THE B.C. TEACHER

March-April 1982 Volume 61 Number 4

TEACHERS & TEACHING

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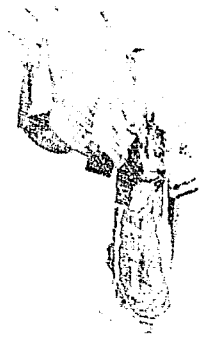

PHOTO CREDITS

Amnesty International — pp. 129, 130; Joshua Berson — pp. 125 (top and bottom), 136-140; Maggie Cooper — p. 158; Vancouver School Board Audio-Visual Services — front cover, pp. 145, 146.

COVER STORY

Our last issue featured several articles about students and studying. This issue features teachers and teaching. Our cover photo symbolizes the theme. The intimate, personal relationship that develops between a teacher and his or her students is the key to success.

Articles contained herein reflect the views of the authors and do not necessarily express official policy of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation.

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Manuscripts (no payment) are welcomed. Topics should interest a wide range of teacher readers. Manuscripts should be up to 2500 words long, preferably typed and double spaced. Writing style should be informal. Avoid footnotes and references.

Notice of change of address stating both old and new addresses should reach the editorial office at least one month before publication.

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From Our Readers

BARGAINING ISSUE GOOD

On behalf of the executive of the Coquitlam Teachers' Association, I would like to commend you on the November-December issue, devoted to the expanded scope of bargaining. It clearly demonstrates that, in fact, professional concerns are an integral part of "expanded scope."

D. Gregg, President,
Coquitlam Teachers' Association

ENCOURAGING RESPONSE

Just a note to say thank you for mentioning the *Directory of Government Tourist Offices* in the November-December issue. There have been many requests for the booklet and I really appreciate that you were able to use the item.

John E. Sullivan,
Chicago

AN APOLOGY

In our January-February 1982 obituaries we included the name of Donna M. Wilson, of the Arrow Lakes school district. Ms. Wilson is very much alive, and we apologize sincerely to her for the error.

Our obituary list is provided to us by the Superannuation Branch of the provincial government, and unfortunately the list supplied to us had included Ms. Wilson's name incorrectly.

In addition, the list showed Esther McCabe as having taught in Maple Ridge. Actually, Ms. McCabe taught in Langley. Again, we apologize to her family.

MANUSCRIPTS SOUGHT

The November-December issue of this magazine will be devoted to the theme of combatting racism and promoting multiculturalism. Manuscripts are welcomed, and must be submitted no later than the end of August. The Editorial Board will meet in September to select the articles to be included in the theme issue.

Manuscripts should be up to 2,000 words in length, should be written in an informal writing style, and should not be cluttered with quotations, footnotes or references.

Photographs for the issue are also welcome. All photos will be returned.

Unfortunately, the budget of the magazine does not permit us to pay for articles or photographs. We must rely on the good will of our contributors.

WE SHALL MISS THESE TEACHERS

In-Service	Last Taught In	Died
Myrtle Irene Aaston	Peace River, N.	January 11, 1981
Gordon Frew	Trail	May 23, 1981
Deborah Joyce Gillespie	Terrace	November 21, 1981
Vivienne Wilda Rowley	Vancouver	December 27, 1981

Retired	Last Taught In	Died
Sarah L. Burden	Vancouver	December 12, 1981
Wm. C. Campbell	Burnaby	January 8, 1982
Eugene F. Cameron	Vancouver	January 13, 1982
Agnes S. Duncan	Vancouver	October 31, 1981
Rhoda B. Foster	Courtenay	November 11, 1981
Eva F. Ireland	Salmon Arm	November 26, 1981
Orval Maxwell	Cowichan	January 12, 1982
Francis McKim	Abbotsford	December 29, 1981
Robert A. Muir	Vancouver	October 14, 1981
Edward T. Oliver	Vancouver	August 10, 1981
Maurice Prince	Vancouver	December 1, 1981
Joseph T. Ross	Victoria	January 25, 1982
John Rukin	Ladysmith	January 14, 1982
Barbara K. Sharp	Cowichan	December 14, 1981
Sydney White	Creston-Kaslo	November 29, 1981

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ITIP CLINICAL SUPERVISION July 26-30
ITIP STRATEGIES AND THE SOCIAL STUDIES July 6-16

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Lilburn Wesche
Director of Summer School

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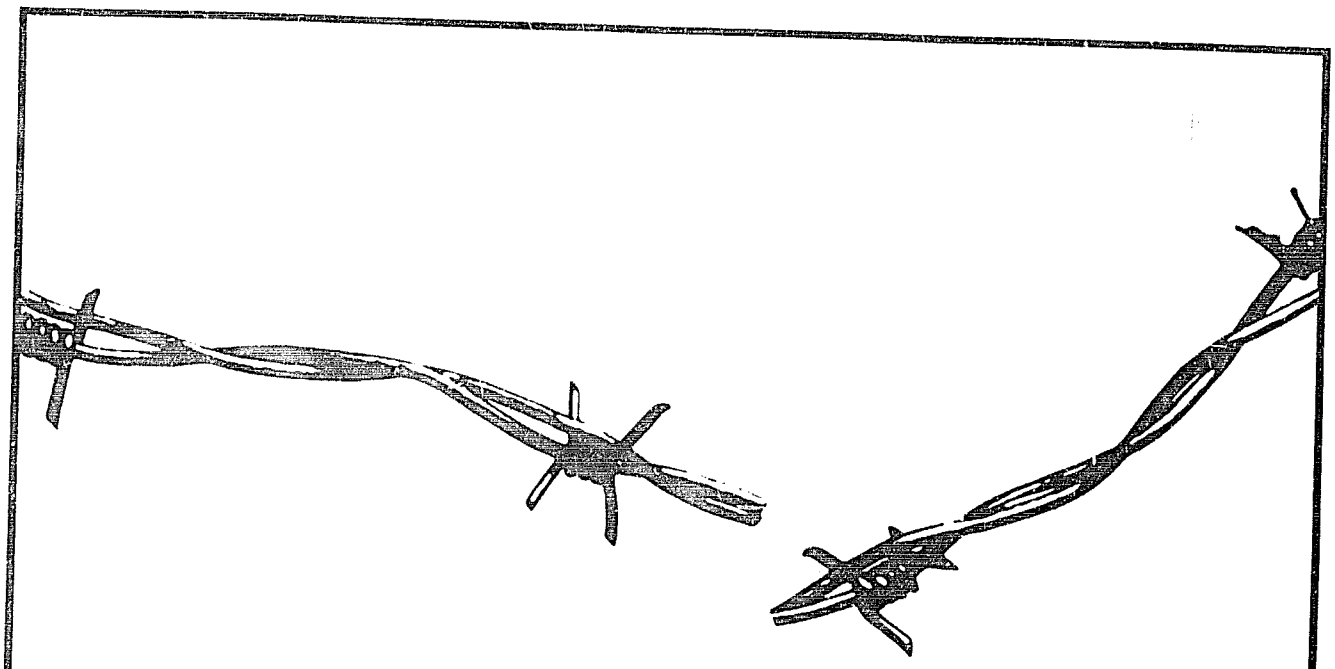


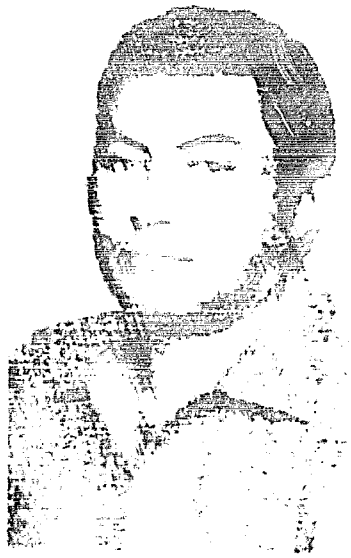
USING OUR FREEDOM TO DEFEND OTHERS

ALISON APPELBE

Amnesty International is a unique world-wide organization, independent of any government, political grouping, ideology, economic interest or religious creed. It has become the conscience of the world as a result of its efforts to protect and promote human rights and to free political prisoners.

Ana del Carmen Sanchez Vega, a teacher in El Salvador, was shot and killed with a younger brother by plainclothes officers who forced their way into her home.

Mart Niklus, an Estonian teacher of English, is in a Russian prison, serving a 10-year sentence for "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda." His crime? Signing an appeal to the UN calling for the independence of the Baltic republics.



Ricardo Alfaro Beltran, a secondary teacher in El Salvador, was killed in front of his wife and child and several students as he unlocked the door of his school.

Bahadin Ahmad Muhammad was a teacher at a technical school in the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. Born in 1938 or 1939, he had studied in England and had hopes of returning to the United Kingdom or the U.S. for a doctorate.

In March 1972 he married. A week later, while showing photographs of the wedding at the home of a sister, he went to answer a knock at the door. He has not been seen since.

In 1969 Muhammad was questioned by police about his relations with foreigners, particularly Americans, living in Aden. He was also reported to have been tortured.

Eighteen other people are said to have "disappeared" the same night. Since the PDRY became independent of Britain in 1967 hundreds of others have met the same fate.

* * *

Mart Niklus is an Estonian English teacher and ornithologist, born in 1934. In August 1979 he signed, with 45 others, an appeal to the Secretary-General of the United Nations calling for the independence of the Baltic Republics from the U.S.S.R.

In April 1980 he was arrested and charged with "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda" and sentenced to 10 years in prison and five years in internal exile. He had previously served seven years in prison on identical charges.

* * *

The following three teachers were all El Salvadoreans. They were among more than 300 teachers killed in El Salvador by uniformed or un-uniformed members of the country's security forces between 1979 and early 1981, when the last figures were available. All were members of the teachers' union, Asociacion Nacional de Educadores Salvadorenos "21 de Junio" — or ANDES.

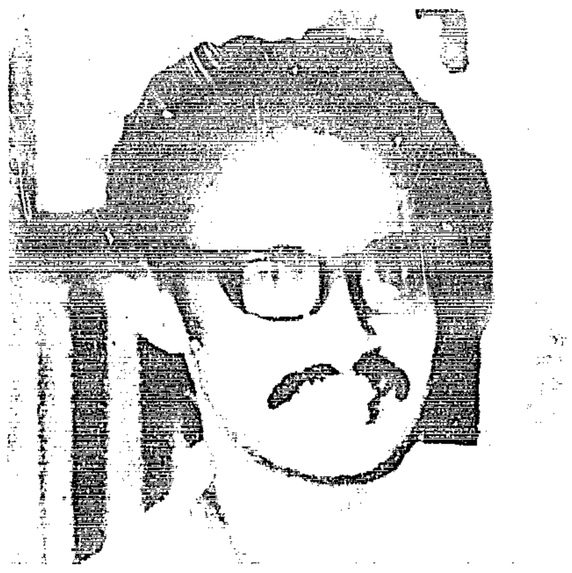
Ricardo ALFARO Beltran was a secondary school teacher, aged 35. He was killed by plainclothes officers on January 29, 1980 in Tejutepeque, Cabanas in front of his wife and child and several students as he unlocked the door of his school. He was a member of the ANDES executive committee for Cabanas.

Ana del Carmen SANCHEZ Vega, a 26-year-old teacher, was killed on May 13, 1980 by plainclothes officers who forced their way into her home in the city of Santa Ana and shot her and a younger brother.

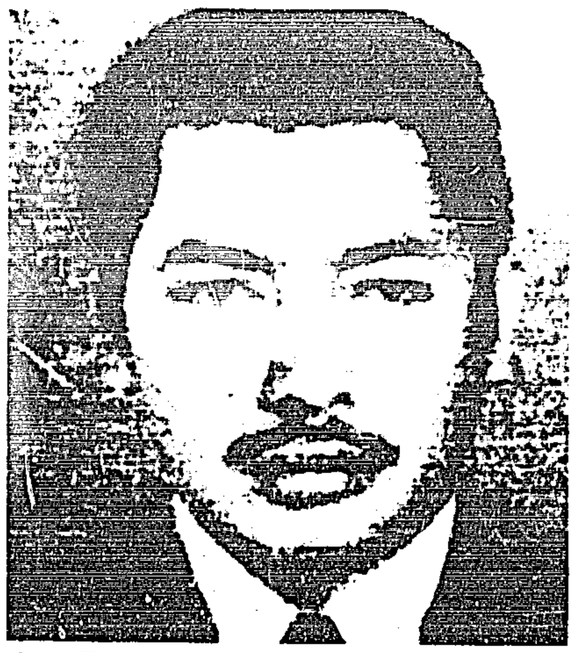
Jose Trinidad CANALES, a 30-year-old teacher, was killed by plainclothes officers at his home in San Salvador on March 3, 1980 in the presence of his wife and children.

These El Salvadorean teachers are listed on a document published in 1980 by Amnesty International (AI). On the list are names and descriptions of 69 other teachers killed that year. Many bodies showed signs of torture and decapitation.

The attack on teachers in El Salvador appears to be an attempt to destroy ANDES, a member of the Popular Revolutionary Block, which is in turn a member of the coalition of parties — the Democratic Revolutionary Front — in opposition to the ruling junta.



Bahadin Ahmad Muhammad, a teacher in the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, answered a knock at the door one week after his wedding. He has not been seen since.



Jose Trinidad Canales, another teacher in El Salvador, was killed at his home, in the presence of his wife and children.

Teachers throughout the world, like people of all other vocations, are victims of flagrant abuses of human rights — imprisoned, tortured or killed outright for their political, social or religious beliefs.

In Greece, George Anastasiades, a Jehovah's Witness, is serving a three-and-a-half year prison term for conscientious objection to military service. Aged 30, he is a teacher and is married with one child.

In South Africa, Nohle Mohapi, a 31-year-old mother of two and widow whose husband died in police custody, is serving a five-year "banning" order for her involvement in the Black Consciousness movement. She is forbidden to teach, travel outside the township of Kingwilliamstown, or be in the presence of more than two other people at the same time.

In Mali (Central Africa), Tieble Drame is one of five teachers being held in a remote desert location for participating in trade union activity.

The list goes on.

Of the above, all but the El Salvadoreans and Bahadin Ahmad Muhammad, who has been one of a number of "desparacidoes" featured in AI's recent campaign against disappearances and extra-judicial killings, have been adopted by the world-wide human rights organization as "Prisoners of Conscience."

These people are, according to AI's mandate, "men and women detained anywhere for their beliefs, color, sex, ethnic origin, language, or religion, provided they have not used or advocated violence."

CASES DOCUMENTED

Their cases have been carefully researched and documented by highly trained staff at AI's International Secretariat in London, England (information comes through a variety of sources: the international press, political and legal experts, letters sent or smuggled out by relatives or former prisoners, underground contacts), and details of their situations are made known to one or more of AI's 2,500 member groups around the world.

Group members — there are now about 250,000 in 134 countries — then write courteous and informed letters to political and prison authorities in the countries and locations where the prisoners are held requesting their release, quick and fair trial, medical attention or simple acknowledgement of detainment.

Since AI's founding in 1961, the organization has worked on behalf of about 20,000 Prisoners of Conscience (only a sampling of victims). Over half of these have been released, although it is not the policy of AI to claim credit for the decision of any government to release an individual.

Amnesty International came into being when British lawyer Peter Benenson — after reading a newspaper report about two students in Portugal who were arrested in a restaurant and sent to prison for seven years for the "crime" of raising their glasses in a toast to freedom — wrote his now famous article "The Forgotten Prisoner," published simultaneously in the London Observer and Le Monde.

