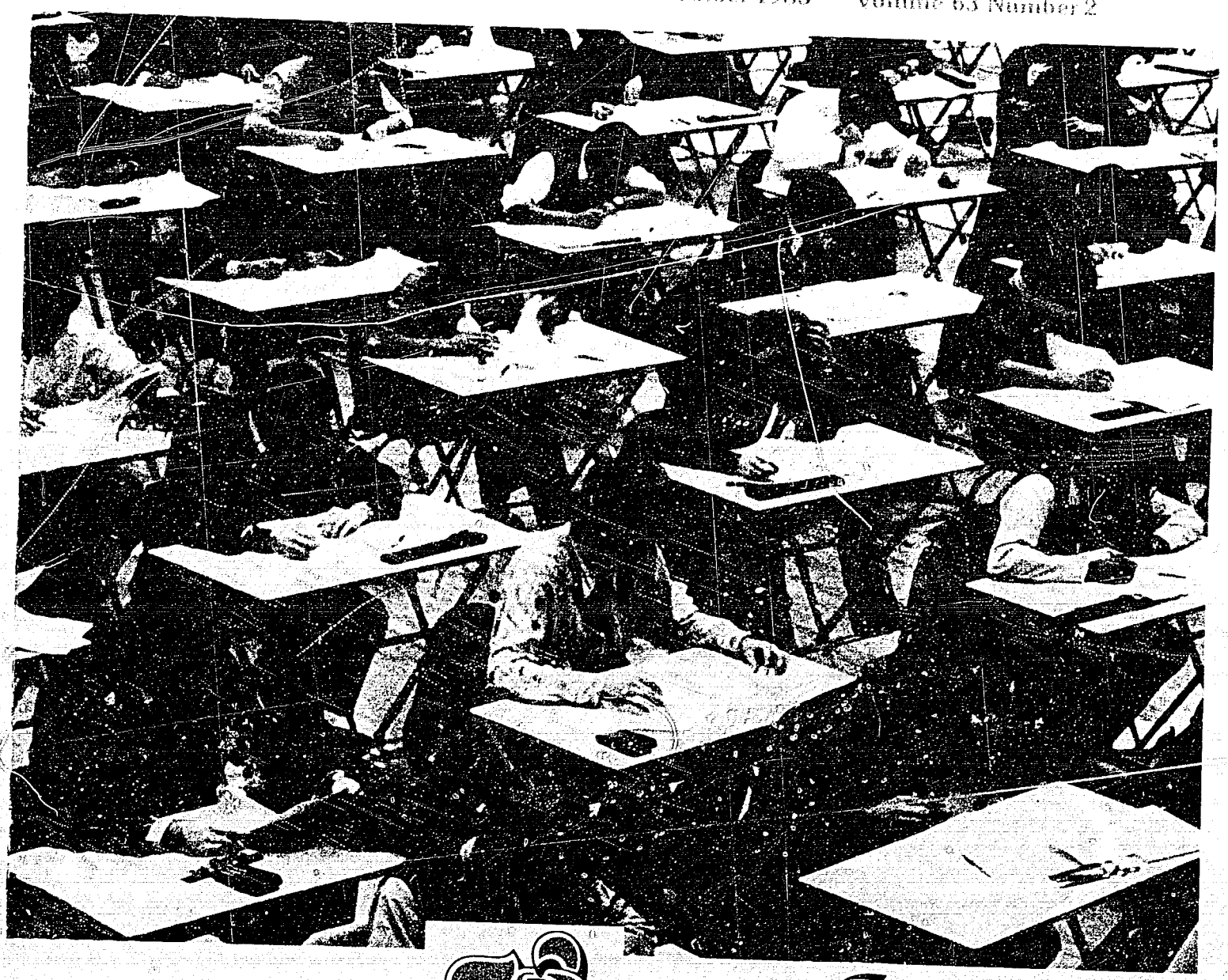
THE B.C. TEACHER

November-December 1983 Volume 63 Number 2



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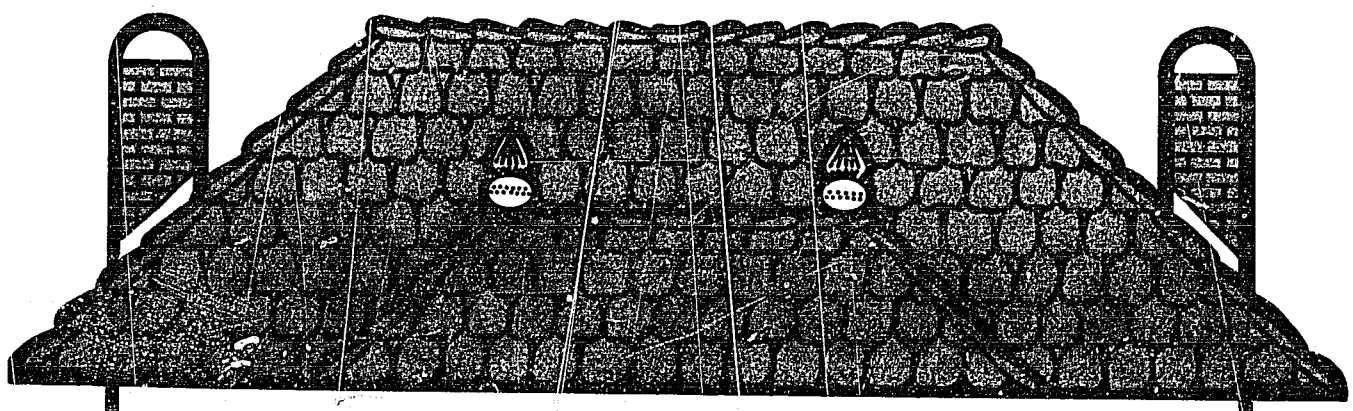

