF to take the extraordinary step of demanding the premier sack his education minister — was Vander Zalm's speech on February 16 to the Victoria Chamber of Commerce, reprinted in its entirety in this issue.

Every teacher in this province should read that speech by their minister of education. Not so that they are assailed once more by the mis-information that we have come to expect from Vander Zalm. Nor that they can marvel at how ignorant the minister appears to be of school life and programs or how he draws specious conclusions from flimsy evidence. They should not read it because of his spurious challenge to the BCTF to do what his government's School Act says it can't do. Or to wonder at the minister's eager pandering to those who, like their counterparts for millennia, condemn a generation of students because of the indiscretion and antisocial behavior of a very few. Teachers should not read it for any of those reasons.

They should read it and regard it as a great tragedy that a minister of education could make an entire speech to a chamber of commerce and, through the news media, to every citizen in B.C. and not find anything of value in the work of the 30,000 teachers and half-million students in the province's education system.

By inference the public system of education and all those who inhabit it and virtually everything they do in it is apparently of little or no value to either the individual or to society. By extension he condemns all previous Socred governments and cabinet ministers who have run the system for so many years (On July 6, 1979 Dr. Pat McGeer, the former education minister, claimed to have turned the system around). By extension he condemns the many dedicated (though we might argue misguided) educators who have labored long and hard in the ministry vineyards. By extension he condemns parents and boards and even society itself for struggling — and no one would pretend that the struggle has not been a blemished one at times — to create a universal system of education for all children. But he knows best; he has the answers, though many of us even after a lifetime of service are still phrasing the questions.

Fortunately, if we are to believe the polls, the minister is a 90-day wonder, not a five-year plan. He is alienating the liberal centre as we thought he would. The man who appointed him is now in a classic no-win situation and deserves to be in that position. If Premier Bennett gets rid of Vander Zalm he risks alienating the party; if he keeps him he risks alienating the moderate elements in his cabinet. Vander Zalm has become his greatest political liability. The teachers have had enough of him, the trustees have had enough of him, a growing number of parents have had enough of him. When the legislature reconvenes, as is likely next month, we hope that someone will quote Oliver Cromwell: "It is not fit that you sit here any longer... you shall now give place to better men."

### All teachers' rights at stake in Quebec colleagues' struggle

Teachers across Canada are being asked to contribute a minimum of \$20 each or approximately \$4 million to the Quebec Teachers' Support Fund.

The fund, established on February 18 by the Canadian Teachers' Federation, is to be used to assist Quebec teachers in "defraying legal costs, payment of fines, and meeting other extraordinary costs arising from the 1982-83 round of contract negotiations." The fund was kicked off with a \$25,000 contribution from CTF.

Greg O'Keefe, president of the 220,000-member Canadian Teachers' Federation, called on "national and international organizations to provide support for Quebec teachers in their fight against the vicious and punitive legislation of the Quebec government."

The BCTF Executive Committee has called on B.C. teachers to support Quebec teachers by contributing at least \$20 each to the fund.

The BCTF will also make an organizational contribution to the fund of \$28,000 or approximately \$1 per member. The Newfoundland Teachers' Association, the New Brunswick Teachers' Association and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation have also made organizational contributions to the fund as well as calling on teachers to make individual contributions.

Larry Kuehn stated in his telegram to local association presidents, "If the Quebec government gets away with its repressive actions, the rights of all teachers are threatened."

The conflict first began on January 27 when 80,000 Quebec teachers went on strike to protest the imposition of Bill 105 by the Levesque government. Bill 105 covered three major areas:

• Salaries. This legislation rolled back

The following is the complete text of Education Minister Bill Vander Zalm's speech to the Victoria Chamber of Commerce on February 16, 1983.

Education has been in the news a whole lot with respect to restraint and during 1982 we've certainly had to apply some tough measures. But let's look at the restraint program '82 over which we had so much controversy. They said it couldn't be done, they said we couldn't find those monies in the educational budget. Ladies and gentlemen, when we introduced the restraint program to school boards, we in fact only reduced the average budget for the average school district in British Columbia from an increase of 21.5 percent in '82 over '81 to 16 percent. They still had a 16 percent increase on average in all those school districts and I wonder how many business people, how many householders wouldn't love to have had an additional 16 percent in '82 over 1981.