He called on concerned individuals to give practical help to people throughout the world imprisoned for their social, political and religious beliefs, and the response was overwhelming.

"It is better to light a candle than curse the darkness," said Benenson, recalling the Chinese proverb. (AI's symbol is a lighted candle surrounded by barbed wire.) Within months the organization was established in several European countries.

AI's goal is to work for the promotion and protection of human rights. It seeks the observance of Articles 9 and 10 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (1948), which read:

"No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

"Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him."

AI is essentially a grassroots organization. Committed individuals work in groups of 5 to 50 on behalf of prisoners assigned by the international secretariat; on campaigns publicizing abuses in particular countries (recent country campaigns focussed on Guatemala and South Korea); on specific issues such as torture and the death penalty; and on fund-raising and promotion of human rights.

To maintain impartiality, AI is financed almost entirely by membership fees and fund-raising efforts by groups and individuals. All larger donations by individuals and organizations are strictly controlled by guidelines laid down by AI's governing body, the International Council. AI does

not receive money from any government.

Charges of ideological leanings are frequently levelled at AI — communist regimes label the organization anti-socialist; right-wing dictatorships call it communist. Impartiality is a fundamental maxim — and continuous goal — of AI. Western democracies are also frequently criticized.

Each "adoption" group (with a particular mandate for dealing with individual prisoners) works on behalf of at least two Prisoners of Conscience in countries other than its own. These countries are balanced geographically and politically to ensure impartiality. A Vancouver group, for example, is working on behalf of an elderly couple missing in Chile, and two men imprisoned in China and the U.S.S.R.

Members understand the importance of putting their own political persuasions aside and focussing their attention on the issue of fundamental and universal human rights.

Torture and "disappearances" have become of particular concern to AI in the past few years.

Over 15,000 people have disappeared in Argentina in the past six years, and probably twice that many in Guatemala. The estimates for Uganda for the period 1969 to 1970 range between 100,000 and half a million and in Kampuchea perhaps three-quarters of a million are disappeared or dead.

Chile, Brazil, the Philippines, East Timor, Ethiopia, Mexico, Syria, Bolivia, Zaire, Cyprus, Indonesia, Nicaragua, Peru, South Africa and Uruguay are some of the other countries where between 11,000 and 13,000 "disappearances" are being investigated.

In 1973 the organization launched a world-wide publicity campaign against torture and was instrumental in bringing about the 1975 UN Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

AI is also unconditionally opposed to the death penalty.

Another important facet of AI's work is called "Urgent Action" — an ongoing campaign on behalf of prisoners in immediate need of medical treatment, on a hunger strike, under sentence of death, at a critical stage in a trial process, victims of torture or "disappeared." An estimated 20,000 members throughout the world participate in this campaign, sending letters and telegrams on an individual's behalf over a period of a few days or weeks. Thousands of messages are sent out and in three out of 10 cases the victim experiences an improvement in his or her situation.

In Chile, teacher Radrigan Plaza, a member of a group publicizing disappearances in that country, was released after an urgent action campaign on his behalf. But Bolivian teacher Grover Vega Telles, also a target of urgent action, remains unaccounted for.

People involved in union activity are often the victims of human rights abuse. Eunice Harker, AI's Canadian Trade Union Co-ordinator, describes labor organization as "a large scale risk."

"Authorities pick on local level leaders or in some cases national leadership," she says.

The national office of Canada's English-speaking section in Ottawa has recently developed a "policy of co-operation" with the Canadian Teachers' Federation to publicize the plight of teachers as human rights victims. The CTF is preparing a brochure to inform its membership of its policy on human rights and present a number of specific cases for teachers' attention.

Human rights education is in the developmental process at AI's head office. A teachers' group is being formed and although there is a film available for use in schools entitled "Prisoners of Conscience," work on educational material is just beginning.

The Canadian English-speaking section of AI has about 5,000 members; the French-speaking section, 3,000. There are 30 adoption groups in Canada and 50 action groups dealing more generally with human rights and country and issue campaigns.

In B.C. there are four groups in the Vancouver area, and others in Kamloops, Victoria, Duncan, Nanaimo, Johnson's Landing, Naramata and Terrace. Several other groups are being formed.

In 1977 Amnesty International was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for its defence of human rights. In 1978 it won the UN Human Rights Award.

And in the last few years, with growing support in the international and national press and an increasing number of high profile spokesmen, AI has rapidly become more widely known and recognized.

But the task is great and the work force still relatively small.

Says Thomas Hammarberg, Secretary-General of AI: "We need commitment. We need more people who are prepared to work for the unconditional release of prisoners of conscience wherever they are held . . . we must be ready to send telegrams or write letters or stand in the rain outside embassies or do whatever has to be done to stop the next wave of tortures and executions.

"We must use our freedom in defence of theirs." ○

Alison Appelbe is a former teacher, a "sometimes" writer, and a member of Amnesty International.

Amnesty International Adoption Groups in B.C.

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P.O. Box 503, Stn. A
Vancouver, B.C. V6C 2N3

Group 25/Kamloops, B.C.
Pat Jarvis
P.O. Box 872
Kamloops, B.C. V2C 5M8

Group 27/Victoria, B.C.
Wendy Amos
898 Victoria Ave.
Victoria, B.C. V8S 4N3

Group 103/University of B.C.
Mandy Hill
Box 24, Student Union Bldg.
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Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1W5

Group 150/Kitsilano, B.C.
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Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1L4

Must we repeat American mistakes?

TOM HUTCHISON

Why do we always follow American precedents in education? What is happening now in teacher education in the U.S.A. should be anathema to us, but we may be next in line.

●Whatever happens in the U.S.A. tends to happen in Canada.

We have shared the same educational philosophers and proceeded, with a time lag, through similar enthusiasms, modes of school organization and teacher training. We read American learned journals, share the American research base, and, when we need a quick fix on a topic, conduct an ERIC search, an information retrieval system based entirely on U.S. sources.

Living next door to the U.S.A. is like sleeping with an elephant. It's not just a matter of accommodating oneself to the monster's movements; one must move smartly to avoid being crushed. There is danger in the uncritical application in Canada, or B.C. of American solutions to problems developed for the U.S.A. This is especially true in teacher education and certification.

Two issues of the *Phi Delta Kappan* (October 1980 and October 1981), explored teacher education in depth. Gene Lyon's article, *Why Teachers Can't Teach*, was reprinted in the 1980 issue.[1] Although based on Texas, it gives a vivid impression of how teacher preparation appears to an intelligent outsider, and chronicles horror stories on lax screening, illiteracy of teachers, lack of fundamental knowledge, grade inflation and the imperviousness of the education community to change.

The Lyons article won the prestigious National Magazine Award for 1980. Its catalyst was the widely publicized failure in 1978 of over half the first-year teachers in the Dallas Independent School District to pass the Wesman Personnel Classification Test.[2] This simple test of clerical skills and abilities involves such things as analogies, putting missing words in sentences and simple arithmetic. One might ask what this has to do with teaching; nevertheless, the Dallas experience is taken as evidence of an unacceptable level of illiteracy and innumeracy in teachers.

Such articles fall on fertile ground among the public and legislators. Distrust of the ability of the education establishment to provide competent and literate teachers has led to one of the most striking characteristics of current American education. This is the willingness of state legislatures to pass laws dealing with pupil and teacher competence, examinations to ascertain competence, procedures to assess competence for certification and compulsory upgrading or in-service to maintain certification.[3]

Already the majority of states mandate in-service education for continued certification.[4] Mandated in-service education will probably increase, since a recent Supreme Court upheld the decision of an Oklahoma board to fire a tenured teacher who refused to participate in in-service activities.

The shape of things to come may be exemplified by Oklahoma[5] and South Carolina.[6] In these states comprehensive legislation deals with entry exams to teaching, exit exams from college, processes for dealing with interim certification periods and final certification that can by maintained only through prescribed in-service programs.

In South Carolina it could take 9-10 years from college entry to "continuing contract," a contract subject to continued re-certification provisions. Georgia already has a system in which teachers are screened, tested on their subject area knowledge before initial certification, and given three years to demonstrate specific classroom competencies through an elaborate legislated assessment system. Nor are these schemes confined to "sunbelt" states; Wisconsin after 1983 will move to a renewable five-year certificate based on required in-service programs.

Essentially state legislatures are moving to permit universities to present candidates for initial certification; the state then sets up the legal mechanisms to assess competence and determine certification. This is a proposition that will find favor with many. It is also worth noting that the trend is toward longer practica and forms of internship, a trend favored in B.C. by all the major stakeholders in education.

However, the implication is that the faculties are not trusted to train and the boards are not trusted to apply sufficient rigor in granting tenure. The influence and control of state authorities are moving into both areas.

Before saying, "well done," and "it's about time," one should look at some of the problems and peculiarities of the American context. In the U.S.A., as here, a long-standing aspiration was the educated teacher. The degreed teacher was to be guarantor of professional teaching. Since possession of a degree in education is no longer seen in the U.S.A. as a guarantee of competence or literacy, what happened?

MANY INSTITUTIONS

One problem is the proliferation of teacher training institutions. There are some 1400 in the U.S.A., 40 per cent of them small private colleges.[7] To accredit even those institutions that are accessible to the process is an immense effort, and there is continued, somewhat acrimonious debate, on the validity of the NCATE guidelines on accreditation.[8]

Another problem is resources and funding. Education is notoriously underfunded. A 1977-78 U.S. study showed that it cost $927 per year to instruct a teacher education candidate; the average for a K-12 student was $1400![9] A 1973 study showed student/faculty ratios in professional education schools to be 37:1, and this in faculties that should emphasize clinical study. In Florida last year more training time was required of a professional barber than of a secondary school teacher.[10]

Related problems are whether low salary levels attract and retain the best people and whether a numbers-driven formula for faculty financing provides sufficient incentive to move toward quality programs.

It could be argued that the professional education of teachers in the universities has not been given a chance. This is underscored by the enormous in-service education operation in the U.S.A. in which 250,000 persons are involved in delivering courses.[11] The in-service model is primarily a deficiency model, rather than developmental, and the state legislation referred to earlier is discouraging in that it assumes that teachers will continue to have to be forced to re-educate throughout their careers.

The trends in the U.S. will take teachers further from control over their own profession. Dr. Robert B. Howsam argues that the problem arises from teaching's semi-professional status, that until teaching has professional autonomy and is held accountable, teachers will experience bureaucratic rather than self-direction. He holds that autonomy can't happen until initial preparation is enormously upgraded.[12]

Dr. B. Othanel Smith in *A Design for a School of Pedagogy* makes a strong case for the development of true professional schools of education.[13] He argues that there is a definable body of pedagogical knowledge that is not being taught systematically, that the placement of teacher education under liberal arts schools inhibits the development of professional schools and that the development of rational links between true professional schools and the public schools they should serve is long overdue. As with Howsam, his plea is for strong initial preparation, with the profession deeply involved.

The likelihood of development along the lines suggested by Howsam and Smith becomes more remote under the Reagan administration. Recent legislation moves the federal government away from the programs and discretionary grants with which they have shaped educational change.[14] Authority is being returned to the states with a system of federal block grants, on a much reduced scale. On the track record of the states, and in the current economic climate, it appears probable that legislated controls over teachers will increase, rather than professional schools and professional autonomy.

NOTABLE OMISSIONS

The B.C. Joint Board of Teacher Education prepared a report on *The Preparation of Teachers for the Public Schools of British Columbia*.[15] This report, submitted in June 1981, was commissioned by the Minister of Education, Science and Technology in September 1979. It deals with most aspects of teacher training and certification, and, in the context of this article, is notable for what it does not advocate.

While making recommendations to faculties for improvements, it does not advocate that the government get involved in the process of testing the product of the universities.

While recommending better co-ordination of professional development activities, it does not advocate mandatory, periodic in-service education for teachers. Nor does it advocate extensive probationary periods on interim certifications. It does advocate a stronger professional core training, significant practicum periods and internship.

However, it seems likely that the Ministry of Education will investigate a meld of exit testing for teachers and internship as prerequisites for a teaching certificate.

In B.C., as in the U.S.A., teachers have minimal involvement in the preparation and certification of teachers. Frail plants such as teacher centres, which operate under teacher autonomy, will feel the chill blast in the U.S.A. as federal funding withdraws. The probability is that they will be institutionalized at the local level and serve prescribed in-service needs. Teachers have to be concerned about testing proposals that call into question the validity of their university years and about "cradle-to-grave" in-service education schemes that assume they were never trained properly never will be, and can't help themselves.

In B.C. we aimed at a Teaching Profession Act and were denied. Failing this, teachers need the muscle and expertise of their organization to do a variety of things.

First, we must monitor the quality of programs of teacher training. Second, we must through our own example prove that staff development programs, with the accent on development, work. Third, we must insist that teachers be the prime trainers of their colleagues in practica and internship and ensure that they have the skills and knowledge to do it. Fourth, we must be firm in insisting that in-service education not derived from teachers' perceived needs is useless.

Above all, we must take a reasonable pride in our own organization and institutions, and make it clear that bureaucratic control on the U.S. model is no answer to the needs and aspirations of a profession. ○

Tom Hutchison is an assistant director in the BCTF's Government Division.

References available on request.

STANDARDIZED TESTING HAS LITTLE TO RECOMMEND IT

Standardized tests are often misused — to the detriment of students.

CHARLES UNGERLEIDER and DONALD FISHER

The curmudgeon of American print journalism, H. L. Mencken, was fond of saying that "no one ever went broke underestimating the intelligence of the American public." With testing a 300-400 million dollar industry, Mencken was certainly correct. No one ever went broke estimating anyone's intelligence, ability, or vocational talent.

Testing is more than a lucrative industry. Because tests are administered and interpreted within a particular social frame of reference, the consequences of how a person scores on the tests affect that person's life chances for education and for jobs.

Standardized tests have traditionally served three major functions — evaluation, selection, and restriction. Although standardized tests have been used to evaluate the performance of pupils, teachers, schools, and school districts, their use in the evaluation of pupil performance is probably the most problematic.

The growth of the testing movement has seen the development of a technology and a vocabulary that mystifies what the tests are telling us about pupil performance. When scores are reported in percentiles and grade equivalents, not very much useful information is communicated to teachers. Information reported in this manner tells teachers only how pupils in their classrooms compare with some local, provincial, or national norm.

The technology of standardized testing is mismatched with the instructional realities teachers face each day. Information about how their pupils compare with other pupils is less valuable than information about the specific performances of their own pupils. What teachers need is information that will help them to diagnose pupil difficulties.

Unfortunately, standardized tests are poor diagnostic tools. Standardized tests measure the answers or results of pupil thinking. Measuring answers is of little help to teachers. What teachers want information about is the process the pupil used to arrive at the incorrect answer.

Knowledge of the process is helpful to teachers because it tells them where to intervene to provide corrective feedback. That is why we so often hear a teacher confronted with an incorrect answer say, "Tell me how you arrived at that answer." By listening to the pupil describe the thinking processes employed in arriving at the incorrect answer, the teacher is trying to identify the point of intervention and to select an appropriate strategy. Standardized tests that measure the various steps in the thinking process have yet to be developed for use in the classroom.

Although the technology of standardized testing is of limited utility in improving pupil performance, it does provide the basis for the comparison of pupil performances. Using statistical procedures, one can easily compare test scores on a local, provincial, or national level. Such comparisons have inevitably led to selection.

