

Special needs pupils denied services

Mavis Lowry
Bargaining Division

Despite ministry of education claims that special education programs are being "protected," a BCTF survey has discovered that they are suffering badly from budget cutbacks.

The survey, conducted over eight months, found that in 23 responding districts more than 1,000 pupils assessed by the districts as needing special program assistance had been cut from the list by the ministry. This has forced the districts to provide for these pupils with-

out the required funding or to let them struggle along as best they can in regular classrooms — or drop out.

When the new fiscal framework financing system was introduced in 1983, ministry documents claimed that resource priorities had been shifted so that

"the system places a higher priority now on meeting special needs of pupils than it did in former years." A few months earlier, legislation (Bill 89) amending the School Act stated: "A board shall not reduce services under a special educa-

See "My number" page 3

BCTF Newsletter

VOLUME 25 NUMBER 4

BROADWAY PRINTERS LTD.

DECEMBER 3, 1985

Changes considered

Executive calls for complete review of BCTF Newsletter

The Executive Committee has authorized a comprehensive study of the *BCTF Newsletter* with a view to making editorial changes.

At its November meeting, the executive called on the BCTF Newsletter Editorial Advisory Board, augmented by two executive committee members, to study the newsletter budget, function, content, production, timelines, style, layout, circulation and distribution, and report back at its earliest convenience.

The executive named First Vice-President Elsie McMurphy and Member-at-Large Moira MacKenzie to work with the editorial board, comprised of chairperson, Jon Bartlett (Vancouver), Margot Chitrenky (Coquitlam), Lynne Hampson (Coquitlam), David Manning (Howe Sound) and Gini Shaw (Burnaby).

The editor would appreciate receiving any comments, critical or otherwise, from members on newsletter function, content, style and layout, and/or suggestions for change or improvement to forward to the study group.



Harold Gopaul, Port Moody Senior Secondary School, has been named Canada's outstanding biology teacher for 1985 by the (U.S.) National Association of Biology Teachers. See story page 3. Ric Ernst photo.

Appeal court rules:

Gov't broke the law

In the wake of an appeal court ruling that the provincial government had used an illegal threat to depress recent teacher contract settlements, BCTF President Pat Clarke has called on the government to recognize its obligation to treat teachers fairly in bargaining.

Sustaining a BCTF challenge, the B.C. Court of Appeal ruled on November 21 that a directive issued last spring by Finance Minister Hugh Curtis was "invalid as not being authorized by law" as it dealt with matters over which the School Act retained specific authority. Curtis had issued a directive warning that he would fine any school board that granted a wage increase to teachers if the board did not employ a "base level" of teaching staff.

Arguing that it effectively meant a wage freeze for teachers, the BCTF challenged the Curtis directive in the Supreme Court of B.C. last May and lost, but has now won on appeal. Accepting the federation's position, Mr. Justice An-

derson concluded that if the government wanted to "abrogate or impair the collective bargaining and arbitration process established by the School Act" it would have to do so by specific legislation.

Clarke told a news conference he expects many local teacher associations will be approaching their school boards to renegotiate their contracts where the directive had produced unfair settlements.

"This may have the effect of creating further chaos in a system that has seen more than its share of turmoil," Clarke said. "But that's the government's fault. The fact is that the government used an illegal threat to depress settlements in last spring's bargaining."

He also charged that the directive was responsible for the disruption this fall in some districts where school boards or arbitrators took away teachers' salary increments because of the threat of penalties under the Curtis directive.

"None of this would have been necessary if the government had acted le-

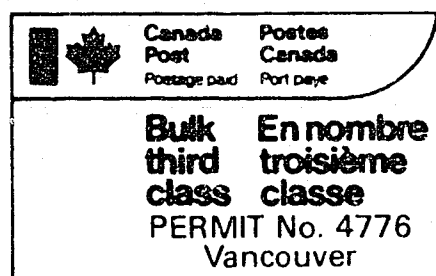
gally," Clarke said. "We said at the time that the directive was wrong. We said it would further erode school board autonomy — as it did — and that it was further evidence that the government was singling out teachers for special punitive treatment. We're happy that the appeal court has upheld our position."