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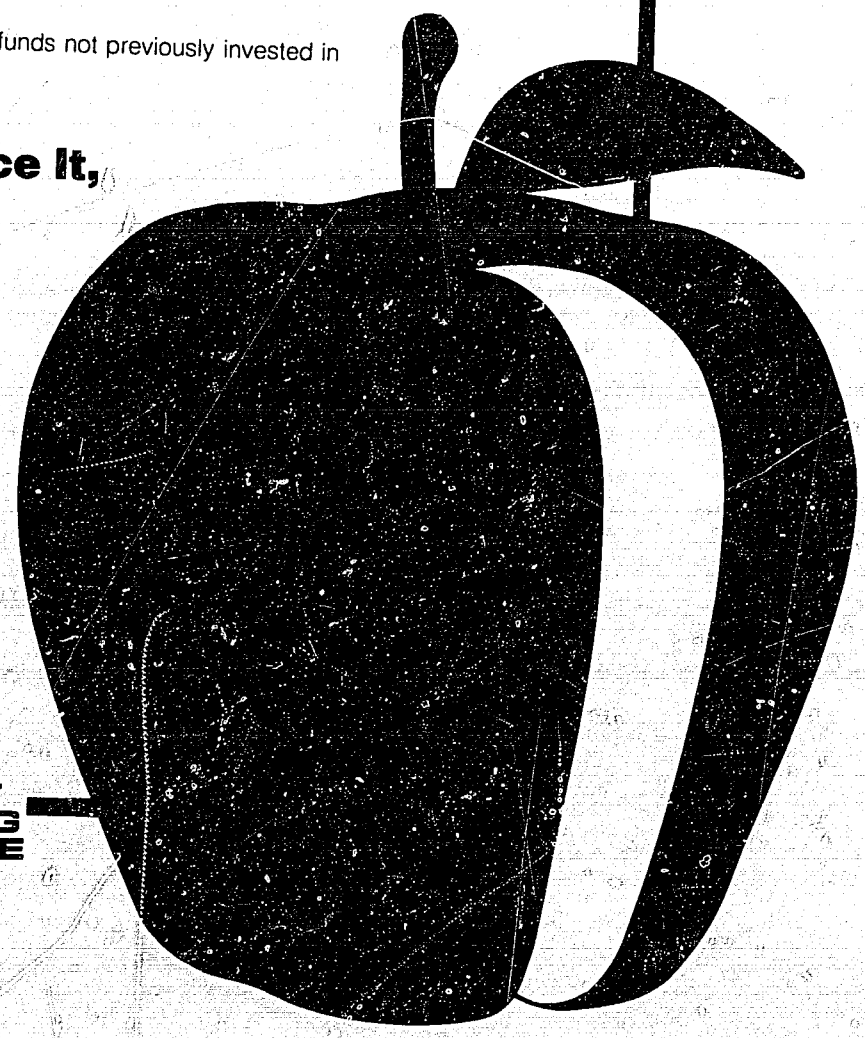

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COVER STORY

Perhaps the most important professional issue facing teachers today is the one of how to evaluate student performance. The government's decision to require every Grade 12 student to write provincial examinations in the academic subjects is a vote of non-confidence in the teaching profession, and has returned education to a by-gone era in which external exams dictated what went on in secondary schools. There is a real danger that secondary *education* will now revert to secondary *schooling*, as teachers' main responsibility becomes that of getting their students through the examinations. In this issue we present 12 perspectives on testing, including pros, cons and research findings.

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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From Our Readers

COMPUTER ISSUE A HIT

●I want to congratulate you on the September-October edition. It was extremely informative and highly professional.

The subject of computers is a fascinating one, and your edition exploited it to the hilt. Your editorial was extremely pertinent and I agreed with it whole-heartedly.

Incidentally, I do enjoy receiving *The B.C. Teacher*. I am pleased that retired teachers are on your subscription list. Thanks a lot.

Ken McKenzie,
Vancouver

●I feel compelled to respond to Barry Underwood's article ("In the World of Technology Where are We?") in the September-October issue.

Barry may be interested to know that computing in high schools in B.C. started much earlier than in 1979, and with many more dedicated teachers than the two he named. I recall introducing Computer Science 11 and 12 courses in North Vancouver in 1974 when Carson Graham and Argyle Secondary Schools both purchased Hewlett Packard 6300 mini computers, the forerunner of today's micro computers. Other teachers, such as Jack Schellenberg and John Petrak in Vancouver, did much work for students and teachers in B.C. at that time.