Based upon the notion that one should fit education to the needs of individual pupils, schools have used standardized tests as a means for deciding whether pupils shall have instruction and the types of instruction they shall have. Standardized tests have been used as the basis for grouping elementary pupils within classrooms, for deciding whether secondary pupils should be allowed to pursue vocational or academic programs, for deciding which pupils shall be placed in classes for the mentally retarded and gifted, and for moving pupils out of the school system into the work force.

The use of standardized tests for grouping elementary pupils within classrooms and streaming them into particular programs at the secondary level is based on two related assumptions. The first is that there is a connection between student abilities and instructional method or program. The second assumption is that pupil achievement can be maximized if pupils of similar abilities receive similar types of instruction.

Grouping by ability has a long record of failure in producing increases in pupil achievement. Results of studies indicate that groups of mixed ability do about as well as groups of pupils with similar abilities. The relation of ability, instruction, and achievement is not sufficiently well understood to justify the use of standardized tests for decisions about pupil placement. Nevertheless, standardized tests are used as the basis for such educational decisions.

Standardized tests restrict the opportunities of pupils from working class and ESL (English as a second language) backgrounds by confirming the restrictions imposed by their economic backgrounds and the impediments produced by not having chosen English-speaking parents. Because a person's life chances are affected by the educational opportunities that are made available or withheld, the decision to provide or withhold certain opportunities on the basis of tests that discriminate against the members of certain groups is unfair.

Historically, standardized tests were used, in part, to control the demands of working class and immigrant groups for better and more education. The "scientific" status of the tests provided justification for the selection and restriction of the educational opportunities made available to members of these groups. The illusion of a meritocracy and equal opportunity has traditionally been used to obscure the social class and ethnic bias of the decision-making processes.

Tests label people. Because they are pervasive, tests and the scores and labels associated with them become part of a person's identity. Test scores are in many ways analagous to the shoulder patch of ethnic identification worn by people in concentration camps. Both are symbols of social standing.

Because of their bias in favor of white, middle class pupils who have mastered the dominant culture and their use in educational decision-making, standardized tests have helped to perpetuate discrimination against people from low income and minority backgrounds and to preserve social inequalities. Given their questionable utility to teachers, the use of standardized tests with economically and culturally heterogeneous populations is, at best, unwise and, at worst, unfair. ○

The authors both teach in UBC's Faculty of Education.

LET'S CHANGE THE WAY TEACHERS ARE EVALUATED

MIKE LOMBARDI

The present practice of formal teacher evaluation every three years is ineffective.

If the purpose of teacher evaluation is to uproot the incompetent, it fails miserably in this task.

If the purpose, on the other hand, is the improvement of instruction, the total benefits derived by the preparation of 8,000-9,000 reports annually certainly does not equal the time and energy expended and tensions generated by this annual provincial exercise.

There is no question that the improvement of instruction by means of supervision is needed. However, the present evaluation and supervision functions are intertwined, with the result that the value and importance of supervision are overshadowed by the threat of evaluation.

What is needed is a teacher evaluation model that assumes professional competence, that provides for formal evaluation when competence is questioned, and that provides for emphasis on the improvement of instruction through supervision. On the initiative of the Coquitlam Teachers' Association, the BCTF has two policies that move in this direction:

- 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 (1980 AGM)
- The evaluation procedure prescribed by the School Act should be used to resolve doubt, when it arises regarding the professional competence of a teacher. (1981 RA)

These two policies assume that graduates of faculties of education have completed their training and are judged by these institutions to be ready to teach competently. We should accept this judgement of competence until we have reason to believe otherwise.

Other professional bodies accept their members' competence and do not subject them to evaluation examination every three years. They do, however, employ evaluation procedures when questions of competence arise. In this way they control the professional standards of their group.

I believe that the emphasis of the teacher evaluation model should be the improvement of instruction by supervision. For this emphasis to be realized, another conventional structure of B.C. educational policy needs to be disassembled.

The present procedure of having the school principal responsible for supervision and formal evaluation needs to be changed. I suggest that if supervision is to be effective, it cannot be performed by the same individual responsible for formal evaluation of instruction. The School Act should be changed to separate the responsibilities of those charged with the tasks of supervision and evaluation of instruction. In practice this would make the school principal responsible for the improvement of instruction through supervision, and the superintendent responsible for formal teacher evaluation when competence is questioned. This is a radical departure from present practice; however, the proposal is workable, and in fact, desirable.

In the present scheme the principal spends most of his or her time involved with the formal evaluation of teachers. This practice is not based on needs, but on School Act legislation. Since the principal spends a great deal of his or her time with evaluation, little time is left for the important task of helping all teachers to improve their instructional capabilities. As professionals, teachers and administrators know that the improvement of instruction involves long-range planning and ongoing consultations. Supervision is time-consuming, but very necessary and very crucial to effective instruction.

A second critical factor in the improvemen of instruction is the matter of trust and acceptance. I do not believe that a teacher can be sincerely involved in an improvement program while the threat of evaluation hangs in the air. The fact that evaluation and supervision are conducted by the same individual is detrimental to the improvement function. For the supervision process to work, it must be free and also perceived as free from the threatening aspects of teacher evaluation. The emphasis on supervision should be to bring the principal, as an instructional leader, together with the practising teacher to work toward mutually agreed upon programs of improvement and assistance.

The role of formal evaluation by the superintendent needs some clarification. As mentioned, such evaluation would be undertaken only if teacher competence or performance is questioned. A possible procedure for resolving the question of a teacher's competence when it arises is suggested as follows. These concerns could be raised by other teachers, administrators, members of the public and by students. Concerns that are raised would have to be put in writing and forwarded to the individual whose competence was questioned with a copy forwarded to the superintendent.

Upon receipt of such a report the superintendent would call a meeting of both parties to discuss the written statement. At such a meeting the superintendent would decide if there were a need to proceed to evaluate the learning situation. If an evaluation were deemed necessary, the superintendent would check all reports and procedures, make classroom visitations, examine workbooks, daybook, student files, and have discussions with appropriate personnel.

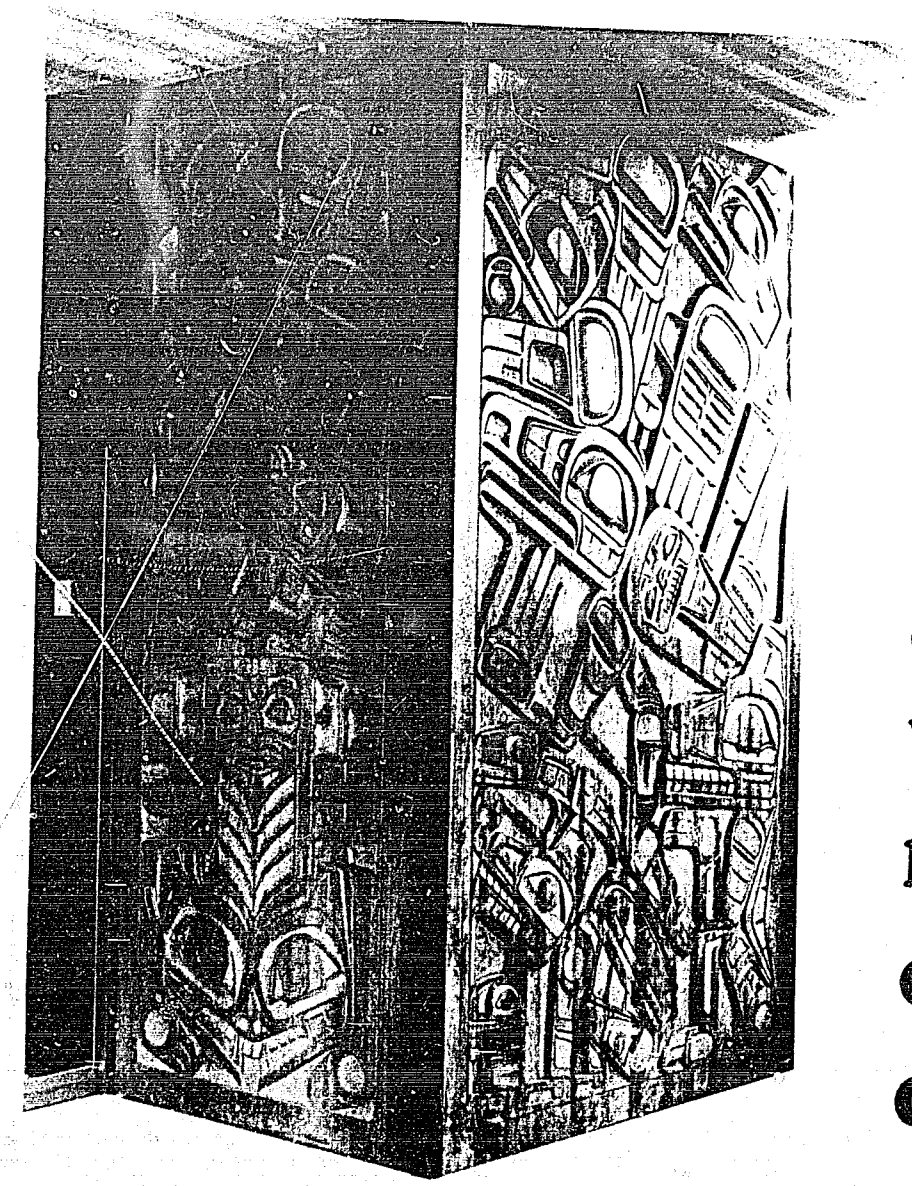
If after such an examination the superintendent ruled that there was a need for improvement in the teacher's performance, a program of assistance would be drawn up and approved by the teacher. After a reasonable amount of time, along with regular consultation with the principal and other professional staff, a report would be written by the superintendent. The report would conclude with a statement as to whether the teacher is competent or incompetent.

This type of evaluation program would require changes in the School Act to provide for all the safeguards of due process now available to teachers.

In summary, I have proposed a new direction in teacher evaluation. I have suggested that the evaluation of teachers be based on the assumption of professional competence with provision for formal evaluation when competence is questioned. Furthermore, I have proposed that the tasks of supervision and evaluation of instruction be performed by different educational personnel. This proposal would see the improvement of instruction as the major focus of the process, while allowing for formal evaluation by the superintendent when necessary.

I hope that readers look at the overall thrust of my proposal and hold reservation on the details of the suggestions. It is my belief that if the overall policy direction is endorsed, detailed regulations will easily follow. A move in this direction will allow the teaching profession to take a giant step toward becoming a true profession.○

Mike Lombardi teaches at Viscount Alexander Elementary School in Coquitlam.



One of four magnificent door panels carved by several people from K'san, near Hazelton. The panels, when closed, represent the doors of northwest coast bent boxes, all-purpose boxes in which the Indians kept their valuables. The panels symbolize the doors to a large bent box — the museum — keeping the treasures safe.

a world class museum on your doorstep

S. CATHY BERSON

UBC's Museum of Anthropology offers teachers and students a wide variety of valuable services and experiences.

The Museum of Anthropology!

To some teachers the very name of the place is a stumbling block: "Anthropology? We know nothing about anthropology or objects. We don't teach anthropology. What, therefore, would such a place have to offer those of us who teach in the public school system?"

This is the question often put to some of us who work in the museum. The majority of teachers are excited and interested but few have visited the place.

The Museum of Anthropology is a unique place. Few museum artifacts have been so singled out as to be given the honor of having an architect design a building around them: the tallest totem pole and the tiniest shaman's amulet were considered when the building was designed.

Before we enter, we are impressed with the structure: massive concrete posts and beams. We do not walk up a flight of steps — as is usual for most public buildings — rather, we go down a lazy river of wide stairs.

Even before we open the glass doors our attention and curiosity are captured, for the eyes immediately dance and ricochet down a wide ramp from sculptured figures to totem poles and beyond to the Great Hall.

The Museum of Anthropology is a visual delight. In describing it to you I hope I shall not rob you of experiencing this yourself, but entice you to come and visit.

My purpose in writing this article is two-fold. First, to explore whether the Museum of Anthropology can augment the curriculum of the high school social studies class, and second, to share my experience of taking the museum to the classroom and the classroom to the museum.

Not being a teacher in the school system, my first task was to find out whether the Museum of Anthropology could be used as an adjunct to the curriculum of the high school social studies classes. (Attendance of elementary schools far outnumbers that of secondary schools). It is obvious from the evidence that the museum does not feature as a necessary item on the agenda of high school teachers.

Why? The schools and teachers are certainly made aware of its presence in numerous ways. Is it lack of time? Secondary schools have far less time for field trips and unless a trip is planned before or after school hours, some activities are difficult to fit in and fall by the wayside. Perhaps the teacher may have found the museum lacking in serving his or her purpose(s).

What does the Museum of Anthropology have within its walls to vie for the attention of the teacher that some other public institution does not have? After all, it does require the teacher to spend the time to preview the place. A teacher cannot take or send pupils to a place he or she knows nothing about. This cannot be done during school hours, so the teacher has to allocate personal time.

For the conscientious teacher there are endless similar avenues to pursue that would broaden the sights of pupils and make learning exciting and enjoyable. Why should the Museum of Anthropology be singled out, particularly by social studies teachers, as a place worth incorporating in their educational curriculum?

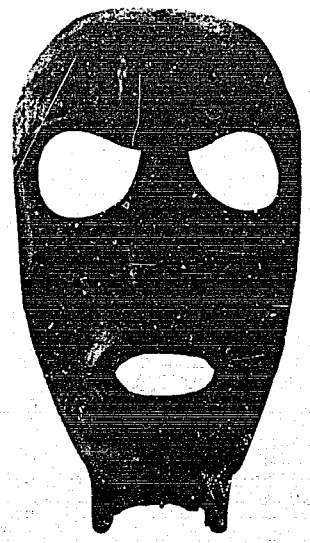
To answer some of these questions I talked to teachers who had not visited the museum. I wanted to find out why so many of them were either unaware or not interested in visiting. What follows are some of my experiences in taking the Museum of Anthropology to the classroom and following this up by taking the classroom to the museum.

I realize this cannot be duplicated in every high school simply because there are no funds at the moment to underwrite a host of non-volunteers in such a venture. What I should like to say at this point is that the experience was welcomed and enjoyed by teachers and students, it was a positive learning experience for them, and I hope in sharing some of these experiences with you, you can duplicate the procedure yourself and thereby broaden the perspective of the students in your social studies classes.

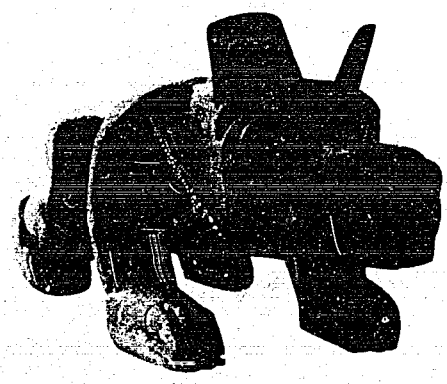
When social studies department heads were contacted they in turn informed their fellow teachers that I was available to talk about the museum. Interested teachers subsequently contacted me and a series of appointments was set up with each teacher. It was important both for me and the teacher to meet and discuss what I planned to do in the classroom and the museum. I also wanted to find out what his or her curriculum was and how the museum could fit into its flow. Once this was established I knew where to focus my talk.