Clarke went on to point out that about one-third of the districts already had fewer teachers than the directive said they should have, so that these districts were "in violation" of the edict at the time it was issued even if teachers received only increments.

He also welcomed the court's strong endorsement of the principle of local autonomy in school affairs. In his reasons for judgment, Mr. Justice Anderson said that the School Act must prevail over the directive because the act:

- gives residents the right to have the quality of education and edu-

See "Clarke" page 2



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

Anger and determination pay off

Teachers in British Columbia today are angry, frustrated, disillusioned — but determined.

This is the mood that has struck me in visits to dozens of locals this fall: that teachers are angry with the adverse conditions under which they work, but determined to continue to fight for a better deal.

But what is more significant, our anger and determination have begun to coalesce to bring us some of the most positive developments in recent years.

Perhaps the most notable expression of this was the recent struggle waged by a dozen local associations to obtain increment payments for junior teachers. It was a fight that should not have had to occur, but teachers had no other option. The telling point is that several thousand teachers took job actions this autumn and accomplished their objective — to get increments paid. The lesson is clear that job actions can work not only to accomplish specific objectives but also to send employers a message, that teachers do have a point beyond which they will not be pushed. Considering what may be awaiting us in bargaining for our next contract, that is a significant message. I believe, because of the actions of

the "no-increment locals," we are in a stronger bargaining position than we have been in for some time.

A second impressive demonstration of anger and determination was evident in the results of the November 16 elections for school trustees. Teachers have worked hard over the past year to make quality education and education funding an issue, joining with other employee groups and with parents to encourage the election of trustees who will stand up for children's rights and oppose the government's destructive education policies. The result was that about half of the boards in the province have been improved by the election of "pro-education" trustees who will be prepared to defend quality public education. I believe there has never been such a significant shift in the political make-up of school boards. The provincial government has certainly been served notice by these results that its educational policies are not only educationally unsound but politically unwise.

Finally, our determination and anger have paid off in one other important respect. For a long time we have been attempting to ameliorate the effects of government actions in education by taking the government to court on a wide

variety of issues. Now, as of November 21, we have succeeded in demonstrating that even the government of B.C., no matter how hard it tries to change all of the rules by way of edicts and directives, is not above the law. We have received notice of a successful court appeal of the Curtis directive which torpedoed our salary negotiations last spring. The effect of the Curtis action was to illegally remove \$20 million of compensation from teachers by forcing going rate 3 per cent settlements to become "Curtis 1 per cent" or less. That this directive has now been declared illegal must be a bitter irony for a government that was so self-righteously heavy-handed with such "law breakers" as the Vancouver and Cowichan school boards. This court decision also strengthens our bargaining position for we can justifiably demand compensation for this illegality which has been perpetrated against us.

All in all, it has been an interesting and rewarding season viewed from the perspective of these events. The simple message is: anger and frustration transformed to dedication and determination can be our greatest assets.

Pat Clarke
BCTF President

Agreements elude four locals

George North
Director, Bargaining Division

Only four local associations were without agreements or agreements-in-committee when the Curtis directive was ruled illegal by the B.C. Court of Appeal.

Those locals without agreements at press time include Burnaby, Revelstoke, Chilliwack and Agassiz-Harrison. The latter depends on the Chilliwack settlement, which in turn awaits word from an arbitration board that sat on November 2 to re-arbitrate its original 2.65 per cent six-month award as requested by CSP Commissioner Ed Peck. In addition, the board is claiming inability to pay despite a \$124,000 operating surplus.

Newsletter deadline for EC candidates' statements shortened

Prospective candidates for executive committee positions are advised that they will have less time than usual this year in which to prepare and submit their campaign statements for publication in the *BCTF Newsletter*. Candidates' statements, biographical sketches and photographs will be published in the February 25, 1986 issue and the deadline for submission of this material will be February 13.