In fact, a few of us gave much time and energy on such committees as the B.C. Computers in Education Committee, the B.C. Association of Mathematics Teachers and several other local and provincial committees. In 1977 I spent many hours as part of a committee under the chairmanship of Dr. Peck of UBC, which wrote a report entitled "Educational Computing in British Columbia" for the then Minister of Education, Dr. Patrick McGeer.

Some of us served as workshop leaders on countless occasions throughout the province, as we attempted to enlighten our colleagues about the new discipline that would soon be upon us all.

Surely many deserve recognition for hard work, dedication, and foresight then and now.

Ian deGroot,
North Vancouver

●In answer to Jean Norris: STARS IN HER EYES (letters page, September-October):

Instead of becoming a volunteer Hospital Homebound teacher, I invite Jean to join the H/H Provincial Specialist Association (PSA), and to work in conjunction with us to improve both quantity and quality of this service; as well as to promote the specialties required of an H/H teacher. (To prepare teachers, U.S. universities offer a complete training course in H/H teaching.)

Section 155 of the School Act requires school boards to provide education to all students. In other words boards are not absolved of the responsibility to provide education to students who cannot attend school. Hospital and Homebound programs are funded by the Ministry of Education, which in turn creates jobs for teachers who hold the proper qualifications. Volunteers undermine both programs and positions; but a volunteer to help us collect and compile data would be a valuable creditor to education and children. To substantiate the need for H/H teachers our PSA has produced a draft listing 27 objections to boards who use substitutes in place of permanently hired H/H teachers.

H/H students cover a wide gamut: those who are ill, have had surgery, suffer from diseases (some on a part-time basis needing intermittent service), accident victims, school phobics (usually Grade 9-10) needing a bridge back into school, terminal illness, the emotionally upset, pregnant, suspended, correspondence student, etc.

The H/H teacher needs special skills to teach all courses to any or all of these kinds of children, at all grade levels in a variety of environments. In addition the H/H teacher must be aware of the side effects of drugs and have extraordinary inter-personal skills to deal with the varying moods that accompany long term illness, family crisis situations, and outside agencies. Files and statistical records need to be kept up to date, and professional development must be ongoing.

H/H teachers are vulnerable to contagious diseases, extra insurance costs, driving hazards, and internal and external misconceptions.

The role of H/H teachers is unique. Help and support Hospital and Homebound teachers and you become an advocate for handicapped children; and while your eyes may fill with tears, they will overflow with stars.

For more information write to:
Margaret Robertson, President
Hospital/Homebound PSA
Box 1255, Salmon Arm, B.C.
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MAGAZINE USEFUL

●Thank you for your publication. We in the Interior do not have the ready access to people of the BCTF office and the educators at the coast universities. Your magazine gives us food for thought, data to support various viewpoints and, most refreshing, discussions on educational issues in the subdued world of print instead of the emotional and often supercharged world of audio (or an audio void, depending on the speaker).

John V. Christofferson,
150 Mile House

A SUPERINTENDENT'S VIEW

NOT AGAIN!

The former director of examinations for the province condemns the ministry's decision to reimpose government examinations. The new exams won't work, and will aggravate the very conditions they are intended to redress.

E. A. (TED) KILLOUGH

●Ten years ago I had the experience of being present in Victoria during an exciting "coming of age" rite for British Columbia secondary school education — the end of Grade 12 government exams!

That was a time of tremendous optimism, enthusiasm and confidence in our students, ourselves, our profession, our future, and especially in education, whose acknowledged importance then was beyond serious challenge.

What changes 10 years, and especially the last two, have brought in these positive conditions and attitudes.

And given the serious reversals and retrenchment recently experienced by education, it's not surprising that provincial examinations, long the symbol *par excellence* of centralized control, again should be paraded as the panacea for our real and imaginary education ills.

In case some have forgotten, for better than 100 years provincial examinations determined the educational fate of virtually all B.C. students who wanted to obtain a "higher education" at the high school level and beyond. In days of our educational infancy, these provincial exams decided not only who would advance from one public school grade level to the next, but also who would enter and who would complete high school, and who would be certified as teachers and at what levels as well.

As we grew during the period of educational childhood characteristic of our first 50 years as a province, we successfully placed aside all elementary school, and then all high school level provincial promotional examinations in favor of on-site decisions by teachers. By the end of this period we were sufficiently bold to be restricting centralized control via provincial exams largely to determining who would get into and who would get out of high school.

Discontinuance of high school entrance exams during the '30s signalled arrival of a bright new era of educational adolescence, when the maturing public school system could be trusted to make all student placement decisions except for those about high school completion.

Throughout the war years and beyond, however, the function of our high schools still was restrictive, almost to the point of being single-purpose — to prepare a select group of students, almost all of whom lived in the larger urban centres, for matriculation into university. Overseas battlefields and blossoming, labor-intensive industrial expansion could be counted upon to gobble up three-quarters or more of the students

Reimposing exams is a vote of non-confidence in teachers.