Approaching the schools in January was not the best time of the year for some. Where schools were on a semester year it was not difficult to incorporate my visit almost at the beginning of, for example, Socials 10. However, where this was not so, my visit had to fit in somewhere else along the educational way. Since teachers have a certain amount of flexibility in planning the social studies programs, I found in reviewing some of these that the museum could fit in very neatly in several general areas of interest.

For instance, of the six units of a Socials 10 semester on Canada, the museum could fit into three: Resources, Early History (Native Indians of B.C.), and Cultural History. To present the Museum of Anthropology as close to the beginning as possible as a resource, similar to a library, certainly offers a worth-while alternative to the writ-



What remains of a feast dish used during potlatches. The face is that of Tsonoqua, in Indian legend the cannibal woman of the woods, who ate children who were bad.



This Haida bear was carved by Bill Reid, one of the best carvers practising the craft today.

ten word and opens up a multitude of diversified ideas and projects to incorporate into the acquisition of knowledge, for student and teacher.

Once I had contacted the teacher and we had mutually agreed on where the museum could best fit into the curriculum, we set dates for visiting the classroom and the museum. The teacher then phoned the museum and made a booking to visit with his or her class. In return, he or she received from the museum a free ticket to preview the place as well as a variety of information and brochures on location, floor plan, exhibits, material on how to enjoy and use the museum, etc. The teacher then visited the museum alone, before my visit to the classroom.

My visit entailed showing slides and talking and questioning the students about anthropology, museums, artifacts, art, and visual learning as an adjunct to the written word. The slides did not cover everything in the museum or every facet of this striking structure. They were meant to invite curiosity in and anticipation of the upcoming visit.

Visiting the museum usually followed within the week. I met the students and teacher at the museum entrance. Briefly I told them the purpose of their visit and what I was going to do with them once inside: the purpose was to acquaint them with this museum, to let them see and experience what it felt like to be inside this building and to get a sense of their own reactions and feelings when looking at the artifacts of their culture and that of other peoples. Some teachers encouraged their students to look and achieve this feeling. I think this is very important on the first visit.

However, some teachers preferred to hand out assignments to their students. This I find to be a dead end, because the students then run around looking and discovering only those things for which the teacher has asked. This blinds the student to everything else in the museum and above all steals and shuts off the vibrations and feelings one gets from just standing and staring or looking at those objects pleasing to the senses. To the sensitive person, the age of a totem pole, I feel, would become obvious or irrelevant. When we ask people to find out how old a pole is we desensitize them by creating a separation between the object and the person.

So it goes with some of the questions on the assignment sheets handed out to the students. The children spend their entire visiting time trying to answer as many questions as possible, in the meanwhile being, or becoming, totally oblivious of their surroundings and the manifold visual delights within their reach.

I am suggesting that teachers should avoid giving secondary school students "busy" work. Be that as it may, different teachers have different approaches. I am not a teacher and what I have to say in this regard certainly does not validate or invalidate a particular approach.

Since the purpose of the visit was to acquaint the teacher and student with the museum, I shared with them my knowledge and feelings about the building and its contents. (These "facts" need not present themselves to the teacher as a task to be learned. They can easily be invoked by allowing one's feelings to convey the sense of what one experiences). As we moved along I encouraged the students to question, and together we discovered many interesting "facts" that were meaningful to them simply because they were motivated to ask.

Walking along casually, I told them that the Museum of Anthropology was opened on May 31, 1976. (Before that date, whatever artifacts could be shoehorned into the basement of the university library made up the museum). Its striking structure was designed by Vancouver architect Arthur Erickson. Last year the museum received the Architects' Award for the design of the building.

We enter the museum through enormous carved doors, which when closed symbolize a container, the container being the museum. Once in, we are in a spacious lobby with seats into which you can softly sink. But this is not where we dally. We are immediately overwhelmed by four large massive carvings of bears that were house-posts in a family house. We move onto the ramp and immediately are impressed by the size and age of Haida and Kwagiutl sculptures. During the decade of the 1950s, businessmen, lumbermen, philanthropists and anthropologists from the university and the Provincial Museum went up and down the coast looking for old house ruins that were no longer being used by families. Arrangements were made with villages and these ancestral figures were bought for the university by such people as H. R. MacMillan and Walter Koerner. Incidentally, the visitor need not know these facts to feel the impact of this building.

Moving along down the ramp we find kerfed or bent boxes that had a variety of uses for the native Indians. There are feast dishes that are beautifully carved and that were used during potlatches, filled with smoked salmon, dried halibut or other preserved fish foods that were served by the family of the host. Huge ladles accompany these feast dishes.

The question is often asked: what is the story of a particular totem pole, or the meaning of the carving on a box or dish? You cannot tell the story of the totem poles unless you know the family history. (These

have died with many of the people. Each family had its own mythology and family crest, which gave them prestige, privileges and rank with the tribe. These privileges were inherited, meaning that the songs, dances and rituals could not be used by another family. It would not be difficult to recognize the figures on a pole or post, like bear, frog, human, etc. but the legend, I'm afraid, is lost.

At the end of the ramp we arrive at the Great Hall. The story goes that Erickson meant us to feel as though we were travelling through the birth canal and arrival in the Great Hall gives one the feeling of being born. Surrounded by 50-foot glass panels, facing the water and mountains beyond, sky, mountains and sea blend so often into a living Toni Onley painting.

Here we find the tallest totem poles in the museum. Totem poles do not belong inside a building. They belong outside, standing as tall sentinels in front of Indian winter homes facing the water. The 50-foot glass panels therefore were designed to bring the outside in and take the inside out. On walking around outside one gets the feeling of having the poles outside, not shut up inside an enclosed structure.

We next move into the Masterpiece Gallery where the ceiling is greatly lowered and the artifacts are very small in comparison to the huge totem poles and house posts. This is where you will find beautiful carved argillite, silver, wood, copper, bone and stone. Here one will see some of the material culture of the Northwest Coast Indians: panel pipes, coppers, small feast dishes, shaman's rattles, spirit catchers, bracelets, headgear worn by chiefs, adzes, exquisite basketry and whorls used for spinning.

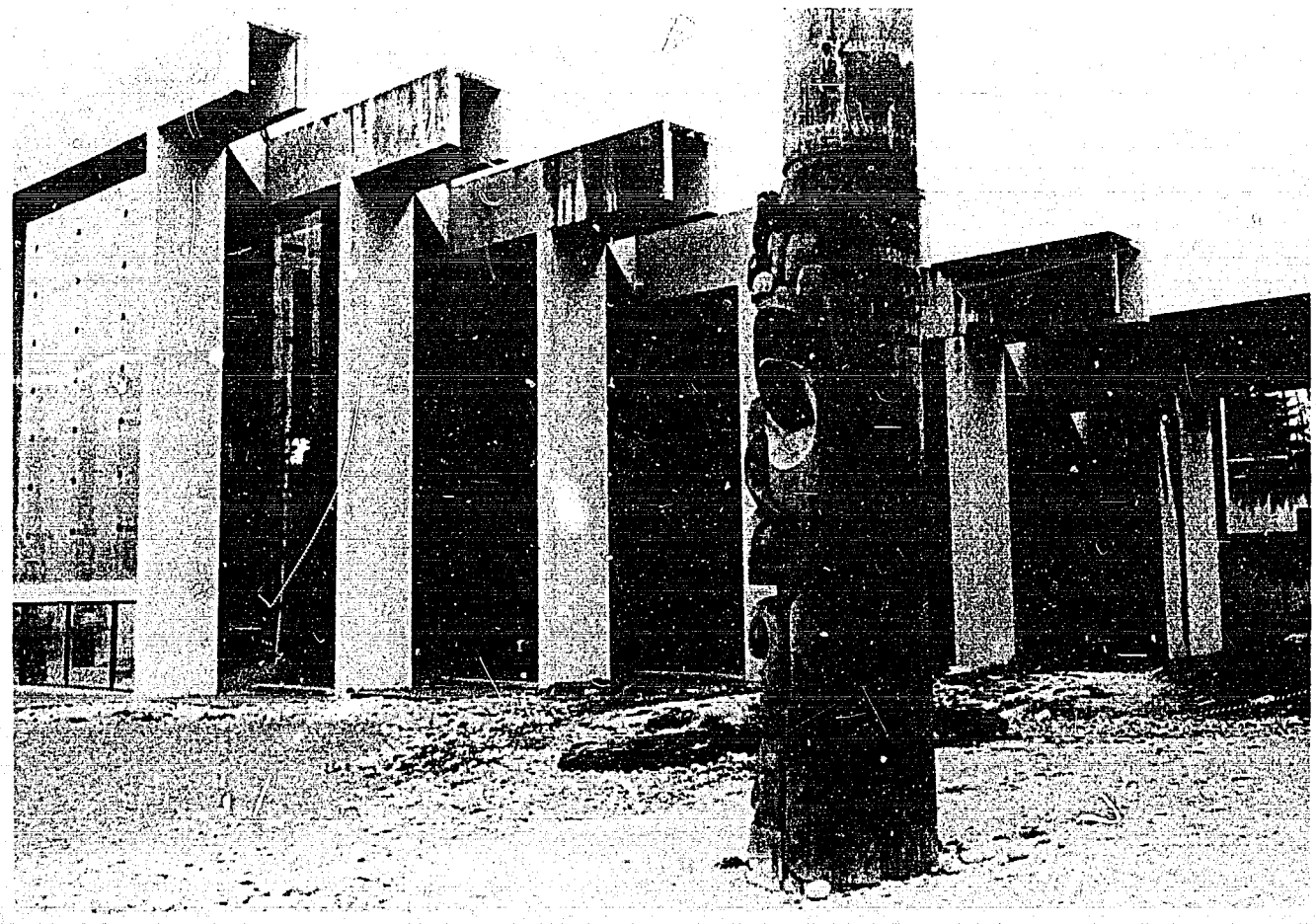
The Museum of Anthropology features two temporary galleries with changing exhibitions throughout the year. This the teacher should become cognizant of, to take advantage of a particular travelling exhibit that might be of specific interest to a course under study.

One of the unique features of the Museum of Anthropology is its Visible Storage Area. Most museums have store rooms, in which nine-tenths of their collection are stored. Some of the artifacts in these store rooms never see the light of day. Further, most museums are 12 years behind in their accessioning and cataloguing. Also, at any given time very little of their collection is on exhibit and rotation of objects on display can take up to several years.

The Museum of Anthropology, on the other hand, is only one year behind in its accessioning and cataloguing. Since the museum is situated on a university campus it is also a research museum. The objects it houses therefore must be available to the serious student and scholar. In Visible Storage all artifacts that have been accessioned and catalogued are out on view. In these cases items are not set out so as to present an aesthetically beautiful picture. Rather, the concern is to present to the viewer as many objects and as varied a selection as possible. All these artifacts are numbered and data books are provided in strategic locations for the seeker of knowledge. Not all items have data on them because some are still in the process of being researched.

Visible Storage presents the material culture of all parts of the world. Maps are located showing culture areas. Bins with storage drawers are filled with artifacts. I have taken hundreds of people through the museum and found no one who has been bored in Visible Storage, and, no one could see it all in one visit.

For the teacher and his or her students



This is a view of the museum from the rear. Internationally renowned Vancouver architect Arthur Erickson's award-winning design features post and beam construction, an architectural style commonly used by the northwest coast Indians.

This Chinese opera costume is one of many treasures from the Orient on display at the museum.

what Visible Storage does present is a resource panorama: a place you have discovered and to which you know you can return whenever you need to find out more about a given culture.

Coming out of Visible Storage, one looks up at Bill Reid's massive Raven sculpture, which was unveiled by Prince Charles. It tells the story of the first Haidas and never ceases to amaze all who walk around Raven sitting atop a clamshell from which little men struggle to emerge.

I knew all these things existed but I did not want to give a tour. I just walked around with the students and teacher. I tried to answer their questions as best I could. I did not want to tell them what to see. If something excited them enough to ask, I responded. The students who came without assignments in hand provided for me, and I feel for themselves, a very rewarding learning experience.

One teacher sent me the following comments, which I think in some ways sum up the expectations and positive attitude of those who come and truly *experience* the museum:

1. The museum presents an alternative resource that is not physically connected with the school.
2. It can be used as one example of source of inquiry that the student must be able to utilize in his or her study.
3. It provides information pertaining to Unit 4-Part A Native Indians' portion of the course outline.
4. Any field trip represents a valuable learning experience for it teaches the student about responsibility and logistics (map work and bus schedules).

I should add that perhaps a further important aspect of the visit was that students had an experience of a building, of their own culture and values, of other cultures, and essentially of their own feelings.

I realize that this cannot be done in all high schools. However, there are alternatives the teacher can avail himself or herself of, such as workshops that are provided for them at the museum. Workshops are given not only on the Museum of Anthropology in general but on specific areas and objects.

What I did was not unique and does not require a person with special museum knowledge. Also, there are many other methods of viewing the museum — for example, cross-cultural comparisons and in-depth studies of influence of environment.

What I did was only one way of looking and enjoying. I did not present myself as an expert. The slides I used in the classroom are available at the museum and they come equipped with sound track and script. The teacher needs to visit the museum in advance, make a booking for a definite visiting date for the class and receive in return all the information in an orientation package.

Every school and school board office receives information from the museum about exhibitions and activities that are constantly going on. Some of these may be of interest to you. There are also numerous resources available at the museum. To mention a few: video programs on totem poles, transformation masks, and village art in South India. There is a museum shop, which carries slide sets, publications and art objects. Please do not hesitate to contact the museum offices for further information at 228-5087.

What I felt and what the teacher should feel, is comfort, inquiry, relaxation, and enjoyment. I don't expect the teacher to be an instant anthropologist but to be open to experiencing this beautiful museum.

In essence what I did in the classroom and in the museum was create a positive learning environment and experience that can be duplicated by any interested teacher.○

Cathy Berson is an anthropologist at the Museum of Anthropology.

WHO MAKES THE DECISIONS?

DAN DEGIROLAMO

Although decision-making in the classroom can be a complex process, at its most simple level it revolves around the keeping, sharing and giving of power.

In this regard, most teachers could place themselves both philosophically and operationally on a continuum somewhere between democratic (power-sharing/giving) and authoritarian (power-keeping).

Many factors from his or her experience and background will determine the extent to which and the circumstances under which a teacher holds, shares or gives power. The maturity and experience of students and the long range significance of the decision will also influence the distribution of power.

We might, for instance, find it reasonable to allow an elementary student to choose one science project over another but consider it unacceptable to allow him or her to opt out of arithmetic or language arts for the year.

Administrative expectations will determine in large measure how the classroom teacher handles power. If the principal, superintendent, board members and/or parents promote power holding, power sharing/giving teachers may soon find themselves at odds with the system.

It is interesting to note that while many faculties of education tend to promote sharing/giving, administrators are inclined to promote keeping. Conflicts and anxieties are almost certain to arise when teachers are forced to keep power while pretending to share it or, conversely, sharing while pretending to keep it.

At this point, I must stress that it is less important to be either authoritarian or democratic than it is for the teacher to recognize his or her own style and to be consistent in it. In fact, there is research to show that: ". . . varying leadership styles can be effective when accompanied by warmth and understanding, non-threatening strategies, clarity and firmness, variability, enthusiasm, imaginativeness, task orientation and responsible and business-like classroom behavior."