Members get discount on Crawford Kilian's new book, *School Wars*

Crawford Kilian's new book, *School Wars: The Assault on B.C. Education* (New Star Books), supplies "an arsenal of facts on government policies in every facet of the education system, including public and private schools, community colleges, adult education, career institutes and universities." Kilian provides a brief historical overview of education in B.C. and highlights the conflicts of the 80s through to the firing of the Vancouver School Board in May 1985. Members may obtain *School Wars* through BCTF Lesson Aids at a discount price of \$3.50 (plus \$.75 handling and mailing).

PWA boycott urged

Employees of Pacific Western Airlines represented by three unions are on strike. The strike resulted when PWA refused to move from its position of demanding significant concessions from employees covering about 200 items affecting economic welfare, benefits and working conditions. The company is continuing to fly its aircraft and has employed inadequately trained, non-union flight attendants and ground personnel in an attempt to break the strike and force the concessions on their employees. All BCTF members engaged in carrying out BCTF business should ensure that they not use PWA while the strike is in progress. Alternate arrangements are possible and should be used.

Ken Novakowski
Coordinator, labor affairs

BCTF Newsletter
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CLIVE COCKING Editor

The *BCTF Newsletter* is published by the B.C. Teachers' Federation pursuant to policy statement 36.26 in the *Members' Guide to the BCTF*. The Newsletter Editorial Advisory Board, which reports to the Executive Committee, serves in an advisory capacity, assisting the editor in interpreting and implementing newsletter policy.

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 UTFE ISSN 0709-9800

2/DECEMBER 3, 1985

BCTF to consider taking lead in forming commission

Frustrated with delays in developing consensus among groups concerned with education, the BCTF is considering taking the lead in launching a public commission on education.

This is one of the options to be considered by the Executive Committee at its December 6-7 meeting.

President Pat Clarke pointed out that the federation had been trying for a year to build a coalition that would undertake a commission on education but has so far been unsuccessful "primarily because we haven't been able to get the cooperation of enough parties and some of the parties involved have themselves been causing significant delays in getting on with the commission."

The BCTF has been pressing members of the attempted coalition, the Education Review Group, for action to get a commission underway in the new year.

The federation's full-time table officers will discuss the issue with BCSTA representatives on Wednesday, December 4, a meeting which may produce another option for the BCTF to consider.

USSR education union reps hosted by BCTF

The BCTF hosted two representatives of the Educational and Scientific Workers' Union of the USSR from November 16-19. This was the return portion of an exchange arranged through the Canadian Teachers' Federation. Last year former BCTF president Al Blakey and two other representatives of Canadian teachers' organizations toured Russia.

The delegation was headed by Maria Kozlova, Secretary of the Central Committee. She was accompanied by Vladimir Nossor, Central Committee International Officer, and translator Sergei Tsivunin. Stirling McDowell, Secretary General of the Canadian Teachers' Federation travelled with the group.

Weekend activities included dinner and a ballet performance at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre with First Vice-president Elsie McMurphy on Saturday, and a tour of Vancouver points of interest on Sunday with BCTF Executive Director, Bob Buzzza. Activities on Sunday included a private tour of the Museum of Anthropology, a visit to the Slavic section of UBC's Sedgewick Library, and dinner in the evening in a private home.

On Monday, a tour of a Vancouver high school was arranged through Stuart Corsan of the Vancouver School Board, and was followed by lunch at the UBC Faculty Club hosted by Dr. Douglas McKie, UBC acting dean of education and senior members of the faculty of education. In the afternoon the group met with BCTF President Pat Clarke and ended their visit with dinner with members of the Executive Committee, Al Blakey, and Julia Goulden, chairperson of the William R. Long Memorial International Solidarity Fund Committee, and Hannah Polowy, president of the Canada-USSR Society.

New parking regulations to be enforced at BCTF

New parking regulations are in effect at the BCTF building.

The August Executive Committee meeting passed the following motion: "That effective September 1985, staff and members visiting the BCTF be issued parking lot stickers or dashboard passes to identify their car and that a towing company be contracted to tow cars in violation of arrangements, at the request of authorized BCTF personnel."

Members and visitors using the parking lot can pick up a dashboard pass from Reception. Passes are required from Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Award-winning biology teacher says:

Outdated text hampers good teaching

The recent recognition of "jumping genes" — material which causes unexplained evolutionary leaps — has got the world's scientific community jumping with excitement.