E. A. (Ted) Killough is Superintendent of Schools for the Maple Ridge School District. From 1964 to 1975 he served as Assistant Registrar (Examinations) and as Registrar and Director of Examinations and Teacher Certification for the B.C. Ministry of Education.

who were not fit material for "The University," and therefore should not be in high school.

High school curricula were very academic, inflexible, highly prescriptive, and suited to the needs of "The University," which largely determined and controlled it. High school matriculation standards were uniform, consistent, demanding, and suited to the needs of "The University," which largely determined and controlled them.

There was a reasonable match, then, among curricula, teaching styles, student registrants, public expectations, labor market demands, and university needs, as all these affected high schools. Under these circumstances a centralized provincial exam system at the high school completion level was not seriously inappropriate.

Rapidly increasing high school enrolments in the immediate post-war years, coupled with burgeoning demand for a better-educated work force in the new industrial society, and growing public appreciation for the economic, social and political advantages of a well-schooled citizenry in a democracy, combined to bring about major changes in secondary school organization, curricula, and emphasis during the '50s and '60s. The former Matriculation Program initially was restyled University Entrance, and then simply the University Program, in recognition that high school completion now could be a valuable student objective in itself, and that graduation, even on the academic program, no longer automatically guaranteed admission into the university.

At the same time, most of our secondary schools (as they now were called) continued to be overwhelmingly academically biased in purpose, design, organization, orientation and operation. Teachers, parents, and particularly students knew the University Program had all the prestige — and with it, the preferred students, teachers, materials, equipment and facilities.

The General Program, in contrast, received hand-me-down curricula, resources, students, and all too frequently, teachers, in accordance with its lesser status as the "non-academic" program. And during this period government also reinforced this fact and perception through the centralized examination system it continued to operate.

Provincial examinations were restricted to the University Program, and to the prestigious academic courses within it. The mystique of these examinations permeated the entire fabric of school life — the courses students took, the teachers they had, other classmates with whom students associated, the relative worth of students and teachers, the school calendar and timetable, and even much of the educational jargon of the day. For these examination results determined not only which students would pass or fail, but also the professional futures of teachers and the status of schools.

Public schools with "good" examination results were granted accreditation, and with it the authority to determine the final standing of up to 60 per cent of the higher-achieving students enrolled in each senior academic course. Those students attending non-accredited schools, as well as their counterparts achieving at or below average and those writing for scholarship in the accredited schools, had their academic futures determined by performance on "departmental examinations" written at the end of June (or on August "supplementals" for those who failed in June).

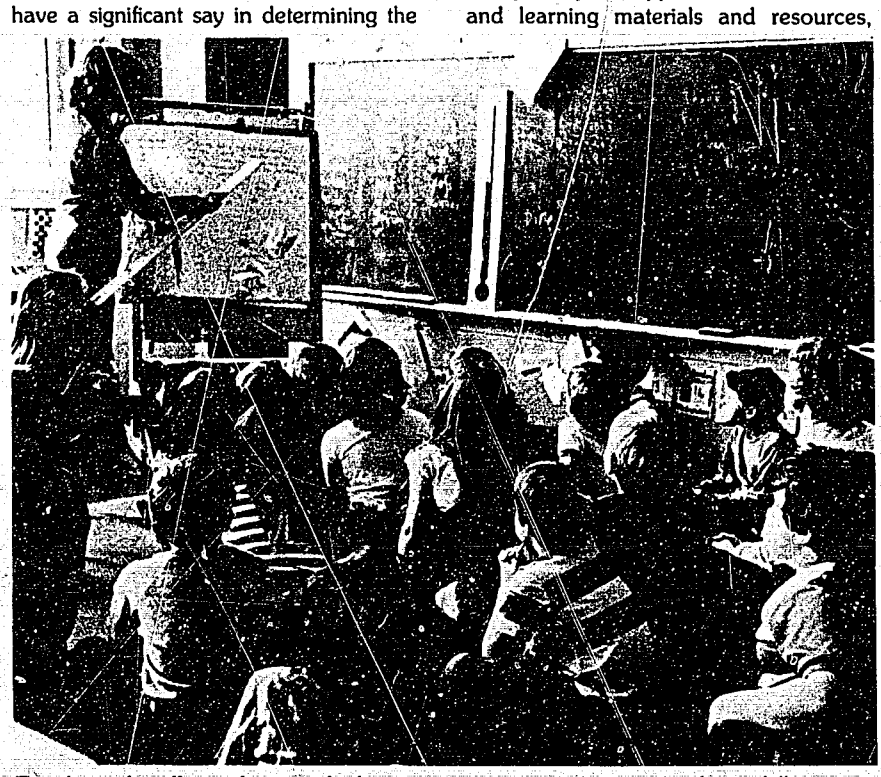
The preparation and marking of these examinations and the determination and release of exam results were carried out by Ministry (Department) of Education personnel under the general direction of a Board of Examiners made up of representatives from the university and the ministry. Experienced public school teachers set and marked the exams under ministry supervision. Before exam marks were entered on student transcripts and released, raw scores were statistically treated to provide consistency between final exam results and course difficulty, between results for the same course from year to year, and among results of different courses within the same year.