Let us consider two scenarios. Teacher A perceives himself to be a democratic individual and likes to promote discussion and group decision-making.

Teacher: "Some of you have indicated that it might be a nice idea to have a year-end party, so I thought that perhaps you would like to decide what you want to do."

Suggestion 1. "Bicycle ride to . . ."

Teacher: "The principal is not in favor of large group cycling."

Suggestion 2. "A day at _____ Park."

Teacher: "Good idea, but there is no bus money available and district policy says no private transportation."

Suggestion 3. "Swimming at the beach."

Teacher: "Too dangerous since there is no lifeguard."

Suggestion 4. "A dance in the gym."

Teacher: "Some other class has it booked."

Etc., etc., etc.

Suggestion 14: "A wiener roast in the wooded area behind the school."

Teacher: "Say, that's a good idea. Perhaps some of you could . . ."

Meanwhile, let's look in on Teacher B:

"Class, some of you have indicated that it might be nice to have a year-end class activity. Because of a lack of money for buses and some school policy for your safety, we are a bit restricted in what we can do. I thought that we could spend Friday, June 22 in the wooded area behind the school and have a wiener roast for lunch. Now we would need several committees and . . ."

While Teacher A might well consider himself to be power sharing/giving, he will no doubt be perceived by his students to be blatantly power-holding. There is a good possibility that student anxiety and resentment would be raised long before the class reaches the decision the teacher had already made

Teacher B, on the other hand, has pretended to be nothing but authoritarian. She has made the decision and justified it. Chances are her students will accept her choice graciously. Teacher B has not "double-crossed" her students by pretending to be one thing while in fact being something else.

To avoid the double-cross, you must realize that when you opt for power-giving, the final decision of the students must be binding, or your credibility will be in jeopardy. If you suspect that you will not be able to live with the decision of your students, you would be well advised to settle for "sharing," where you have provided a series of acceptable alternatives or even for "holding," where you would openly offer the solution you want. Certainly, sharing or giving power can be less risky if you are aware of the dynamics of your groups and the balance of positive/negative elements.

For another example of giving, sharing and keeping power, consider the principal who meets with his or her primary staff to discuss the purchase of a new science series.

The power keeper says: "I have alloted $2000 for the purchase of the XYZ Science Series for Grades 1 to 3."

The power sharer says: "I have alloted $2000 for a new science series and I should like you to select and recommend one for purchase," or, "I would like you to choose from between the ABC and XYZ science series."

The power giver says: "I should like you to get together to select and cost out a new science series. When, I have your recommendations, I shall place the order."

While we have all at times lived with each of the above, how would you as a teacher feel if your principal, who perceives himself or herself as a power-sharer/giver says after you had attended countless meetings and prepared a carefully considered report:

"That series you have selected does not meet with district approval," or,

"A good series, but too expensive," or,

"I have decided that perhaps we should go for social studies instead of science."

Or, or, or!

You have just been double-crossed and probably feel the same way your students do when you define a problem, ask for solutions and then for a variety of "good" reasons reject them all and supply your own.

Examples of inconsistency are all around us. Consider the lecturer we have all had on humanistic education who faces his passive audience from behind a raised podium.

Some examples are amusing, as the college faculty member who was heard to say with pride, "When I work with classroom teachers, I insist that they give or share power with their students."

Whether we choose to keep, share or give power, we all do so for good reasons. Yet, we must be constantly aware that our perceptions of our style are congruent with actual practice. We want always to be certain that what we intend is actually what occurs, for it is not which style we chose, but how well we use it and how honest we are in communicating our decision-making style that may make the difference between a happy, productive classroom and the other kind.

Dan DeGirolamo is a Project TEACH associate, and teaches at Coldstream Elementary School in Vernon.

A better way of reporting

Including the child in parent-teacher conferences makes the reporting process far more effective.

The child is involved in parent-teacher conferences right from the beginning. Indeed, the child starts the conference by showing the parents his or her notebooks and some of the other work he or she has done.

CHERYL MACDONALD

TAKE ONE

The teacher writes a report card for each student in the class. The reports are put in envelopes and sealed. The students carry their sealed reports home for their parents to read.

CUT! SOMETHING MISSING IN THIS SCENE!

TAKE TWO

The parents come to their children's classroom to meet the teacher. The teacher shows the parents their child's work. Next, the parents read the report card the teacher has written about their child. These adults then discuss how the parents can help at home.

CUT! STILL SOMETHING MISSING!

TAKE THREE

Matthew Biggs brings his mom and dad to his school and classroom. They have come 15 minutes early so they will have time to watch a videotape of the class in action, and to look at how Matthew interacts and works in this setting.

Mr. and Mrs. Biggs also look at the many color photographs of the children engaged in various activities that have taken place throughout the term.

Matthew then shows his mom and dad around the classroom, and points out some of the work he has done at school. He also teaches them some of the things he has learned. Next, he shares with them a report he has written about himself describing his perceived strengths and/or weaknesses in

each subject area, and his goals for next term.

Ms. Smith, the teacher, next shares the report she has written about Matthew's observed strengths and weaknesses. She has already shared this report with Matthew, so there are no surprises for him. Mr. and Mrs. Biggs, Matthew and Ms. Smith all note how closely, in many instances, Matthew's perceived strengths and weaknesses match Ms. Smith's observations. Together, they all discuss a plan of action for Matthew at home and at school.

THE DILEMMA

In each situation I have taught in, I have been given the option of sending report cards home with my children or having conferences with parents to discuss the report.

Sending report cards home with each child was the easier, less time-consuming option. Yet, I worried. I worried about the anxiety some of my children might have felt when carrying this precious envelope home. I worried that parents would not understand what I meant. I worried that parents would pressure their children to learn things they were not ready for. And I worried that there was something I should know about each child, information that only the parents could share with me. To relieve all these worries therefore, I chose to meet with parents.

Parent-teacher conferences were more satisfying to me. The parents and I were able to share information about their child's activities at home and at school. If any questions arose, we were able to clarify them immediately. Then we could make plans to help promote their child's learning.

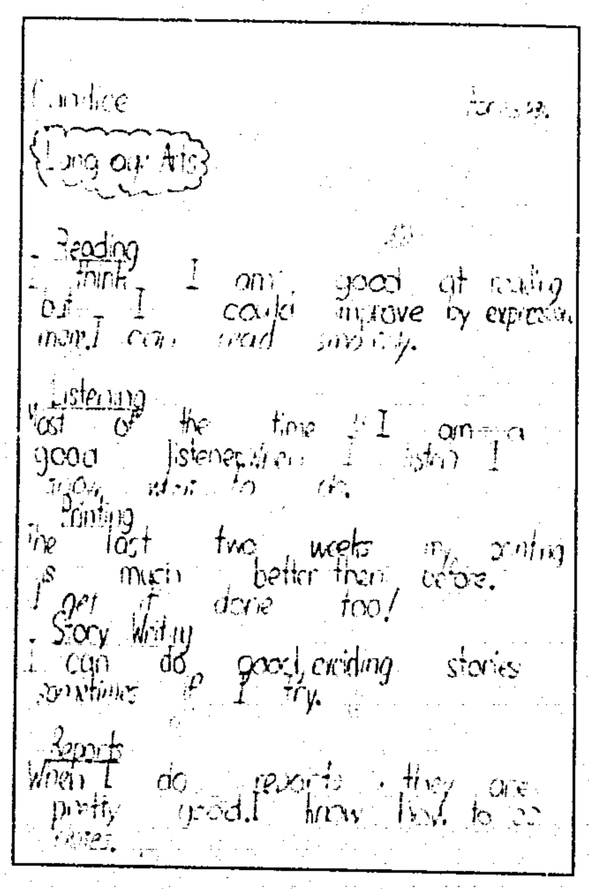
Yet something still worried me. I had read each child his or her report card prior to the parent-teacher conferences, hoping to relieve the children's anxiety about the content of the cards, but I could not erase the picture in my mind of each child sitting at home wondering, and perhaps worrying, about what we were saying.

At this point, I recognized the key element missing in my reporting practices — the child. If my feedback was to enable him or her to make changes and grow, why wasn't this information being shared directly with the child? And, why weren't the children sharing their successes with their parents? What did they think they had learned? What did they think they needed to learn? What were their goals? How did they plan to achieve these goals?

It seemed to me that if the child were involved in the parent-teacher meeting, and were given opportunities to evaluate his or her own progress, he or she would be more committed to learning. Last spring, I decided to try this process.

SELF-EVALUATION CHALLENGING

Self-evaluation was new to my year three students. Asking them to comment on their perceived strengths and weaknesses on various curriculum areas, and on how well they worked in a classroom setting, was a challenge for them. First, they had learned that to admit what they did well was wrong. As one student said, "It's not good to brag about yourself." Second, when I asked them to comment on their academic weaknesses, and on their ability to work independently and with others, they realized they were making a commitment to academic growth and behavioral change.


Candice
Long ago Ms
Reading
I think I am good at reading but I could improve by expression more. I can read smoothly.
Listening
Most of the time I am a good listener when I listen I
Painting
The last two weeks my painting is much better than before. I get it done too!
Story Writing
I can do good exciting stories sometimes if I try.
Reports
When I do reports they are pretty good. I know how to do

The self-evaluation reports of the students are very perceptive. This is the first page of one girl's report on herself.

Yet, their reports were amazingly perceptive and honest.

Some comments on reading were:

"I think I am good at reading but I could improve my expression more. I can read smoothly." *(Candice)*

"I think I am a good reader, but I just need to practice a little to get faster." *(Enida)*

"My goal on reading is to be a very good reader by the end of spring break. Right now I am an eaven reader." *(Michael)*

"I am a good reader because I read smoothly. I am a bookworm." *(Nicole)*

Responses from the children on their listening skills included:

"I listen good, then I know what to do." *(Christopher)*

"I think I am a good listener because I get lots of things right." *(Jimmy)*

"I am improving buy consontroting." *(Glen)*

And, about their printing, some children said:

"I'm not good for printing but I do my beast." *(Christopher)*

"The last two weeks my printing is much better than before. I get it done too!" *(Candice)*

"Most of the children are better printers than I am, but I have improved since September." *(Heather)*

"I print beautifully. But sometimes when I'm mad I don't print very good." *(Lance)*

About their speech, some comments were perceptive — and humorous:

"I am good at speaking. I do not swallow words." *(Ethan)*

"I can speak well, when I talk." *(Candice)*

"I have no trouble with my speaking, but sometimes I forget what I am going to say." *(Lance)*

"When a visitor comes I say 'um' sometimes and sometimes I don't." *(Enida)*

In arithmetic:

"I am good at doing arithmetic. I can borrow and carry now. I know how to tell time and factoring." *(Jamie)*

"I am slow on substraction and speed drills and carrying. I am fast on 1, 2, 3, 5 and 10x. I am fast on fractions." *(Alykhan)*

And finally, responses about working in the classroom setting:

"I work by myself and don't look at other people's books . . . I am nice to friends. I never hurt other people's feelings and whenever anyone wants help I tell them how to figure it out." *(Jimmy)*

"I am improving and I don't copey peapole . . . I have a good sens of humer." *(Glen)*

"I think if I 'm a little bit kinder I will have more friends." *(Ethan)*

In almost all instances, my students' perceptions of themselves corresponded closely with my views. As well, they were able to identify areas to work on, without my direction.

Student self-evaluation was aided by photographs and videotapes of them at work in the classroom. Using these visual records, the students were able to analyse their interactions with others, and their ability to concentrate on tasks.

In the hallway, before the conference, these tapes and photographs were also viewed by the students' parents. They, too, could observe their child at school, and have a clearer vision of what happens in the classroom each day.

THE CONFERENCE

During the student-parent-teacher conference, my role was minimal, leaving me

free to watch my students interact with their parents.

To start the meeting, the student showed his or her parents his or her notebooks, and his or her work displayed around the room.

Next, the student taught the parents some things he or she had been learning. For example, one activity was a math worksheet. The parents put their names on the paper. The student then guided them through each step of the activity. While the arithmetic was not new to the parents, the way their child was learning to do it was different for them. The student was pleased to teach the parents, and in the process demonstrated his or her understanding of the concepts involved. As well, the parents now knew how to help their child at home.

Following this, the student, the parents and I sat to listen to the student read his or her self evaluation. The report I had written was also read. In most cases my report was somewhat redundant, for the student had already identified areas for learning and behavioral change and growth.

IN RETROSPECT

Reflecting upon the child-parent-teacher conferences, I recognize how each meeting centred on the individual student concerned. There was no discussion by parents about how their child compared with others.

As well, while writing my reports, I was aware that the child would be the direct recipient of my comments. I did not feel the need to soften or emphasize my statements. Rather, I was more conscious about describing actual, observed behaviors, without attaching my emotions or biases to the statements. In this way I did not make judgments on the students, just described their behaviors and academic progress.

FEEDBACK FROM PARENTS

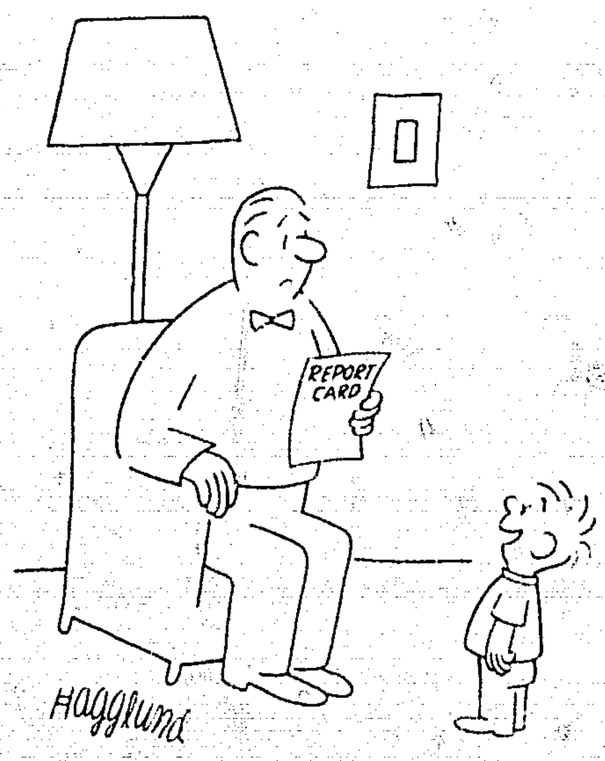
I asked parents to respond, anonymously if they wished, to the child-parent-teacher conference. They, too, recognized the benefits of their child's inclusion.

"Having a child included in the conference is a good idea. It gives the child a feeling of accomplishment and also informs the child at the same time as the parent where the problem areas to be worked on are, and encourages the child to do better."

"I felt it was a good idea to have my child present as I feel it is his education. He is the one to benefit from the support and encouragement of parents and teachers together. It is an encouragement for him, I think, to see his parents and teacher letting him have some ***control****."*

"I think that the child being included in the conference was excellent. Somehow I don't think a child benefits near as much when a parent comes home from a conference and tries to explain what was discussed."

This girl is teaching her father some of the things she has been learning, guiding him through each step of the activities.



"Considering the heredity factor, it's not bad, eh, dad?"

"I enjoyed seeing my daughter glow as the adults praised her hard work, . . ."

. . . I enjoyed getting the student view of a report card; it was a real insight into how the children feel about themselves and their work."

". . . I especially liked having him come with me to show and explain what is special to him . . .