Jumping as high as anyone is Harold Gopaul, a Port Moody Senior Secondary School biology teacher, who last month was named by the (U.S.) National Association of Biology Teachers as Canada's outstanding biology teacher for 1985.

Gopaul finds that to be able to discuss in class such an important, current discovery — that evolution is not always smoothly gradual but subject to sudden leaps provoked by the mysterious transfer of genetic material — is what makes biology exciting to his students and to himself as a teacher.

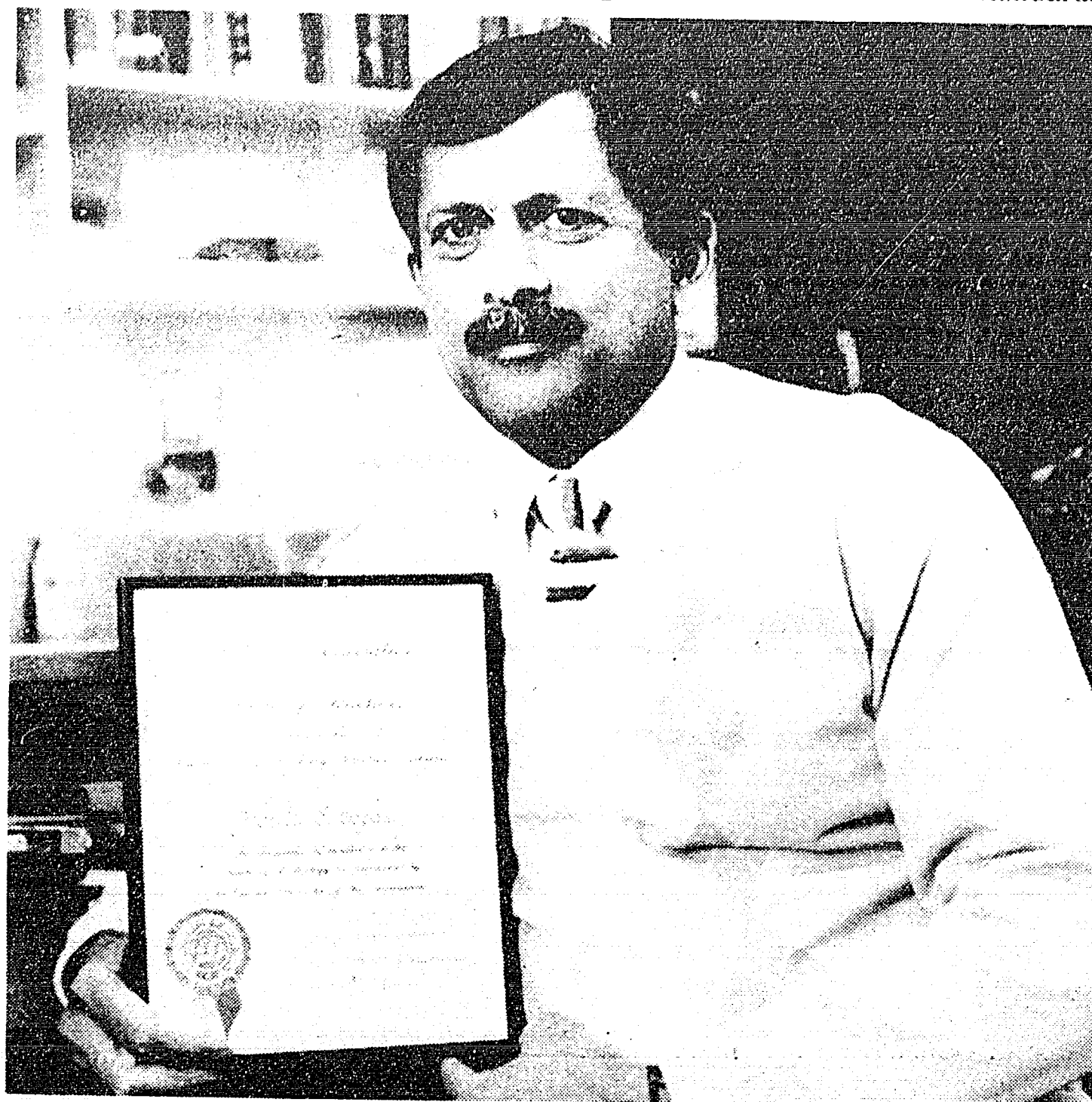
But his frustration is that the prescribed textbook is of no help: it's 14 years out-of-date. Gopaul hopes that the new textbook (or textbooks), supposed to be available next year, will deal with this new development in genetics, and many other recent advances — and that the Ministry of Education will not take another 14 years for the next text revision.