In total, then, teachers in the '50s did have a significant say in determining the final standing of secondary students in academic courses: by assigning final recommendation grades to better than half of the large majority of students who attended accredited schools; by being involved in preparing the exams themselves; by marking all the exams administered.

Nonetheless, curriculum prescription, interpretation and emphasis still were largely controlled by provincial examinations that, in turn, were very heavily influenced by university needs and perceptions rather than those of teacher and students in the secondary schools.

The '60s brought the last step in the process of educational evolution and maturation that preceded our final "coming of age" with an end to provincial examinations in 1973. To the major advances of teacher-determined student recommendations and involvement in setting and marking these examinations now was added the authority of subject teachers to determine one-half the final course mark of the minority of students who were required to write a provincial examination.

More important, major secondary school reorganization and curriculum revisions introduced at the beginning of the decade as a consequence of the Chant Royal Commission on Education, added important diversity and stature to the non-academic program. Exciting new programs, resource courses, broader choice of texts, and other less prescriptive approaches to curricula and learning materials and resources,



Thanks to the efforts of critics of education, many people believe that basic skills are not taught in schools. This class gives the lie to that charge, but the widespread misconception is one of the reasons for the reimposition of provincial exams.

meant far greater opportunities for a rapidly growing number of students and teachers to select, modify and innovate to ensure a secondary school program better suited to varying needs.

Changes of at least equal importance also were occurring at the post-secondary school level to reduce the very close relationship which historically existed between the secondary schools and the University of British Columbia. New university departments were established, and existing ones moved to adjust their admission requirements to reflect changing needs and expanding student enrolments.

The monopoly of post-secondary school education long-held by a single university now also was ended by the endowment of two more public universities within the province, by the full development of BCIT, by establishment of community colleges throughout B.C., and by the opening of several independent universities, colleges and institutes.

All these changes argued the inappropriateness of continuing a centralized provincial examination system that long had been a key to ministry control of and university influence over secondary school programs, course content, student enrolment, teaching styles, student success rates, and operating costs.

An end to the long history of these examinations consequently appeared to have arrived with their discontinuance by the ministry 10 years ago last June. This decision appeared to be a vote of confidence in the professional competence and integrity of public school teachers, as well as in the capacity of the public secondary school system generally, to manage affairs in a mature, responsible manner without direct intervention of the central authority in determining secondary school completion rates. Our public school system finally had reached maturity.

Ministry thinking now seems to have reversed itself. In its recent announcement that provincial examinations are being reintroduced this year, the Ministry of Education gave three reasons for this action: to ensure Grade 12 students meet consistent provincial standards of achievement in academic subjects; to ensure graduating students from all schools in the province will be treated equitably when applying for admission to universities and other post-secondary institutes; and to respond to strong public concerns for improved standards of education.

Is it reasonable to expect the exams to achieve these objectives? At what cost? Are the anticipated advantages that may result sufficient to offset major disadvantages? The following are among the many important issues raised by the decision on examinations.

Up to now teachers have searched for materials and methods to enrich the educational experience of their students. Now, in fairness to their students, they will have to concentrate almost entirely on what may be on the exam. Yet people will call that education.

- A centralized examination system of the type envisaged is financially expensive to establish and maintain. Is this a wise allocation of education dollars during a period of rapidly diminishing resources? It is important to bear in mind that unlike the '50s and '60s when only the smaller half of students ineligible for recommendation were required to write examinations, the new plan demands that all students enrolled in the academic courses write provincial finals. Comparative costs therefore will be much higher.
- A centralized examination system of quality is very extravagant in professional resources, including the numbers of persons and their energy and time necessary to ensure acceptable standards of examination preparation, printing, distribution, administration and collection, marking, determination of scores, and preparation and release of results. It will be difficult to get enough experienced, practising teachers to undertake these tasks, particularly as already heavy teacher work loads further increase during budget restraint. Does this mean the exam system will come to depend upon non-teachers, unemployed teachers and others who are not teaching the courses being examined?
- Even provided that the necessary teaching personnel is available to the examination system, it still will be difficult to provide system-wide exams that measure performance in prescribed course content in a manner that is fair, equitable and consistent. For example, statistical treatment of all raw exam scores would be required to ensure pass/failure rates that are fair, equitable, and consistent: among different courses at the same exam sitting; between results for the same course exam from year to year; and in relation to overall course difficulty. To date there is no clear commitment that statistical treatment of this nature will be provided.
- This examination system will encourage bias and imbalance in prescribed curriculum as teachers, and especially students, inevitably and increasingly concentrate on those selected components that readily lend themselves to centralized pencil and paper testing. Examination format that permits rapid hand or machine scoring may aggravate this condition.
- The examination system being introduced once again will bring about greater status and preferred resources for those secondary school programs, teachers, students, facilities and courses that are "academic," and commensurate down-grading of the "non-academic."
- An extensive examination system will reduce the actual available instructional time for teachers to teach, and students to learn.
- Increasingly the design, direction and control of secondary curricula for the majority of students will be influenced unduly by the universities in their efforts to have prepared and to select the minority who will continue with university studies.
- One outcome of the examination system is likely to be exam results that discriminate against some and in favor of others as a consequence of such variables as geographic location and size of school.
- Academically oriented students will be disinclined to sample broadly from school curricula and to be involved in other important aspects of school life and learning. Such areas as the fine arts, athletics, and student service and leadership will be much the poorer for it.
- Secondary school discipline problems and drop-out rates will increase appreciably, both because of changing emphasis in favor of "academic" curricula and instruction, and because students intending direct employment or technical/vocational training after Grade 12 either will be forced into lower-status courses or will be required to compete against university-bound students in academic courses inappropriate to their needs or aptitudes.
- Administration of the exam system will take principals and other professionals away from higher priority tasks, and seriously inconvenience or penalize at least