(I) am not sure of his standing in the class (e.g., is everyone on level 9?), but I do realize each child is evaluated as an individual. . . ."

"Having our child included in the conference was very beneficial to her . . . She was able to explain several arithmetic problems to us and was able to honestly see her own strengths and weaknesses."

Although I held the student-parent-teacher conferences late in the school year, I noticed significant academic and behavioral growth in my students as they began to take some responsibility for their own learning.

I am eager to see the effects of having students evaluate themselves and participate in reporting conferences as an integrated part of their educational experience. ○

Cheryl Macdonald teaches at Meadowbrook Elementary School in Coquitlam.

Learning to read

—naturally

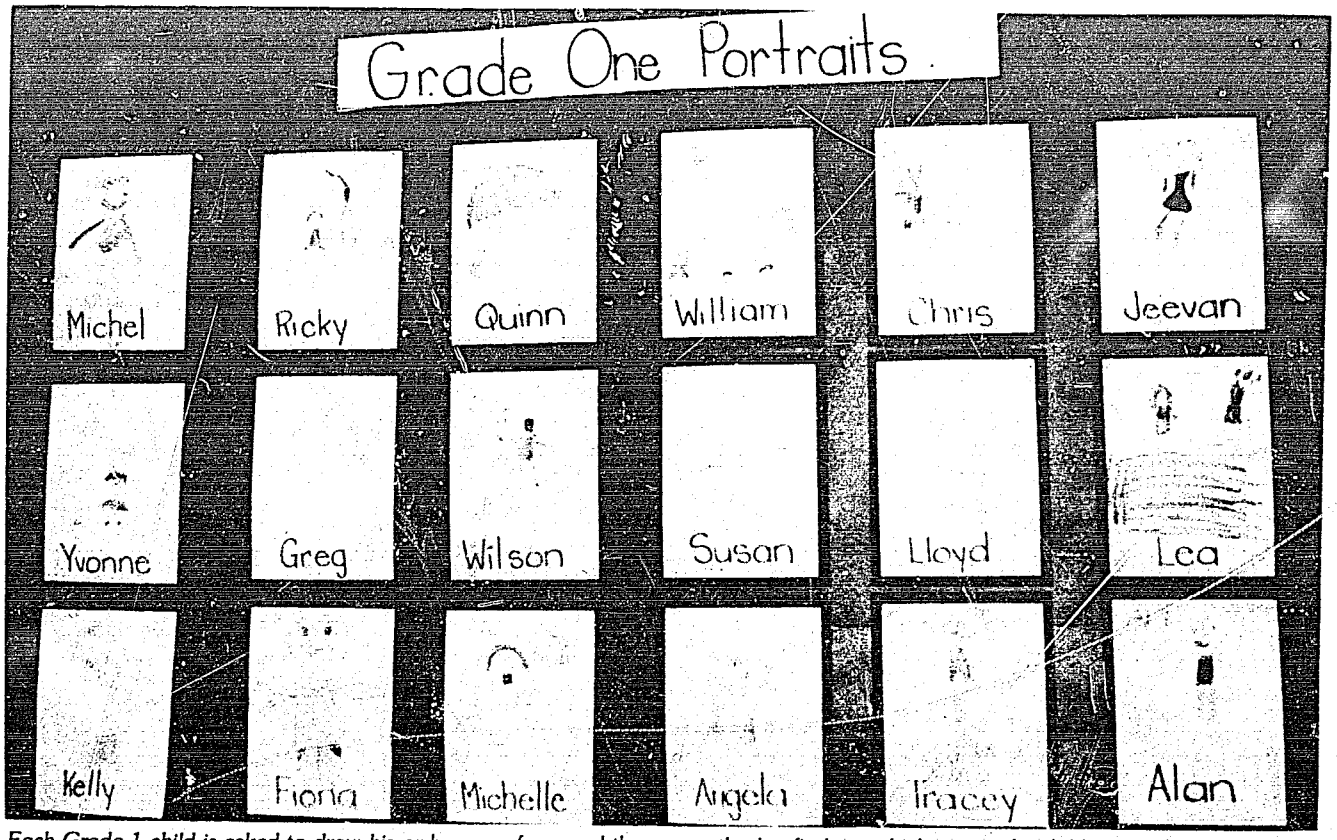
Tired of teaching the "basic skills" of reading, only to suffer frustration and failure? Consider another approach to reading—one that says that reading can occur naturally.

LEE DOBSON and
MARIETTA HURST

Most children are successful in learning to read during their first year of school. They advance quickly through the pre-primer and primer stages. Soon they are enjoying the interesting and meaningful reading material available to the more mature reader. They read at home, at school, and in the community environment. Reading seems to come naturally to them.

Other children, however, exposed to the same teaching methods and materials do not learn as easily. Our schools are particularly unsuccessful at teaching children from lower socio-economic environments. In fact, socio-economic status is often cited as the most significant factor in predicting how successful a child will be at learning to read.

Here, then, is the problem for teachers. Can the learning environment be arranged so that the learning-to-read process be-



Each Grade 1 child is asked to draw his or her own face, and the names are printed under the drawings. The teachers use this method to find out which names the children can "read," then use those names in the reading material they prepare for the children.

comes natural for such children? We think it can be. Children come to school with strength in using their own language. Teachers must learn to capitalize on that strength in their reading program. Reading is, of course, a language process, and must build from the children's own language base. Here's how we accomplished such a task.

First, we itemized the factors necessary for a program in which learning proceeds naturally.

- The reading environment must be familiar and relevant to the lives of the children.
- The reading material must be based on their own experiences to be meaningful to them.
- Already familiar words must be discovered and capitalized on.
- The written language must initially follow the natural and predictable patterns of speech.
- The learning task must be comprehended and considered worth while by the children.

With these factors in mind, we created a learning-to-read program for children with limited experience, limited language, and cultural differences, whose only common ground might be the school environment.

THE PROGRAM

The children's first reading material becomes familiar signs around the school. The signs say EXIT, OFFICE, GIRLS, etc. They are identified in their actual situation in the hall, then copied onto word cards, and re-identified in the classroom. Any time a child cannot recognize a word, he or she is free to check the word in its original context.

This basic sight vocabulary is extended for each child individually by adding other words he or she knows. Names of family, friends, classmates, and other signs from the environment are the words most commonly added.

First sentences are in the form of messages — Come to the L.A.C., BOYS STOP. The beginning readers learn to play with words by cutting up the messages and forming new ones — Come to the office; Come to Kim. We reinforce this learning through games that involve words to be identified and messages to be acted upon.

At this point in our program we wanted to transfer to book reading. Although every child could recognize 20 or more words, where is a book with such a specialized vocabulary? We had to make our own. Thus, the *I Can Read* books were begun.

Book 1 contains photographs of the signs, and the words of the signs separately, in upper and lower case letters. The children can read it independently; and they do, with much enthusiasm.

Next, the messages are enlarged, and varied in construction, including questions and answers. But always they are kept within the experience and capacity of the individual child. We stick to very basic sentence structures that young children commonly use. Within these the known words are manipulated (Can I go to the store? Yes, you can go to the store).

Once the children can identify the school signs we extend their sign reading to include sign labels in the community. We go on walking trips in the neighborhood and into stores. We bring our knowledge back to the classroom through photographs, word cards and labelled packages.

Book 2 contains photographs of 10 school-based activities. The text uses familiar sentence patterns. Any vocabulary words not recognized by the children can be predicted from what makes sense, using the pictures, the sentence structure and the first sound in the word as clues.

We introduce phonic skills gradually — never in isolation. With their list of sight words as a guide we lead the children to discover sound-symbol relationships. Their discoveries are reinforced by our presentation of the key word pictured within a letter symbol — a mountain with an **m**. This

attaches meaning to the otherwise difficult abstraction. These pictures are used as referents.

Book 3 is about pets. In this book drawings by Gayle Dobson replace the photographs. Although the pictures are more abstract by nature, they continue to give direct clues to the meaning of the text. We also used the text as typescript, asking the children to supply appropriate illustrations. Fifty-three words are used in this book, including most of the typical primer vocabulary words.

Book 4 repeats this vocabulary while introducing direct conversation — first in balloons in the illustrations, then in quotation marks in the text. This progression shows children directly how we take the words out of the mouth of the speaker and transfer them to written materials.

Book 5, *I am at School*, follows the progress of a child through the activities of one school day. It is our first attempt at following a story line.

It is only after our pupils have progressed this far that we feel comfortable introducing them to standard reading programs. But we are careful in our selection of their first books. We look for story line and natural language. Many reading programs in their search for simplified vocabulary and/or sound patterns destroy the natural and predictable aspects of language. This often makes them meaningless to beginning readers and therefore very difficult. We have found the early books of the Nelson Series, (*Surprise! Surprise!, Kittens and Bears*, etc.) to be straightforward and natural in meaning and language.

We also use the series of Collins Mini-

"Frankly, I'm against memory pills because I'd like to forget all about school!"

books and Methuen Instant Readers, both printed in Great Britain. In these books the sentence patterns are constant and predictable from the illustrations but the phrasing and vocabulary are very English.

Best of all are the individually designed books that use rhythm and rhyme to invite the child to become naturally involved with book language. Here we include the Big Books, publicized by Don Holdaway and distributed by Scholastic Canada.

There is so little reading material available for beginning readers that it is a temptation for teachers to teach too much too fast. The need for additional stories for readers at this beginning stage of reading development is great. We hope other teachers will take up the challenge. ○

The authors both teach in the Learning Assistance Centre of Queen Victoria Elementary School in Vancouver.

Want to publish your own books? We managed it this way.

In 1980 we applied for, and received, an innovative grant from the Vancouver School Board. So far we have completed three books with photographs and print, three with illustrations and print, and a teacher's guidebook.

We used the services of Marjean Gibson, of the VSB Audio-Visual Services, who photographed the signs and situations. Her photographs went to a commercial printing firm, which converted them to half-tones (paid for with grant money). With the layout of the books and these half-tones in hand, we approached Lorne Turner, teacher in charge of graphic communications at Vancouver Technical School. There, under his supervision, secondary students completed the printing process.

There was some difficulty with the lettering. We wanted to use an alphabet that closely resembled the one children are expected to learn in print in their first year at school — no curls on the *t*, an *a* and *g* in these forms. Apparently there is no such printers' alphabet. So we improvised. Our sclution was to select the Helios style of print, but to print *g* when an *a* occurred — for example, kinderggrten — then delete the tail of the *g* to make the *a*. We also deleted the curl on the *t*.

The interest and excitement shown by the children as they discover their own school and neighborhood in a book! The results have added immeasurably to the motivation and achievement of both pupils and teacher.

Our books are now available from I. M. Reading, 3956 W. 34th Ave., Vancouver, B.C. V6N 2L5. Some program materials are also available from BCTF Lesson Aids.

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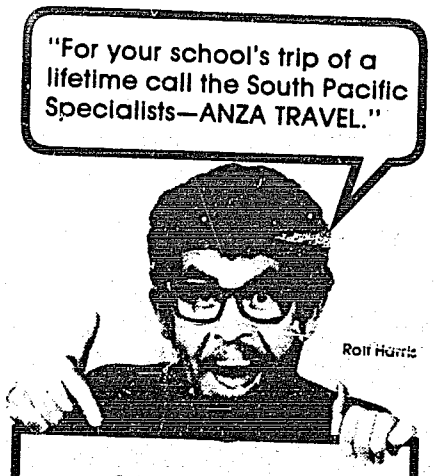

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For rent. Furnished room in duplex, plus share of rest of house. One block from buses. Near UBC. Going rate, for summer session only. Send 3 references to Ms. F. Bontron, Box 46476, Station G, Vancouver, BC V6R 4G7.

5 bedroom house, close to UBC, with separate study, TV room and basement recreation area. Available July and August at $1,000 per month plus utilities. 733-0289.

Furn. 3 bdrm. home for rent July & August. Close to UBC. Handy to beaches and downtown Vancouver. Children and pets welcome. $900 per mo. incl. utilities. Damage dep. and refs reqd. Write to J. Maycock, 2918 W 5th Ave., Vancouver, BC V6K 1T6 or phone 732-1896.

Rent full month July '82. Fully furnished home in excellent location New Westminster. 3 bedrooms (2 up, 1 down), 2 bathrooms, linen, dishes, etc. Panoramic view Fraser River and mountains, 10 min. drive SFU. Family preferred. $950/month OBO. 526-1333 evenings.

For rent. 3 bedroom house + pool. July 5-August 15. 5 min. SFU. $500 + utilities. Contact Deirdre 533-1468, 8:30-4:00.

House for rent. Modern, furnished, 4 bdm. home near central Richmond from July 1-August 14. $850 inc. 25 min. to UBC. Utilities included, non-smokers, ref. 271-7110 eves.

Van. close to UBC. Available July 2 to August 15. 2 bdrm. house. Fenced landscaped yard, laundry facilities. Fully furnished. $800. References. 876-7459.

Furnished 3 bdrm. home with large, fenced yard and sundeck. Available July 1-August 31. $700 a month plus utilities. 2576 Bendale Road, North Vancouver. 929-1791.

For rent. July and August. Two bedroom house in Kerrisdale. 10 minutes to UBC. No pets please. $800 per month. References required. Phone 261-5506.

West end, Vancouver. 1 bdrm. apt. for rent, all or part of July/August. $370 per month. Phone 685-8978 aft. 6 p.m.

Victoria. Character 3 bedroom house available for July and August. $750 per month. Close to town, one block from beach and parks. 385-0634.

July and August. 1 bdrm. large new furn. apt. 25" TV, dishwasher, cntrl. ent., garage, large patio, 20 min. to UBC, great shopping, pool, courts. $439/mo. plus util. 278-2775, best before 8 a.m.

Available July 1-Aug. 16. Fully furn. 3-bedroom deluxe house. Large sundeck, mag. view, 6 appliances, nr. shops, park, bus. 30 min. SFU, UBC. $900 per month. 988-0107.

For rent. Large 3-bdrm. house in Burnaby 20 min. from SFU. Complete facilities. Avail. for all of August. $700. 438-8827.

2-bdrm. house near Langara to sub-let June-August inclusive (flexible). Nicely furnished, washer, dryer, dishwasher, etc. $600 a month. References and damage deposit. 669-2336 days, 321-5426 evenings.

Victoria. House in country setting close to park, lake and university. Available for summer session. Will rent or swap for similar accom. near UBC. 479-4241.

1 bdrm. apt. available for rent July & August. Good South Granville location. Dishwasher and parking. Min. rental 6 weeks. $125/week. Call 734-1803 evenings.

ACCOMMODATION SWAP

Family of 3 with non-shedding dog would like to trade houses for 3-4 weeks over July-August with someone in San Diego. We live within walking distance of University of British Columbia. Call 604-228-9697 or write Reg Plummer, 4514 W 11th Avenue, Vancouver, BC V6R 2M4.

Wish to exchange during July or August 2 bdrm. lakeside cottage in the Gulf Islands for similar cottage elsewhere in B.C., length of stay negotiable. Call 946-9417.

House swap? Have 3 br. home on 25 acres in Shuswap. Want family accommodation accessible to SFU for all or part of July 5 to mid-August. Enjoy the pleasures of sun, lakes, etc. Phone 112-838-6678.

ACCOMMODATION WANTED

Perhaps someone would like to have a house taken care of in July and August, or August only, in Vancouver area. M. Doherty, 362 Ruggles Street, Prince George, BC V2M 3P6. Phone 562-7791.