"We have to teach the biology of the Eighties, not the biology of the Seventies," he says. "Curriculum revision should be a continuing exercise."

Harold Gopaul, who was born in Trinidad, graduated from UBC with a bachelor's degree in science in agriculture (animal science) and became interested in teaching through his wife, who was then in teacher training. After completing the one-year training program at UBC in 1963, he taught at Coquitlam's Como Lake Secondary School and Centennial Secondary School, before doing a three-year stint with CIDA teaching teachers in the Cameroons, west Africa. Since 1973 he has taught at Port Moody. Active in presenting workshops through his PSA, Gopaul has co-authored a secondary biology text, with teachers' manual,

Biology of Ourselves: A Study of Human Biology, which is prescribed for Alberta schools and used throughout the country.

He said he was pleased with the award, which he received at the NABT convention in Orlando, Florida, but noted there were many other teachers also deserving of recognition. "I was pretty elated to get the award," he said. "It feels good, because I think that teachers should be recognized and this is something we don't do often enough."



Port Moody teacher Harold Gopaul, showing his (U.S.) National Association of Biology teachers' citation for outstanding teaching, emphasizes the need to teach "the biology of the 80s, not the 70s."

Gopaul's colleagues and students were equally pleased, according to Port Moody Senior Secondary School Principal Ron McPherson.

"Harold is well-deserving of the award," McPherson said. "He has given good service to the school and to the district: both the students and the staff are proud of him."

McPherson praised Gopaul's effectiveness as a teacher, noting he has an open and friendly style which encourages students to work to his standards.

"He gets the best out of his students through his smile and his general good humour."

The outdated textbook is not Harold Gopaul's only frustration: there is also the restrictive effect of the provincial examinations. While there is still some room for flexibility at the Grade 11 level (he teaches earth science 11 and biology 11 and 12), he finds there is very little at the Grade 12 level due to the need to prepare students for the exams. "There is too much to cover in too little time," he says.

What he finds sadly lacking in the senior year is the time to have as much discussion, field trips and lab work as he feels is needed. "We're not able to stimulate students' creativity as much as we would like to," Gopaul said.

But despite the constraints, he does what he can — even to the extent of playing bus driver on field trips. Recently, he took his class to the Vancouver Aquarium in the school's own bus saving students a \$2 bus fee, since under restraint the school has no budget to pay a private bus line.

"I object to students having to pay for field trips," Gopaul said. "So I'm the bus driver: we have a bus and I have my Class 4 licence and that's why we don't have to charge for the bus — but they had to pay to get in the aquarium."

Still, Gopaul said he enjoys teaching and believes teachers have reason to be proud of their work, but admits current conditions are not conducive to good morale. "We have excellent teachers in biology in this province," he said. "But if we don't watch out, we're going to end up with a bunch of mediocre teachers because the rest will be lured away elsewhere."

This is the second year in a row that a B.C. teacher has been honoured by the National Association of Biology Teachers. Last year, Terry Quelch, of North Vancouver's Argyle Secondary School, was cited for outstanding teaching.

"My number was scratched out and theirs put in"

From page 1

tion program established under the regulations without the consent of the minister."

On the one hand, then, the government has put out a consistent public message that special education and special needs of pupils must be given priority, that programs must be provided, continued, and protected. But, on the other hand, the ministry is refusing to grant the funding required by school districts to do the job.

In the survey, special education coordinators were asked to indicate, first, how many students in the district had been identified as needing the assistance of a special program, and secondly, how many of these pupils were actually accepted by the ministry for approved funding purposes. The responses indicate that it is a common practice for the ministry to simply cut numbers from the districts' lists. As one coordinator said: "My number was scratched out and their lower number was put in."