The teachers certainly because they represent almost 80 percent of that total expenditure also had to give by way of the requirement in Bill 89. But once again the effect of this to the teachers' increase in 1982 where they negotiated or where through arbitration they received an additional 17.5 percent increase over 1981, was only to take it back to an increase of 15 to 16 percent on average. And a 15 or 15 to 16 percent increase in 1982, the worst year since the Depression, was certainly not a bad increase for any group in society let alone for a professional group, and we have respect for them, that is certainly very, very well paid at an average salary of almost \$34,000 a year. And even with that the ministry is still picking up \$112 million annually on behalf of the school districts as their share of the teachers' pension fund.

Teachers' salaries or professional salaries since 1978 have risen to the tune of 68 percent. The administrators making up to \$80,000 per year are also required to have a hold on those salaries until Mr. Peck has had an opportunity to review all of those administrative salaries throughout the whole of the public service system.

The cost per pupil in British Columbia since 1978 rose from \$1,824 on average to \$3,283 per year and that's in only four years. The BCTF again this year were granted pay increases by the arbitration board ranging from 3 to 6.5 percent on top of the increases granted them in 1982. Yet the BCTF feels that not only are these pay increases necessary now, but with it we must somehow guarantee total job security: no layoffs. It can't be done. We can't afford it. We can't afford it any more in the public sector than you can afford that in the private sector. We can't afford it in business. We can't afford it for the millworkers. We can't afford it for ourselves. It simply can't be done. British Columbia is not an island unto itself, it's part of a competitive world. And certainly there are many, many professional groups throughout the province, throughout the country and throughout the world that would be very pleased to just stay even during 1983 if somehow they could as a part of that process be guaranteed their jobs for the year to come. And we can do that and we've certainly striven toward this end. We've done what we could in the ministry and government to try and keep people employed wherever, but certainly in that profession especially. We said to the teachers, "Now is the

• Working conditions. Bill 105 increased the workload by the 120 minutes per week at the elementary level and by 160 minutes per week at the secondary level. It was estimated that this would eliminate about 11,000 teaching positions in the province as well as dramatically increase class sizes.

• Management rights. The legislation overrode previous contractual arrangements and gave school boards prerogatives for declaring teachers surplus and for transferring teachers.

With the strike in its third week, the Quebec government lowered the boom, introducing Bill 111, a draconian law to force teachers and other striking civil servants to return to work.

The essential features of Bill 111 were that it ordered teachers to return to work on February 17 and increased the penalties for not doing so. Under the law, teachers could be dismissed by notice from the employer for hindering people from entering a work place. Teachers, beginning February 17, could lose two days' pay for each day they remained on strike. The government by decree could also cut off all funds to unions and impose the loss of three years' seniority for each day a teacher remains on strike.

Probably the two most controversial sections of Bill 111 are Section 17, which presumes teachers guilty, and Section 28, which declares that the legislation overrides the Quebec Charter of Rights and exempts it from sections 2 and 7 to 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

• Salaries. This legislation rolled back

while this had not produced dramatic short-term victories, he was hopeful that the forthcoming provincial election would produce a victory for education.

In his speech, Larry Kuehn said that the federation has calculated that there are at least 2,000 unemployed teachers in B.C. right now. There is also a fear, he said, that if more money is not put into the education system this spring then replacements will not be provided for the annual attrition of about 3,000 teachers.

Kuehn said the federation had been pursuing the fight for restoration of funds with a broad strategy of political action and,

# Minister doubts effectiveness of public education system

time to hold back, wait for better times. Let's keep everyone in their job. Let's keep those educational programs in place. Let's give our young people an opportunity to learn in a fine educational system that can be improved upon and we should do so together. But hold those salaries during 1983 in order that we can keep you employed."

And teachers throughout this province as I meet them individually, as I visit Revelstoke, Cowichan, Courtenay, Surrey, Burnaby — it doesn't matter where — individual teachers and groups are certainly aware of what's happening and would probably be very pleased to assure that their jobs and the jobs of their

in order to assure that there is a future for our people, especially our young people in British Columbia. I challenge them to come and sit at the table and negotiate on the basis of no salary increase but keeping every teacher that's permanently there employed and keeping all the programs intact. I challenge them; we can do it!