Wanted to rent. We need family accommodation in Victoria for the month of July, while attending summer school at U.Vic. We will take good care of your home, lawns, pets, etc. Also, we have a cabin on Shuswap Lake that we would be willing to trade for such accommodation, if interested. Contact Al or Maureen Simpson, 1376 Dominion Crescent, Kamloops. Phone 374-1666.

Victoria accommodation, preferably furnished, needed for July-August for couple 695-6500 (home), 692-3666 (school).

BOOKS

Afternoon reading (4-8). 23 stories of farm and small town life. Clean. Funny. Warm. Good characterization. $3.50 pp. Les Dybvig, 3405-25th Avenue, Regina, Sask. S4S 1L7.

EXCHANGE WANTED

Teacher exchange, Sept. 1982. Jersey, Channel Isles. Economics 12th grade, Geography & Commerce 10th. For 1 year, house & car, good climate & tax deal. Phone 430-5752 for details.

FOR SALE

Large lot, private beach, caretaker, at McGillivary Falls on Anderson Lake in the hot, dry interior 30 miles north of Pemberton on the B.C.R. Owner will carry at low interest. $10,000. Many other facilities—family oriented. 107-5800 Cooney, Richmond V6X 3A8.

HOLIDAYS/TRAVEL

Israel. "The Trip of a Lifetime" (Retired Teacher's Special) Fabulous **10 Day Tour to Israel** for retired teachers! Get away to the sun and see the cradle of three of the world's great religions. All inclusive price from Vancouver is $2899 (Can. funds). Tour includes: direct jet air fare to Israel, 1st class hotels, 2 meals per day, tour escort, limited tour membership, folklore evening, all entrance fees, cruise on Sea of Galilee, kibbutz stay, buses and guides, all tips and taxes. See Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth, Galilee, Tel-Aviv, Haifa, Jericho, Dead Sea, Messada and much more. 5-day add-on tours available in Egypt, Greece or Rome for **15 day combined tours.** "An Educational and Cultural Experience of a Lifetime." Departure dates: April 26, May 17, September 13. Cut-off date—30 days before departure. For information, write or phone: Teach-A-Trip Tours Ltd., 9349 - 120th Street, Delta, BC V4C 6R8. Phone 936-6463 or 588-8336.

Trekking in Peru. Our guiding and outfitting service offers unforgettable adventures in the land of the Incas. Archeological sites come to life as we explore the stunning mountain scenery and colorful folkways of the Andes. Attractive group rates. Andean Treks Unlimited, Box 2944, Stn. M, Calgary T2P 3C3. (403) 269-9181.

Do something different this summer. Explore the Galapagos Islands (South America) or Western Canada (rafting, sailing, etc.). For details on all our trips and our magazine, write or call: Great Expeditions, Box 46499, Station G, Vancouver. 224-7610.

Katie's Bed 'N Breakfast. Visiting Vancouver or need accommodation for visiting friends & relatives? Lovely bedsitting rooms in Victorian mansion, offering scenic view of city and inlet. Full English breakfast served. Minutes to downtown, handy to Horseshoe Bay & Whistler. Rates available on request. Phone 987-1092.

MISCELLANEOUS

School bus for hire. Seating capacity 72 students. Excellent rates. Available weekdays 9 a.m.-3 p.m., eves. from 5 p.m., weekends 24 hour service. Phone Bill Gillespie, 255-3794.

Professional resumés prepared in one day. Call Irene, 669-1533. Rainbow Resumé Services, 405-402 W. Pender St., Vancouver V6B 1T6.

New Books...

GRACE E. FUNK

Opinions expressed in these reviews are those of the reviewers, and not necessarily those of the B.C. Teachers' Federation, the editor or the new books editor. Reviews are edited for clarity and length.

Addresses are given for publishers not listed in Books in Print, Canadian Publishers' Directory, *or* Books from British Columbia.

ACROSS THE DESK

Children's book publishing in Canada seems to be suffering. Eric Wilson (*Murder on the Canadian* and its sequels) delivered an anguished speech in Manitoba last October, and begged for some support to buy, use, and promote Canadian children's books.

As an example of what Canadian publishers are up against, Wilson noted that U.S.-published *Ranger Rick* magazine spent more on promotion in Canada than the entire production budget of the excellent Canadian children's magazine *Owl* (Greey de Pencier).

I wish you, as Canadians, would choose Canadian books to read to your children, at school or at home. Excellent titles *are* being produced, even if not all titles being produced are excellent.

The children's books that have accumulated on my desk seem to fall into three categories.

Some books are merely printed in Canada. *Folk Instruments; Make them and play them* (Dennis Waring, Hyperion Press, 1979) has something for all ages, children and adults together, among its 51 designs. Fitzhenry and Whiteside have added a sure-fire title to their Zap series, the reader *Monsters*. And Mary Alice Downie has come up with a really *good* reason for brushing your teeth (it helps you win swim meets). Read *Jenny Greenteeth* (Rhino Books, 1981).

Some books are aggressively Canadian. Fitzhenry and Whiteside have added *W. A. C. Bennett* by Rosemary Neering to "The Canadians." It's kind of a shock to see the Kelowna hardware store right in there along with Sanford Fleming and Laura Secord. Come to think of it, maybe Wacky Bennett is as much of a legend as Laura Secord is.

NC Press seems to think it has the answer to Canadian publishers' problems with a new paperback series but will have to do much, much better than *The Chocolate Moose* (pun, I regret to say, intended) by Gwendolyn MacEwan, or the highly moral tale, *Douglas the Elephant The Birthday Party* by Mark Thurman. Ginette Anfousse's *Winter* has more appeal, but it probably sounds better in its original French.

The *Canadian Children's Annual 1982* (Potlatch Publications) is the predictable magazine-type mixture of short stories, verses, brief articles, puzzles and comic strips. *The Great Canadian Alphabet Book* (Philip Johnson, Honslow Press, 1981) is a hodgepodge of puns, exploits, misinformation and Laura Secord (again!).

So, I'm different by Joan Weir of Kamloops (Douglas and McIntyre, 1981) is purportedly about how a young son of Indian parents feels and thinks. It is heavy on the moralizing, heavy on the stereotypes, heavily contemporary and mostly just heavy. Even the rainbow legend told in it, which should be enjoyable, loses much when related in Grade 6 idiom.

Borealis Press has ventured into the realm of historical fiction with *Rob and the Rebels 1837* by Jean Johnston — depressing, rather than exciting; *Boy with an R in his hand* (James Reaney, Macmillan, 1965) is still to be preferred. And *Tom, David and the Pirates* by Betty Clarkson may have some nominal relation to the Newfoundland fisheries of 1672, but unless the author had told me I would never have guessed from the style or the events.

The Secret of Ivy Lea in the Thousand Islands is badly dated. Childish mystery stories should not include bad grammar, never mind bad writing. The less said about five current Borealis picture books, the better.

Some books are charmingly Canadian. Grandfather Symons remembers lots of things about homesteading on the prairies (he was there). So he has written a couple of pages for each month of the year and painted a picture to make each event seem real, and left a page for the child to draw a picture, too (*Grandfather Symons' Homestead Book*, R. D. Symons, Western Producer Prairie Books, 1981). *The Dancing Sun*, edited by Jan Andrews (Press Porcépic, 1981), is subtitled "Stories and poems celebrating Canadian children" — and it is exactly that: Polish, Mennonite, Japanese and French-Canadian; Negro, Newfoundland and Icelandic — in tales of courage and adventure and magic.

Monique Corriveau's appealing story of a lonely boy seeking and defending his grief-estranged father is now translated for English-reading children (*A Perfect Day for Kites*, Groundwood Books, Douglas and McIntyre, 1981). Hyperion Press of Winnipeg has issued an accurate, informative series of 40-page Canadian albums of birds, animals, ethnic costumes (so far) illustrated with large black and white line drawings and *instructions* for coloring. Useful for both home and classroom, priced at only $4.95.

Storytelling has always been a necessary part of life to native peoples of North America. *Tales the Elders Told* (Ojibway) (Basil H. Johnston, Royal Ontario Museum, 1981), the raven stories in *Raven the Trickster* (Gail Robinson, Chatto and Windus, 1981) and *Kwakiutl Legends* (as told to Pamela Whitaker by Chief James Wallas, Hancock House, 1981) combine the deep understanding of human nature with a wry sense of consequences that barb the lessons with humor so that they stick.

Most exciting by far in this group are two Inuit books. Although *Building an Igloo* (Douglas and McIntyre, 1981) is not really intended as a children's book, Ulli Steltzer's beautiful photography will surely fascinate a child. The igloo builders wear zippered parkas and live in a house. But they have not forgotten how to build snow igloos for hunting shelters.

Ytek and the Arctic Orchid (Garnet Hewitt, Douglas and McIntyre, 1981) is an exotic item. An Inuit tale of a magical link between a young shaman and the caribou spirits, it is illustrated by Heather Woodall with impressive double spreads in warm color washes of orange and brown, contrasted with a deep blue for formidable spirits. The combination makes a moving and memorable experience.

READ CANADIAN!

BOOKS RECEIVED

Garth, Dave. *Computer studies* by Dave Garth and George Milbrandt, Toronto, Guidance Centre, 1982. 96 pp. paper, no price given 0-7713-0113-8 (Student, subject and career series 15). Forward-looking analysis of the state-of-the-art of computer use, and the wide variety of careers open to high school students.

Kunc, Norman. *Ready, willing and disabled.* Toronto, Personal Library, 1981. 111 pp. paper, $8.95. 0-920510-56-6. Practical guidebook to integrating a physically handicapped student into a regular school system. Written by one.

Martin, Jack. *Models of Classroom Management.* Calgary, Detselig Enterprises, 1981. 188 pp. paper, $10.95. 0-920490-15-8. Behavior modification, modelling, classroom meetings, the managerial approach, the teleonalytic approach, etc.

Moss, John. *A Reader's guide to the Canadian novel.* Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1981. 399 pp. paper, $12.95. 0-7710-6564-7. Alphabetical, from Atwood to Wright, with a page or two of commentary on 156 Canadian novelists, including Québécois and children's authors from 1769 to 1980. Chronological listing, cross references, index. For teachers of Canadian literature and the general reader.

Persky, Stan. *At the Lenin Shipyard: Poland and the rise of the Solidarity Trade Union.* Vancouver, New Star Books, 1981. 253 pp. paper, no price given. 0-919888-45-3. Cloth 0-919888-46-1. Timely and poignant account by a B.C. political science teacher of the 18-day strike in Poland in August, 1980.

Putman, Marie. *Mentely handicapped love.* Madeira Park, Harbour Publishing, 1981. 42 pp. paper, $4.95. 920080-03-0. Written by a strong, vibrant personality suffering from a mental handicap. Reads like a diary. The author is 20, born with brain damage.

Ross, Anne. *Teenage mothers/teenage father.* Toronto, Personal Library, 1982. 128 pp. paper, $8.95. 0-920510-39-6. A recent study with a little sociology and many case histories. All schools, and all teachers, need to know.

Schooling and society in 20th century British Columbia edited by J. Donald Wilson and David C. Jones. Calgary, Detselig Enterprises, 1980. 191 pp. paper, $11.25. 0-920490-09-3. A series of historical essays by different authors on various aspects of education in British Columbia. Last chapter is a 28-page bibliography on the history of education in B.C.

CANADA

Hutchinson, Bruce. *Uncle Percy's wonderful town.* Vancouver, Douglas and McIntyre, 1981. 203 pp. hard, $16.95. 0-88894-318-0

There have been suggestions that attempts to compile a good anthology of Canadian humor are doomed: — the covers of such a book would be too close together. Regardless of the barrage of pub-

Continued next page

licity touting this book as British Columbia's answer to Stephen Leacock, it will do nothing to change that critique. Bruce Hutchinson is simply not very good at being funny.

A Canadian newspaper man, he has twice won the Governor-General's award for non-fiction (*The unknown country; The incredible Canadian*). Now over 80 years of age he has written this fiction, a collection of episodes in a small British Columbia town in 1910. These adventures are narrated by a 14-year-old boy who never rises from the page.

In his foreword Mr. Hutchinson says innocently of *Uncle Percy's wonderful town*: "It will surprise my friends, distressing some of them." I should think so.

Some questions connected with this publication should be considered. Do previous honors earn an author immunity? Does noblesse oblige restrain fellow authors from making adverse reviews? Pierre Berton calls it "this delightful work"; Peter Newman, "a priceless read." (*Anyone* who describes *any* book with whatever accompanying adjectives as "a read" has lost me instantly.) Are they, like some other professions, closing ranks to protect one of their own or are they merely trying to honor an old gentleman?

If a charitable silence is not possible, the book must be discussed for its literary merit. The twelve adventures are stale and totally predictable. There is never anything fresh or unexpected to cause laughter. The situations are merely retellings of long outworn clichés. There is the town prostitute with heart of gold; the tear-jerker about the Canadian Melba; the loud-mouthed Hollywood producer filming a saga about Louis Riel; the fine English correspondent; the inarticulate "halfbreed"; "the bed in which Sir John A. Macdonald slept." None of these makes the book unique in any sense.

There is no believable characterization, the descriptions are commonplace, the presentation is dull, and the language is surely ill-chosen. Were people in a small village in British Columbia in 1910 likely to say: "The boss is all shook-up"? Did they defend adolescents with: "They're only kids!"? The dialect used for some of the characters is unconvincing and annoying.

Although the book has little I can recommend, the illustrations demand positive condemnation. They are pathetically bad line drawings of the calibre of those in an ancient copy of Blackie's Annual.

The thirteenth episode in *Uncle Percy's wonderful town* is completely different in tone from the others. It concerns the narrator's return 60 years later to the same town. He says, "It was a mistake to return." I echo that and extend it to the whole unfortunate book.

—Louise Scott, Courtenay

Lewis, David. *The good fight*. Toronto. Macmillan, 1981. 542 pp. hard, $24.95. 0-7715-9598-0.

A fine book by a unique, dynamic and truly great individual. Lewis, in his progress from Jewish emigrant exiled from the Soviet Union, to Rhodes Scholar; vital, driving force behind the CCF in the early days; top-ranking labor lawyer; Member of Parliament and National Leader of the NDP succeeding T.C. Douglas, relates a fascinating, powerful story of Canadian politics from the 1930s to 1958.

Brief biographical sketches of characters Lewis met in his wide-ranging career in national and international politics reveal his insight into persons and personalities. He detests dictatorships, whether of right, left or centre. Experiences in Russia and with the Communist Party (LPP) in Canada confirmed his distrust of dogmatic Marxism and his consistent opposition to any association between the Communists and the CCF.

He reveals and documents the degree to which the political and economic opponents of the CCF and socialism were willing to go. "Gentleman" George Drew reveals himself as less than gentleman. David Lewis is equally frank in recognizing his own weaknesses, those of the CCF with whom he worked, and of the Labor Union leaders with whom he associated.

In October 1955, David Lewis summed up his vision, the goal to which he had devoted his life: "To be a strong and powerful voice for the common man against the abuse and oppression of the privileged minority . . . and to forge and ever finer and higher standard of values and a richer pattern of life" for all.

Despite all setbacks, he never lost faith.
—Frank Snowsell, Kelowna

Brody, Hugh. *Maps and Dreams.* Vancouver, Douglas & McIntyre, 1981. 297 pp., hard. $19.95 0-88894-338-5.