In some districts as many as one quarter of the identified special needs students in the district were cut by the ministry and funding for needed programs for those pupils not provided. In many cases, districts are providing the programs anyway. It is not good publicity for a school district to have special needs children not getting the special help they need, especially with all the provincial government comments about how this area is a priority and that the funds are being provided. Therefore, some dis-

tricts are simply "subsidizing" their special needs programs by using funds that were designated for regular classes or by creating large classes of regular students.

For example, one large metro school district identified 1,752 special needs pupils. The ministry declared that district to have only 1,294 special needs pupils, simply cutting 458 pupils from the local list without any reference to individuals at all. These cuts included three pupils identified as autistic, 130 severe learning disabled, 48 educable mentally handicapped, 131 severe behavior, 10 re-hab, 105 ESL and others. This district, however, declares it is providing the necessary special programs for all the pupils identified, even though funding was not provided for a quarter of those students. The results in the district are predictable and have been proven in the BCTF Working and Learning Conditions Survey: class sizes have grown dramatically, and the district claims an inability to pay the teachers' arbitrated salary increase.

In districts that identify more special needs students than they had the previous year, or more than are currently in special needs programs, the standard ministry response is to fund only programs already in operation and to be highly suspicious of numbers over the previous year's level. That means that districts cannot get special program funding to operate a special program until it has been in operation for a year. And, even then, the district takes a chance in starting up a program for additional students that the funding may

not be approved the following year either, on the basis that "the number of pupils identified exceeds incidence levels found in the Guidelines." Districts claim to be in a catch 22 situation. You must provide the service before you can claim the funding but you cannot start the program until you get the funding.

One small district with under 3,000 pupils reported that funding to provide assistance for three visually impaired children would not be granted because the teacher did not have the required qualifications. Similar action is being threatened with regard to the visually handicapped program.

Another common situation faced by several districts is the phenomenon of increased numbers of children each year developing problems as a result of the tough economic environment they live in and the increased inflexibility they face in the school system. A special coordinator from a small south coast district stated: "As coordinator of special education, all referrals for special class placement are forwarded through my office. This year there has been a very noticeable increase in referrals for special class placement of students who, prior to the increase in PTR, were served in the regular class. These students are the 'slow learners' and mildly learning disabled who can cope in a regular class if teachers have the time to modify/individualize curriculum."

At least 39 schools added a comment to their fall BCTF Working and Learning Conditions Survey forms stating that the

learning assistance program had either been eliminated, reduced, or the learning assistance teacher was being used as a substitute to cover when other teachers were ill.

The sad part about this whole special education scandal is that school districts are succumbing to the system they find themselves in. A Fraser Valley supervisor states: "Our district underwent a ministry audit last spring. The district was told it could request funding for only those students who it knew would be receiving direct special instruction. For example, we identified about 100 students having some kind of hearing loss — at least 35 serious enough to require direct instruction, but the district only requested funding for 14 students this year, because that is the number that could receive direct service."

Is this what special education has come to? Before we identify children with special problems, we must find out from the ministry what the number is that we are allowed to identify? Are we creating more special education students simply because we no longer have time in our crowded classes and with less or no preparation time to deal with those students who may have difficulties learning? Are the fringe kids being pushed out into the streets? Are districts subsidizing special education programs by funding them out of regular program funds?

This initial BCTF special needs survey has certainly raised many issues that need immediate attention.

DECEMBER 3, 1985/3

Program against racism seeks PD associates

The Program Against Racism is inviting qualified candidates with backgrounds in multicultural and anti-racist education to apply for positions as volunteer Professional Development Associates. The PD Associates will design and facilitate workshops on topics ranging from "Developing a School-based Action Plan" to "Cross-Cultural Communications."

Training will take place Friday, February 29 to Sunday, March 2, 1986. Application deadline is **January 17, 1986**.

Applications may be made on curriculum vitae forms and sent to: June Williams, Professional Development Division, B.C. Teachers' Federation, 2235 Burrard Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6J 3H9.