I know that certainly in my ministry over the last six months I have felt much like the minister of finance. I've had to discuss monies perhaps much more than what I wanted and I've often longed for that one day I could, as does every minister, get into all of those things that make every ministry so interesting and



**"Is that high school diploma really worth what it should be?"**

colleagues were kept in place by foregoing a salary increase in 1983 waiting until times improved again.

But we're having to fight as so often happens, the big machine. The people in their ivory towers on Burrard Street in Vancouver. And they say "No, we can't do it; it's a matter of principle." It's a matter of principle we keep people employed wherever and whenever we can. That's a matter of principle. But they say, "No, we won't do it." Because again that large organization is more interested in power, power for the sake of power and political power than what they are really interested in assuring that people maintain their jobs and the system remains intact. I challenge them ladies and gentlemen.

I challenge the BCTF to take into consideration what's happening all around them in the public sector, in the private sector, what's happening not only in British Columbia but what's happening throughout the country and throughout the world that would be very pleased to just stay even during 1983 if somehow they could as a part of that process be guaranteed their jobs for the year to come. And we can do that and we've certainly striven toward this end. We've done what we could in the ministry and government to try and keep people employed wherever, but certainly in that profession especially. We said to the teachers, "Now is the

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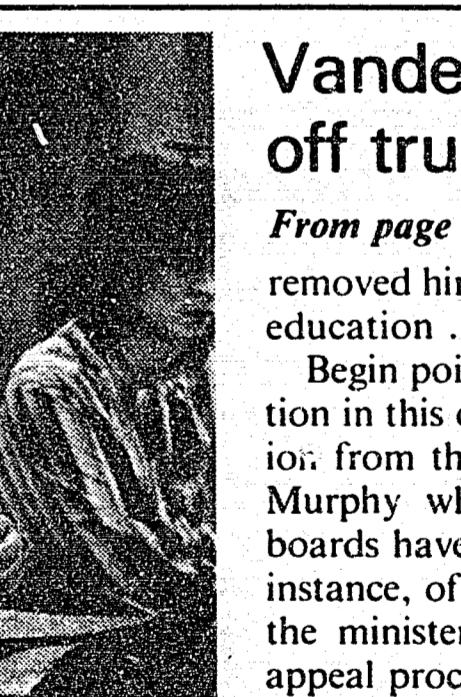
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• Salaries. This legislation rolled back



PAST President Maxine Boag (right) participates in small group discussion about ways of helping the unemployed.

## Vander Zalm laughs off trustee charges

From page 1

removed him from the office of minister of education . . .

Begun pointed out that the trustees position in this case was based on a legal opinion from their law firm of Campney and Murphy which made clear that school boards have the responsibility, in the first instance, of disciplining teachers and that the minister has important duties in the appeal process and must not become personally involved.

The legal opinion said in part: "Having in mind the Minister's responsibilities in the appeal process under the Act, we are of the opinion that he is obliged to remain neutral and impartial in that process. We are therefore of the opinion that he has exceeded his authority under the Act and acted in a manner which is inconsistent with his role as a neutral and impartial participant in the discipline process in making the statements he did to the Board Chairman . . ."

Vander Zalm laughed off the trustees' charges the following day, saying it "doesn't worry me nearly as much as tomorrow's lunch."

In a related step, the BCSTA also called on Bennett to establish a tripartite council, composed of representatives of the government, the BCSTA and the BCTF to resolve the education crisis.

## "How can we improve the product?"

From page 3

defensive about our educational system. But we should instead be ready to address it and say, "How can we improve on the product? How can we make certain that when we put all that money into that system all of those years, when we require our youngsters to participate all of those years that at the end we have a deserving product, a result which will permit our young people to get out there in the real world and contribute to the progress and the prosperity of the greatest place on earth, British Columbia?"