"Are we supposed to be nice and give you our traplines so that you can put your pipeline and benefit other people? . . . These traplines are for us, so we keep them. Why cannot you guys understand that? . . . I guess you don't really understand that this is our way of life and always will be."

Maps and Dreams is a unique production: a sociologist's research report and field study aimed at both the layman and students of our native peoples.

Hugh Brody spent 18 months with a group of Beaver Indians in Northeastern B.C. as part of a research team funded by the Canadian government in response to the proposals in 1978 for an Alaska Highway natural gas pipeline. The team's object was to complete a land use and occupancy study, and *Maps and Dreams* is the product — but it is that and more.

Brody has welded together his research writing, (history, maps, and data occupying the even numbered chapters), with a collection of anecdotes resulting from his having actually lived with the people on the reserve and in the bush (odd numbered chapters). Thus he has achieved his avowed aim of presenting scientific detail in conjunction with an expression of more unfamiliar points of view.

His title is entirely apt, for it is by means of maps that both whites and Indians attempt to communicate to each other their fondest hopes, their dreams. Underlying this state of affairs, of course, is the conflict over land use — a conflict rooted in the fundamentally different perceptions each group has regarding the purpose of land.

The Indians' concerns are restricted to the surface of the land. They dream of a past in which they were free to roam in search of good hunting and fishing, of a time of unlimited access to their environment. Part of this dream is of an age in which they were also guaranteed access forever to certain areas by the white man.

Now they also dream of a future when such a situation will indeed be restored to them, or at least one in which present day incursions by industrial society are brought to a halt. They do *not* dream of large amounts of money being paid in return for the loss of their way of life. In support of these dreams they were able to show Brody, both on his maps and on their own, just which areas of northeastern B.C. are and have been so important to them.

The whites dream, very simply, of ready access to what is under the ground — and thus of unlimited development. Such a dream requires detailed, complicated maps of all descriptions, which make a mockery of treaty delineations and of the Indians' dreams for the future.

It is in the presentation of this conflict between a hunting society and an industrial society that Brody's bifocal arrangement of the chapters is of great advantage. Perhaps most importantly it enables him to present the Indians on their own terms, in their own context. He makes the point that the white stereotype of these people is necessarily invalid because it has been founded upon observations made of the Indians when they are in a hostile environment — that is, in the company of white people.

Brody cites a number of examples of the people he lived with completely effacing their everyday selves upon contact with the local white population. He also points out that it is not on the reserve that Indians are to be seen as what they really are — for the reserve is the white race's creation — but in the bush, and it is interesting to note that the people's response to almost any question he asked of them was to take him into the bush in one direction or another.

Maps and Dreams, then, has the potential to serve as a step in bringing about real understanding of these people. There is not space here to cite the many examples where Brody does help achieve this process, just to say that the book is beautifully written, beautifully *told*, and anyone reading it cannot help but come away with some disturbing thoughts about just what Canada is doing with its wilderness and its native peoples, to provide the West with the raw materials for which it seems to have an insatiable appetite.

I leave it to Brody himself to outline the very reasonable alternative approaches to the problem, which he does so admirably in the final chapter.
—Simon Ruddell, White Rock

DYSLEXIA

Vellutino, Frank R. *Dyslexia: theory and research.* Cambridge, MIT Press, 1981. 427 pp.paper, $12.50. 0-262-72007-8.

Dyslexia — a topic that is much bandied about, but few people, professional and otherwise, know what a dyslexic really is.

Vellutino's book provides an extensive review of dyslexia research through the last 85 years. He offers a critique of specific studies on which the more prominent theories of dyslexia are based, ending with an overview of previously discussed topics. Vellutino really intended to produce a research monograph dealing primarily with

his own work, but ended up with a full length book critically analyzing traditional and contemporary theories of reading disability.

This reference should be required reading for all teachers, or at least all teachers of reading. Many of the "old wives' tales" being shared about would be filed away under that heading. The text is in easy-to-follow prose and presents the subject as an extensive critique of studies, thus allowing the reader to extend his or her knowledge of the theory behind dyslexia. The book provides very few diagrams and charts, but they are compatible with the text's development.

Since the book is quite extensive in its material, I suggest that the reader may find, in general, Part Three: General Summary and Conclusion, and in particular, the last section, on remediation, to be of special interest to the general classroom teacher of reading.

There is an extensive listing of references available at the back of the book. For the student of reading disorders, this list will be found to be of inestimable value.
—Harold D. McTaggart, Langley

EDUCATION and PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITY

Public Involvement: Why and How — Here and Now, Texts of Speeches Delivered at Plenary Sessions, CEA National Workshop/ Seminar. **Toronto: Canadian Education Association, 1981. 54 pp. paper, $4.00. 0-919078-70-2.**

Strategies for Public Involvement: Final Report of the CEA Task Force on Public Involvement in Educational Decisions. **Toronto: Canadian Education Association, 1981. 104 pp. paper, $6.00. 0-919078-97-4.**

"Once upon a time, the animals decided they must do something heroic to meet the problems of a 'new world' so they organized a school."

This first line from a short story entitled *"The Animal School"* provides a working focus that exemplifies the role of public involvement in the establishment and maintenance of public education. Each of these texts provides a focus for the discussion of particular aspects of the public's right to participate in all aspects of educational governance.

Public Involvement: Why and How — Here and Now is the jumping-off point for a popularized viewpoint of the problems of public involvement across Canada. The authors are practising administrators who have taken as an aspect of their job public involvement in decisions affecting education.

Strategies for Public Involvement is the conceptual analytical framework for the discussion of public participation in educational policy development. This text provides an overview of current practice in Canadian educational planning. As a theoretical document, it provides a number of definitions regarding public participation in educational policy development. For example, the introduction states that public involvement occurs when three basic conditions are met:

- School boards make decisions to invite the public to participate in an issue.
- The public is made aware of that offer to participate.
- Members of the public are interested and willing to participate in making those decisions so that it is the school board that involves the public's "participation" in a decision, rather than the school board's participating jointly with the public in all decisions regarding educational management.

The success of this approach is determined on the basis of the issues the school board brings to the public. For example, in Chapter 6 a number of cases are cited of public involvement, both positive and negative. However, as the text states, there are more positive outcomes than negative so the rate of success is a determination of how a particular issue is handled.

Public Involvement: Why and How —

Here and Now is an amalgam of speeches delivered at plenary sessions of the CEA national workshop. As such, they do not provide the necessary theoretical background for full discussion of public involvement in education. The document, when used in conjunction with *Strategies for Public Involvement*, may provide an additional insight into public policy-making in education. However, most readers will be quite satisfied with *Strategies for Public Involvement*.

I strongly recommend the latter book to administrators interested in educational policy development. With the reservations mentioned, I suggest that the other one be used only as a follow-up document.
—Ian Ferguson, Nakusp

George, Donald A. *An engineer's view of science education.* Ottawa, Science Council of Canada, 1981. 31 pp. paper, free. 0-662-11598-8. Aikenhead, Glen S. *Science in Social issues: implications for teaching.* Ottawa, Science Council of Canada, 1980. 81 pp. paper, free. 0-662-11183-4.

The Science and Education Committee of the Science Council of Canada began its studies in 1980 with three overall aims:

(1) to establish a documented basis for describing the present purposes and general characteristics of science teaching in Canadian schools;

(2) to conduct an historical analysis of science education in Canada;

(3) to stimulate active deliberation concerning future options for science education in Canada.

The council points out that it has, at present, no collective views on desirable directions for science education in Canada. It is seeking to develop such a view and to this end is actively soliciting a diversity of opinions concerning possible directions. The Council is publishing a number of discussion papers that, it hopes will result in a good understanding of the state and needs of science education in this country. Following are surveys of two of the discussion papers.

An Engineer's View of Science Education, by Donald A. George.

Professor George argues that science education should emphasize the relevance of science to technology, removing science from the abstract and introducing significant elements of engineering and technology into Canadian schools. He states that scientists and an inadequately informed public are increasingly isolated from each other, and public support for science is on the decline.

Some of his statements are challenging. In the 1950s, following Sputnik, decisions were made to reform science education and the nature of the reforms was left to the science establishment: "science is too important to be left to scientists." Two decades later science education is in disarray. The undeniable improvements in the quality of science education have been accompanied by decreased enrolments in high school science classes. Science taught by teachers who themselves are not attracted to it, and perhaps came to dislike it, cannot be stimulating.

The greatest effect of compulsory science may be an alienation from science. Even the existence (of engineering science) is unknown to the vast majority of people whose science education is limited to physics, mathematics, chemistry and biology. Science is not just these four subjects.

Science in Social Issues, Implications for Teaching, by Glen S. Aikenhead.

Professor Aikenhead claims that while science and technology occupy an increasing phase in contemporary society, science taught in our schools and universities to our future politicians, decision-makers and voting citizens is almost completely isolated from a social and political context. If Canadians are to comprehend and cope with the increasing impact of science and technology on their lives, science education must rethink its goals. Where in our society can judges and other citizens develop a literacy about science and the wisdom for utilizing scientific thoughts?

Canadians require answers to three valid questions:

(1) What does science actually do, and what is it really all about?

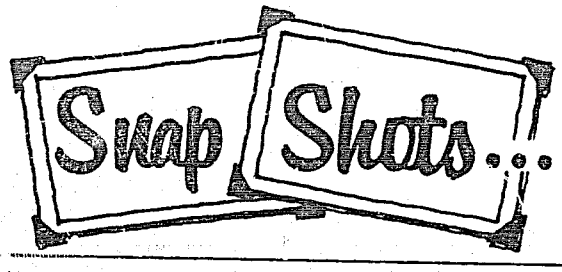
(2) What are the limitations of science: what can it do and what can it say?

(3) How can science . . . be used to help Canadians resolve "real life" social problems, and cope with, and manage, a complex scientific, technological society?

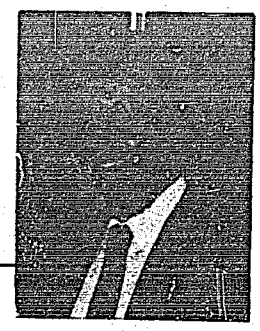
A reorientation of the current science program is being proposed. The study of science has traditionally been socially and culturally sterile, and instruction has not prepared many students for their future social responsibilities. Altering the traditional view of good science teaching will require concentrated action on a number of fronts. Just as an individual is shaped by his or her cultural environment, science is moulded by societal environment.

Training, education and miseducation develop in the areas of: (1) scientific knowledge; (2) scientific inquiry; (3) the characteristics and limitations of science; (4) the interrelationships of science and society; (5) feelings or attitudes. In the students' eyes, science should *not be isolated* from real life. The collective consciousness of the scientific community recognizes the satisfaction of curiosity as its principal goal.

The Science Council also distributes periodically a bulletin that outlines significant events in Canadian science education. Secondary teachers, and especially science teachers, will find both the bulletin and the discussion papers stimulating and possibly challenging. They may be obtained free from: Science Council of Canada, 100 Metcalfe Street, Ottawa, K1P 5M1.
—J. Arthur Lower, Vancouver



GEOFF HARGREAVES



THE MESSAGE OF THE MEDIUM

●"You must go and consult Tim," said Lynda, the substitute. "He's in Victoria for only a few days. Then he's heading back to the Kootenays."

Lynda's one of our most effective substitute teachers. When you know she's coming in to replace you, you can lie back with your pills, pastilles, and tissues, and really get the best out of your illness.

"You think he's the real thing?" I asked.

"He revealed to my Aunt Milly that her inferiority complex was caused by a cutting remark her father made about children. And Aunt Milly actually overheard him, while she was in her mother's womb."

"Gee!"

* * * *

Tim was busy when I arrived. Three young women, their clothes an assemblage of items from Katmandu, Lima, Manila, and the Goodwill, were gathered about him, their eyes dilated with adoration.

Without getting up, Tim said, "Some unexpected things cropped up. So I'm way behind my schedule. I've still got to do a reading for Rainbow here."

Rainbow peered at me from behind her granny glasses.

"You can stay and have some tea till then," Tim added.

As we drank tea, Tim told us something of his history. He had left the States, disgusted at the thought of fighting in Vietnam, and had trekked all the way to India.

"Wow!" said Rainbow.

"Wow!" said her two friends.

He had been little more than a shiftless crook, he admitted freely. Then, one day, contrary to all habit, he had returned to a shopkeeper in Bombay a tablet of incense he had stolen. Suddenly his spine seemed to burst into flame. Startled by the unprecedented act of honesty, the Kundalini energy lying dormant around his coccyx had shot up his marrow and was now setting his brains on fire.

"Wow!" said Rainbow's friends.

"Wow!" said she.

Ever since that day he had been psychic. He had been over the bridge of death and back again, and was now fearless.

"Wow, wow, wow!" said Rainbow and her friends.

At this point I left, and Rainbow had her reading.

* * * *

When I came back, Tim was settling a pillow behind his head and preparing to go into a trance. As he sank below the surface of consciousness, his left hand nimbly clicked on a tape recorder.

He had explained earlier, to the girls and me, that he acted only as a medium between us and our Higher Selves. We could ask questions through him and the Higher Selves would respond.

Judged by its responses, my Higher Self is a bit on the stuffy side. It has an intermittent penchant for referring to me as *thou* and *my son* and to itself as *we*. But that, of course, may only be the Lower Self judging things by its own standards.

Anyway, it told me that I am treading a dry and dusty road in search of water. Suddenly I see it, a silver pool. I advance toward it. A conventional school appears on the spot. I enter the school and everything vanishes. Illusion! The same thing happens a second time. The third time that I see the pool, a school with turrets and waving flags appears above it. I enter. All remains in place. And the school expands indefinitely.

(If your school has turrets with flags on, is constructed over a swamp or has a swimming pool in the basement, and is actively engaged in a building program, I'd love to hear from you.)

The Higher Self then offered me some reflections on the nature of time and eternity. I recognized the ideas. It and I must frequent the same section of the library, but it obviously hasn't seen me there.

"We are now available for questions regarding past lives, if such enquiries are of interest to thee, my son," it said.

"Sure," I said. "Fire away."

It turns out, I'm sorry to say, that I've never been anybody famous or glamorous or even amusing.

Way back in the third or fourth century, when the Roman Empire was having one hell of a good time, I was living in a cave in the desert, whipping myself with thorns to ward off the temptation to join the party.

Then a dozen or so centuries later I was a religious fanatic. The Higher Self didn't specify in the name of what religion I went around making life miserable for myself and everyone nearby. But then one religion's fanaticism is on par with another's.

"What about the life just before this one?" I asked, hoping that I might have been Amor de Cosmos or Chief Maquinna.

No such luck! In the Victorian era I was a music teacher! I had a class of band students who never practised, were mostly tone-deaf, and preferred fishing to music anyway. My demands for perfection from these imperfect students led to frustration, and frustration led quickly to drink.

The Higher Self then rounded things off with a few words of advice. "Thy task in this lifetime, my son, is to compensate for the rigidities of the past."

"You mean, I've got to lower my academic standards, give religion the go-by, and wallow in sensuality, to make up for three lifetimes of putting on the dog?"

"It is our advice."

"Wow," said my Lower Self, "wow, wow!"○

Geoff Hargreaves, our regular columnist, teaches in Cowichan Senior Secondary School.