Pension fund investments

As of September 30 the annual rate of return on the total pension fund was 11 per cent. After deducting for inflation, the fund had a real rate of return of 7 per cent.

The actual rate of return on September 30 on the securities purchased prior to January 1981 was 9.4 per cent, on securities purchased since that time was 12.4 per cent and on the inflation adjustment account was 10.3 per cent.

Science PSA honours top teachers

The B.C. Science Teachers' Association has honoured three of its members for exceptional contributions to science education.

Gordon Gore, Westsyde Secondary School, Kamloops, was honoured with the Distinguished Service Award for leadership outside the classroom in science education. A former editor of the *BCScTA Journal*, Gore has been active in sharing ideas with colleagues through articles, BCTF Lesson Aids materials and as co-author of textbooks. He has also played a leading role in the organization and growth of the annual Science Spectrum conference.

Frank Cloutier, Delta Secondary School, was recognized with the Exemplary Secondary Science Teacher Award. Noted among his colleagues for developing a large bank of test items and an annual school blood donor clinic, Cloutier enlivens his classes with his underwater photography and collections of live marine specimens. Also a past editor of the journal, he has contributed a biology unit to the science text, *Probe 10*.

Exemplary Junior Secondary Science Teacher Award went to Donna Deschner, University Hill Secondary School, Vancouver, who has developed many innovative teaching strategies. She is also

noted for her willingness to share ideas and has given many workshops as well as contributing to the production of science texts.

Dr. Jack Sample, executive director of the B.C. Secretariat on Science

Research and Development, presented the awards, in the form of plaques from the PSA and gift packages, at a BCScTA luncheon at the UBC Faculty Club during Science Spectrum '85 on November 2.



Honoured recently by the B.C. Science Teachers' Association were (left to right) Frank Cloutier (Delta), Exemplary Science Teacher; Donna Deschner (Vancouver), Exemplary Junior Secondary Science Teacher; and Gordon Gore (Kamloops), Distinguished Service Award.

Letters

Teachers' Viewpoint seeks open, constructive debate of issues

We welcome the opportunity to inform the membership about an active group within the BCTF — TEACHERS' VIEWPOINT.

TEACHERS' VIEWPOINT is an organization open to all BCTF members. It seeks to ensure that issues facing teachers are debated openly and constructively.

TEACHERS' VIEWPOINT has been in existence since 1977, publishing a regular newsletter and holding open meetings to discuss issues of concern to teachers within the BCTF. Our members have worked in local associations, at annual general meetings and rep assemblies, and on the BCTF executive to support and act on progressive policies.

TEACHERS' VIEWPOINT supports the right of teachers to participate in educational decision making at the school, district and provincial levels.

We stand for continuing to build support for public education in B.C. through the strengthening of networks including parents, community groups, education and other public sector employee groups.

The opportunity to negotiate professional working conditions and learning conditions for students should be afforded to teachers through full collective bargaining at the local level.

We continue to work for membership participation in, and control of, the BCTF, through staff rep training, grants for local president release time, and direct BCTF staff support for effective local association initiatives.

We oppose the loss of professional rights caused by such developments as a centralization of curriculum development, province wide testing of students, and loss of local professional development funds. We support such professional rights as a greater say in teacher education and professional development and greater control over certification and entry into the profession.

TEACHERS' VIEWPOINT will continue to work for equal status for men and women, for teachers and principals, for minority groups and for equality of opportunity for all students.

4/DECEMBER 3, 1985

TEACHERS' VIEWPOINT believes that teachers need, and deserve, a salary increase.

TEACHERS' VIEWPOINT membership fee is \$15 per year (waived for unemployed or substitute teachers). Fees, material for publication, or requests for further information should be directed to: TEACHERS' VIEWPOINT Steering Committee, 3506 W. 26th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C. V6S 1N6.