And we all have a share and if we ask questions or if we question just how effective our school system is then certainly we as a provincial government, as a ministry, must accept a part of the blame if things aren't as they ought to be. School boards must accept a

tomorrow and the day after we go to a restaurant in New Westminster where we have a three hour course in cooking or at least we go to the restaurant." I don't know just exactly what the course involves, but she now realizes too that as she nears the end of her term that somehow she missed out on many opportunities. That because those easy options were given her, she failed to pick up on that which is required to assure her a more positive future once she leaves Grade 12.

Are we being fair to those children? Do we really expect to leave the choice to them when we say, "You can have physics, or cooking or gourmet," or when we permit them the options that really do not add to that basic knowledge required to the knowledge which will not only contribute to that which is required of them in

## "Students will have to take specialized science and math"



part of that blame, teachers will need to accept a part of that blame and we as parents of the children in the system, who've been very busy; involved with all the things we're doing and perhaps not always responding or questioning or following up on the things we should, we too have a share of the blame.

I have a little niece who visits me regularly and sees one of those students who went through from Grade one to 10, took all the courses that are required in the program, all of those courses which gave her that basic education, that basic program that allowed her to build a knowledge base and develop certain skills. And then when she came to Grade 11 she could take English, was required to take English 11 and Socials 11 and Phys. Ed, but for the rest if she didn't want to pursue an academic course everything else was optional. And then when she came to Grade 12 she was required to take English 12 but for the other six or seven courses she did not unlike my kids did, unfortunately, and as so many youngsters do when they're given those wide options she chose from interior design and cooking and gourmet and sewing and life science sports and textiles and many of those elected that are available in the system now. And Lisa comes to me and she says, "Uncle Wim (as I'm called in Dutch), I'm off skiing

later life, whatever their vocation, but to that which will teach them to learn? I think there is much that can be done in that area and certainly my ministry is working on a new curriculum and we'll do so, we'll do so in consultation with the school boards that are in full consultation with the teachers. But what we will seek is that students specialize and it can be science or music or industrial arts or business, but if they do then certainly the courses they're provided with at school ought to be related to their specialty. And if someone chooses to take a trades course, then instead of the physics, perhaps we provide them with a course in trades math, but not no math. And if they want to take a business course, then perhaps instead of algebra, we can give them a course in business math but not no math. They'll be required to take science and math courses which are relevant to their specialization. We owe it to them to give them a more effective curriculum, a more effective school program that will benefit them in future years.

And it's our duty as well as the provincial ministry: we owe it to the young people that we re-introduce a means of provincial testing. It must be fair, it need not be the whole measure but certainly we want to make certain that those in Atlin, those in Cassiar, those in

Cranbrook or those in Victoria or the lower mainland all have an equal opportunity. And if we find a district, a school or a class or a youngster failing that badly time after time, let's not ignore it, let's get at it and let's try to really zero in on the skills and the abilities of our young people. And let's look for excellence and not attempt to pull everything down to an average for fear it might offend someone.

I spent the day before yesterday in a constituency office and it's tough to be the MLA in a constituency as large as Surrey and to be the minister of education at the same time. There are all sorts of problems brought up to the constituency office, but interestingly enough last Monday the largest single number of complaints came from parents and people involved in the educational process about the lack of discipline as it exists in the school system. One man sat in my office, he had some difficulty communicating because he had arrived from Greece not too many months ago, but he felt terribly offended because his youngster came home, had witnessed another youngster punch a teacher in the nose and when he followed through on the complaint he really couldn't get anywhere with the school or the principal or with the board because they really didn't want to become too involved because they feared the reaction from the parents.