some students. For example, it is unlikely students writing exams in June will be able to meet autumn registration deadline dates of at least post-secondary institutions outside the province. Students writing August supplemental exams will not even have their final results before the new school/academic year is well under way. And once again, students who live farther from the sites of the post-secondary institutions are likely to face the greatest problems.

- Giving a two-or three-hour final exam and an entire year's study and achievement equal weighting in deciding the student's final grade in a course is unrealistic and unfair both to the teacher and to the conscientious student. At the same time this weighting system seems to be more protective of the student who demonstrates poor work and study habits during the school year.
- There is a real danger, too, that students, and particularly teachers, will be expected to demonstrate a high degree of consistency between school and exam marks when major discrepancies may in fact be in order. Serious variations may be the result of inconsistent student performance, for example, or a consequence of the two evaluations measuring significantly different content, skills, concepts or abilities.
- Equal weighting of school and exam marks to arrive at a single final grade for a course also is likely to discriminate against the school that grades accurately and fairly, and in favor of the school that overevaluates the performance of its students. Consequently, students and teachers in the former type of school may be under some jeopardy, whereas their fellow students and teachers in the latter type of school may be viewed as performing better because their final success rates appear to be higher.

CONDITIONS COULD WORSEN

There are many other arguments that could be made against reintroducing the proposed provincial examination system. Perhaps most significant, though, is the strong possibility that rather than respond favorably to the three purposes given by the ministry as justification for this decision, the examination system that has been announced well may aggravate the very conditions its implementation is intended to redress.

For example, it would be a retrograde step to have Grade 12 students meet consistent provincial standards of achievement in academic subjects if these provincial standards are consistently inconsistent! Having the students consistently meet provincial standards that are less appropriate and less valid than those now existing would be similarly regrettable. Both of these are possible results of the exam system.

Further, secondary school accreditations, provincial learning assessment tests, standardized tests, and much more all provide the ministry, school districts and the public with much information valuable in monitoring and evaluating performance and in reassuring those unfamiliar with the facts who might question the very good job our schools already are doing.

How will forcing large numbers of students to quit school prematurely or to be marked as failures improve standards in education?

There similarly would be questionable value in achieving the objective of ensuring equitable treatment of students seeking post-secondary school admission if the final grades providing the basis of that treatment are less valid indicators of actual student achievement, or are poorer predictors of future success than are the school grades now being used by these institutions in making these decisions.*

In any event, it seems wholly inappropriate to force the vast majority of students who now proceed through secondary school without intending to go to university, to meet the requirements intended to select the minority who will continue with their studies. Our several universities, colleges and institutes are all autonomous, and very capable of selecting their own registrants in accordance with differing requirements and expectations. Surely they are arguing neither for simple, uniform criteria of selection, nor for the public school system to make all selection decisions for them!

Finally, will this examination system redress what is purported to be public concern for improved standards in education? What evidence is there of the nature and the extent of this concern? Traditionally our students have performed well in most comparisons with students from other provinces and other nations. Are there now data that establish otherwise?

In any event, how will forcing large numbers of students to take course work inappropriate to their needs, interests and abilities, and others to discontinue their education at an earlier stage result in improved standards in education? Students who currently do well in academic courses will continue to do so with or without provincial examinations, and forcing large numbers of other students either to quit school prematurely or to be marked as failures is not going to alter this basic condition.

Our current secondary school curricula generally are relevant, diverse, well developed and appropriate to the broad spectrum of student needs. In response to changing conditions and times, our schools now perform greatly enhanced roles as social, cultural, and recreational as well as academic institutions. Perhaps the apparent public concern actually illustrates a lack of understanding about the changing nature and composition of our secondary school population, and about the expanded mandate of the schools. Perhaps, too, it reflects the general state of apprehension and concern during a time of major economic and social instability and uncertainty. An examination system is unlikely to alter these conditions.

Equally important, an examination system designed for a by-gone era in education is inconsistent with the high calibre of competent, confident professionals, with extensive training and expertise, who now teach and supervise in our schools. These are the same teachers whom the ministry now relies on when designing curriculum, selecting texts, implementing programs, teaching students, and designing provincial tests, and now also proposes to rely on for setting and marking provincial examinations. Surely our secondary school public teachers are comparatively as well qualified and as entitled to continue to determine the final grades of all students whom they teach as are their counterparts in other provincially funded components of the education system.