Kathleen MacRae
Steering Committee
TEACHERS' VIEWPOINT
Langley

The Pessimist's Lament

Dial the police and report:
The teachers' co-op's running short.
Taxes, taxes, everywhere . . .
Hidden, blatant — who can care!
UIC's gone out of sight
Layoffs, paybacks — left and right.
Things are fine, we're being told,
Election fever's taken hold.
Social Credit has been hit
With EXPO-mania and a bit
Of sounding incredibly wise,
As circles darken Bennett's eyes.
TV reveals another plan,
Others politicking all they can.
Furious comments hurtle past.
We wonder if it all can last.
Sit tight and clutch your empty purse,
My feelings are — it will get worse!
The word is out — oh, woe are we! —
Foreclosure's almost hit B.C.
The money's gone, we don't know where,
Bring the Kleenex — for pure despair!

— Joan Kurth
Dorothea Walker Elementary
Kelowna

Hard evidence needed to prove education decline

Although retired, I keep an interested eye on the charges and counter-charges over the effects of restraint on education. In a front-page article in the most recent *BCTF Newsletter*, President Pat Clarke is quoted as saying that "this survey has revealed to us that there is a continuing deterioration in B.C. schools." Well, I think that this is probably so. "But more important," he says, "are the indicators of declining (my word) quality." Now what "indicators of quality" are most

accessible to parents, officials and the public at large? They are letter grades and scholarships results. Is the ministry granting fewer Grade 12 scholarships? No. Are teachers granting fewer As and Bs than heretofore? No. Why not — if quality is declining? Because their classes wouldn't stand for it, nor would their principals, nor would the kids' parents.

So it follows that some pretty hard evidence needs to be gathered to prove that the quality of education is suffering.

If the weather is deteriorating, the barometer falls; if the economy is inflating, the purchasing power of my dollar declines. But if the quality of education is declining, the indicators which come at students and their parents with every report card prove that this isn't so, for the educational barometer remains steady.

This is an anomaly that president Clarke might give some attention to.

Alan Croll
Retired Teacher
West Vancouver

Member urges 1986 AGM delete abortion policies

It seems many teachers are unaware of two pro-abortion policies under the Status of Women section in our Members' Guide, namely 42.25 and more explicitly 42.29.

The BCTF has gone outside its jurisdiction as our union in speaking on behalf of its members' moral values on a highly controversial issue. The inclusion of these policies makes it very difficult for many teachers to continue the support of the BCTF we are required to give as a condition of our employment. Making policy on moral issues will alienate much of the BCTF membership and the community, undoubtedly lowering our status contrary to Goal #10 of the BCTF. Members who have strong convictions on either side of controversial issues have plenty of opportunity to present their views through more appropriate channels.

I urge all local associations resolve to have their executive place a motion on the floor of the 1986 AGM calling for the deletion of policies 42.25 and 42.29.

Daragh Truscott
Teacher
Campbell River

Workshop badly named, poverty is no "game"

I can hardly believe what I've just read in my November 7 *BCTF Newsletter*.

Mel Lehan, UTAC coordinator, can be commended for his attempt to share the plight of very unfortunate people in society, the poor.

Having grown up on welfare and hand-outs, I assure you that poverty is not a game — not by any stretch of anyone's vivid imagination.

Poverty is damnation, discrimination, inequality and ruination of lives. Strike the word "game" forever from the association with poverty.

Let's not imply that starving, suffering people are "enjoying" their unfortunate situations.

Even the "Plight of Poverty" would be better.

Joan Kurth
Dorothea Walker Elementary
Kelowna

Thanks, but no thanks for article byline

While my colleague George North naturally felt I should receive credit for the November 7 *BCTF Newsletter* article on Bill 35 (because it contained much material earlier prepared by me) I should inform readers that I did not write the article as it finally appeared.

I should also say that every local association would be well advised to ensure that proper seniority provisions are negotiated.

David Yorke
Staff lawyer
Bargaining division

BCTF Newsletter regrets inaccuracy in article

The *BCTF Newsletter* would like to apologize for publishing some misinformation about conditions in Dawson Creek, Fort Nelson and Golden in the article, "Trustees to feel sting of parent revolt" (October 9, 1985). The information was provided by parents and published by the *Newsletter* in good faith, believing it to be true, but it has since proved to be inaccurate. This incident highlights the need for parents to be given accurate information about the school districts in which they are concerned.