I wonder really as I look back at my years in school — and I'm not suggesting for a moment we return to the strap — but I recall certainly back then the strap would have been out there and as I remember it when I received the strap once, good and hard, back in Grade eight on a Thursday afternoon at 3:15 p.m., a sunny afternoon in May, the third desk from the back and the principal was a stern guy, it certainly had an effect on me and it left a lasting impression. And a janitor came to me among all of those others on Monday and he said, "You know Mr. Minister, I'm only the janitor," but he says, "I take great pride in that school and I do a real job cleaning up and I take considerable pleasure in going there and maintaining that school as I know it has to be maintained," but he says, "I'm only 48 years of age and I'm about to give up." He said, "I don't know how much longer I can take it. Right in front of my eyes a kid kicks in a window and there's nothing I can do and there's little ever done and I know that there are kids writing on the walls immediately after I've finished with the mop and there's no way I can grab the kids or take them up to the principal's office; it hasn't helped." He says, "Isn't there something we could do?" and I said, "You know Jim, maybe do you think perhaps if we should somehow encourage those schools by whatever means to make sure that if a youngster in our schools defaces or damages school property, that for the next week he picks up every little piece of paper and cigarette butt for a week a block every way of the school." I says, "What do you think that would do?" He says, "That would be terrific, can you do it?" I says, "Let's give it a try." But there's a great deal we can do, we certainly can bring a measure of discipline that not only the schools but we as parents have failed to assure within the system as it ought to be. There's a lot we can do.

## "Vander Zalm abuses his power"

February 17, 1983

The Honourable William R. Bennett,  
Premier of British Columbia,  
Parliament Buildings,  
Victoria, B.C.

Dear Mr. Bennett:

On behalf of the 30,000 public school teachers of this province, I call upon you to remove Mr. Vander Zalm from office as minister of education and for you to appoint in his place someone from your caucus who will treat that position with the dignity and care that it deserves.

Mr. Vander Zalm abuses his power by attacking individual teachers, shows contempt for the legal processes he has responsibility for carrying out, announces arbitrary and destructive changes to the school system as dictates which cannot be changed regardless of the damage to students, and frequently uses his access to the media to make false statements about the public school system and teachers.

Mr. Vander Zalm in his brief tenure in office has alienated almost every teacher in British Columbia, has dragged the profession of teaching into the gutter of his own political ambition, and is totally undermining the confidence of parents and the general public in our system of education.

His latest outbursts are not only intolerable but are massively ironic.

To state, as the minister did in Victoria on February 16, that the education system is preoccupied with activities like skiing and gourmet cooking rather than with basic courses is a complete falsehood and panders to those who are already misinformed and whose prejudices are thus reinforced.

The irony is that Social Credit governments have ruled this provincial education system for 27 of the last 30 years. Your government, Mr. Bennett, has been in office continuously since 1975. The person you appointed minister of education in 1975, Dr. Patrick McGeer, is on record as claiming that the province's education system needed attention. He is also on record as claiming shortly before he left that office that, as a result of actions that he initiated, the system of education had been turned around. His successor, Mr. Brian Smith, at the conclusion of an exhaustive tour of the province and direct contact with

thousands of students, teachers and parents, stated in part: "Although it is fashionable to criticize teaching these days and decry standards I can say that I was fortunate to witness excellent quality teaching around the province."

For what other ends other than personal political ambition or perhaps to be "fashionable" can Mr. Vander Zalm make the statements that he does?

On the subject of education finance your minister's view is even more bizarre. He calls in the BCTF to negotiate a provincial salary freeze when he is well aware that, under the acts that he is supposed to administer, salaries are negotiated by school boards and local associations of teachers. Not only are those negotiations subject to compulsory arbitration but in addition the results are now subject to your Compensation Stabilization Program.

The salaries that will result have already been reduced by 2½ per cent as a consequence of Bill 89. To argue now that the net provincial average teachers' salary increase of 1½ per cent will result in the loss of thousands of teacher jobs is a monstrous and false allegation.

Mr. Vander Zalm's "offer" — even if it were possible for the BCTF to negotiate provincially — is no offer because he specifically promises to protect only the jobs of permanent employees. Hundreds of teachers who are on temporary appointments will not be re-hired for the coming school year. Through the normal attrition that takes place in the summer, hundreds of other teachers will leave the system and will not be replaced. That is what will affect school programs and the delivery of services to students, and that is the responsibility of your government, not of teachers.

Mr. Vander Zalm knows these facts yet chooses to bait the teaching profession and make them the scapegoats in the eyes of the public.

Mr. Vander Zalm's onslaught on the public school system and its teachers would be unwarranted and unacceptable from any member of the legislature. Coming from the minister of the Executive Council responsible for education they are unconscionable. We call on you to remove him from office with all possible speed.

Yours truly  
L. Kuehn,  
President.