No, the disadvantages of a provincial examination system significantly outweigh any short-term educational advantages that might result from their return to the secondary school system. ○

*See Daniel R. Birch's article elsewhere in this issue.

THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION'S VIEW

WHY PROVINCIAL EXAMINATIONS?

The Minister of Education gives his government's rationale for requiring all Grade 12 students to write government exams in the academic subjects.

THE HONORABLE JACK HEINRICH, MINISTER OF EDUCATION

●In August, I announced that beginning this school year students enrolled in Grade 12 academic subjects would be required to write provincial examinations.

There were three basic reasons for this decision.

Firstly, our government believes strongly that students graduating from our high schools should be achieving challenging standards that are consistent across the province. We believe that any student graduating from a secondary school in British Columbia should be assured of achieving a standard of education that is comparable to that of any other student graduating from one of our secondary schools.

Secondly, a graduate applying for admission to a college or university should be assured of being treated equitably in the admissions process and be assured that high school marks will be taken at face value. A student must not be discriminated against because a high school has had a tradition of inconsistent grading patterns that have caused the post-secondary institute to view students' marks from that high school with suspicion.

Finally, we introduce testing to reassure the public that we are serious about quality in our schools. While a provincial examination program is not the panacea to the many problems facing our schools, we believe it is a necessary ingredient in re-establishing a sense of focus and direction and a necessary element to improved public confidence in the public school system.

The decision to return to Grade 12 exams after a 10-year absence was not taken lightly by me or my colleagues. There is no question that while provincial examinations and testing programs are strongly favored by citizens, a number of educators tend to oppose their use.

One reason given by opponents is that provincial examinations force teachers to "teach to the exams." The expression "teach to exams" can have two quite distinct meanings: teaching answers to the specific test questions; or teaching abilities and understandings prescribed in the curriculum that will enable students to answer questions better.

Teaching answers to specific test questions is obviously unethical and would not provide students any learning that is of lasting value. The second is not only appropriate but represents the most basic responsibility of a teacher: ensuring that students are taught the prescribed curriculum.

There is a potential problem: teachers may tend to focus on what is to be examined, and if what is examined year after year represents only one small part of the prescribed curriculum, students will be short-changed. I am confident that much has been learned about measurement and

If it were economically feasible I would have provincial exams in all secondary courses.

evaluation over the past 10 years, and that this problem is not a serious one. In short, provincial exams should encourage teaching to the curriculum and promote more effective and purposeful teaching.

Another reason given by those opposing exams is a reluctance toward the application of uniform standards across the province. They believe educational standards and expectations should vary from student to student and from community to community.

Few teachers accept this approach, but when education is guided by such beliefs, confrontation with parents and community leaders is inevitable. In my view, this approach is unacceptable. While parents expect teachers to use different methods and expect educators to be sensitive to the unique needs of children, they do not want expectations and standards lowered.

When the model of teaching involves systematic instruction toward common goals for learning, external exams are not only useful; they are, in my view, essential.

Critics of provincial exams often claim that the exams will be used to deny students the opportunity to further their education. I have no hesitation in stating that a student who has not met acceptable Grade 12 academic standards should not be admitted to a post-secondary institution. Provincial exams planned for this year will help to ensure that uniform standards are satisfied in academic subjects. If it were economically feasible, I would insist that provincial exams be administered in all secondary courses.

An important point is to observe what is available to students now compared with 20 years ago. Our province is now blessed with a full range of educational options. The emergence of regional colleges and institutes, the expansion of adult and continuing educational opportunities, and the development of distance education programs all help to ensure that doors are kept open for all students.

Clearly we have reached a point in our history where both the parents and the public want students to receive as much education as possible, but they want meaningful standards to be achieved. They are demanding that a graduation diploma have greater meaning and value. They do not want the Dogwood Certificate awarded to anyone who simply has attended school for 12 years.

A common concern expressed by a number of individuals is the fear that after working a full year students could fail a government exam that will determine 50 per cent of their final mark. My response is that if a student has mastered the basic curriculum expectations, there should be a minimum of reluctance in sitting for an exam that will assess those skills. All students, particularly those enrolled in academic programs, must sooner or later come to grips with the reality of final exams in whatever post-secondary programs they choose to enrol. The vast majority of students have grown accustomed to school final exams and the fact that they will now be taking a government exam as opposed to a school — or district — final exam should make little difference.

Another reason given by opponents of examinations is that publication of results could be misleading and harmful. There have been cases in the past where exam results have been unfairly reported. I can assure you that being reported unfairly is not peculiar to the educational community!

Nevertheless, we are left with a dilemma. The public clamors for data that provide a better understanding of student achievement. On the other hand, many teachers question the competence of citizens to judge the effectiveness of their efforts fairly and reasonably and fear that publication of test scores will encourage the public to make judgments they are not qualified to make. However, we must understand that public education in our democracy is controlled by the public, and ultimately requires the informed approval of the citizens it is intended to serve.

Teachers and school officials constantly seek public support for their programs, as indeed they should. Strong and lasting approval must be based on the programs they want supported. When schools withhold from the public objective information on pupil achievements in learning, whether positive or negative, they are not helping citizens judge their work competently. A school system that pursues excellence cannot afford to waive accountability for its success in the promotion of learning.

As Minister of Education I have a responsibility to inform the public about the state of learning in the province. Traditionally, the ministry has issued reports arising out of the provincial assessment program as one method of informing the public. We have planned the administration of a provincial reading assessment for Grades 4, 7 and 10 in the spring of 1984, and I plan to continue the practice of summarizing provincial results for the public.

However, I do share the concern expressed by many teachers that school by school listings of exam results can be damaging. Pitting one school against another serves no useful educational purpose. We know, for example, that schools that serve a high proportion of disadvantaged students tend to score low when compared to other schools. Yet the teachers who work with these students often are among the best in the profession.

The policy I intend to follow is this: With both Grade 12 exams and the reading assessment for Grades 4, 7 and 10, overall achievement levels for the province will be made public. District or individual school results will not be identified. These results will be forwarded to the district superintendent of schools. I shall expect boards of school trustees, in consultation with local educators, to review the data and provide the local taxpayer with a summary of student achievement in the district.

It is essential, if we are to regain public confidence, that we do all we can, both provincially and locally, to demonstrate to our taxpayers we are serious about being accountable. I am convinced that we have much to gain and little to lose by being aggressive in our sense of responsibility to the public.

This leads me to my final point. For the past 10 to 15 years, the British Columbia Teachers' Federation has been officially opposed to any form of external testing. During this period efforts by the ministry to involve the BCTF in the planning and administration of provincial testing programs largely have not succeeded. Although time did not permit consultation with the BCTF on the recent decision to implement exams, we asked the federation to appoint a representative to the Board of Examiners, which will play a key role in the planning and administration of Grade 12 exams as established by the School Act. The federation has refused to participate.*

This type of action reinforces in the minds of the general public the impression that the profession is not interested in quality and excellence in our schools. I do not believe this to be an accurate picture. I believe most teachers would prefer a separate debate over economic and political issues as distinct from their day-to-day professional concerns about children and the learning process.

The public strongly approves of provincial examinations for what they believe to be a number of very valid reasons. It is my responsibility as a representative of the public to respond. It is your responsibility as teachers to become involved and respond to the requests made of those constituents we both serve.

I believe we can work together in dealing with difficult and immensely important questions that face our schools. A comprehensive examination program can help make our schools, and in turn our children, responsive to the needs of the next century. The future of our province demands that we get on with the job. ○

*See the next article, by Pat Clarke, for the BCTF's position.

THE TEACHER IS THE BEST JUDGE OF A STUDENT'S PERFORMANCE

Teachers are not opposed to testing, but the BCTF *is* opposed to the government's provincial exam program. Here's why.

PAT CLARKE

The BCTF has developed over the years fairly extensive policy on the matter of the evaluation of students. This policy can be summarized as favoring models of pupil evaluation that are teacher-designed and child-centred. The federation's policy is quite specific in its rejection of standardized or "bureaucracy-directed" testing.

The most significant feature of the BCTF's position is that it clearly sets out the professional responsibilities of teachers in the matter of student evaluation. Contrary to what may be a common public perception, the teachers of this province are not opposed to testing. We have indicated opposition only to certain forms of testing. Specifically, we have opposed the use of province-wide testing (policy statement 9.D.09) and determined that the evaluation of learning is most appropriate "when it is close to the scene of active teaching and learning" (policy statement 9.D.29).

Our policies recognize the unique and sensitive relationship of teacher and student. They state in general terms our belief that it is the teacher who is best qualified to evaluate student performance. It is the teacher who through ongoing contact with students can make the best estimates of abilities and devise the most appropriate means of testing and evaluating a student's progress as it relates to those abilities. Our policies reflect our long held belief that we should treat students as individuals, and that standarization in evaluation diminishes our ability to do so.

The examinations planned for Grade 12 students are obviously contrary to all of the principles the BCTF has developed with respect to the evaluation of pupils. The very fact that they are to count for 50 per cent of a student's total mark seriously diminishes teachers' opportunities to individualize instruction or to develop an attitude toward learning based on an emotion other than fear.

Certainly the examinations program suggests that teachers will be less able to function as professional educators inasmuch as they will not have the freedom of applying their professional judgments in evaluating the performance of their students. Their decisions — which are based on their relationship with their students — are to be of less consequence than a single examination. Our viability as professional teachers has been diminished. We are now less professional educators and more functionaries or technicians.

Inasmuch as the spectre of a return to province-wide testing has been around at least since Pat McGeer introduced the Provincial Learning Assessment program, the BCTF has for some time been endeavoring to reduce what might be termed the professionally debilitating aspects of this form of evaluation. It has been clear to us

The exam system makes teachers technicians rather than professional educators.

Pat Clarke is first vice-president of the B.C. Teachers' Federation.

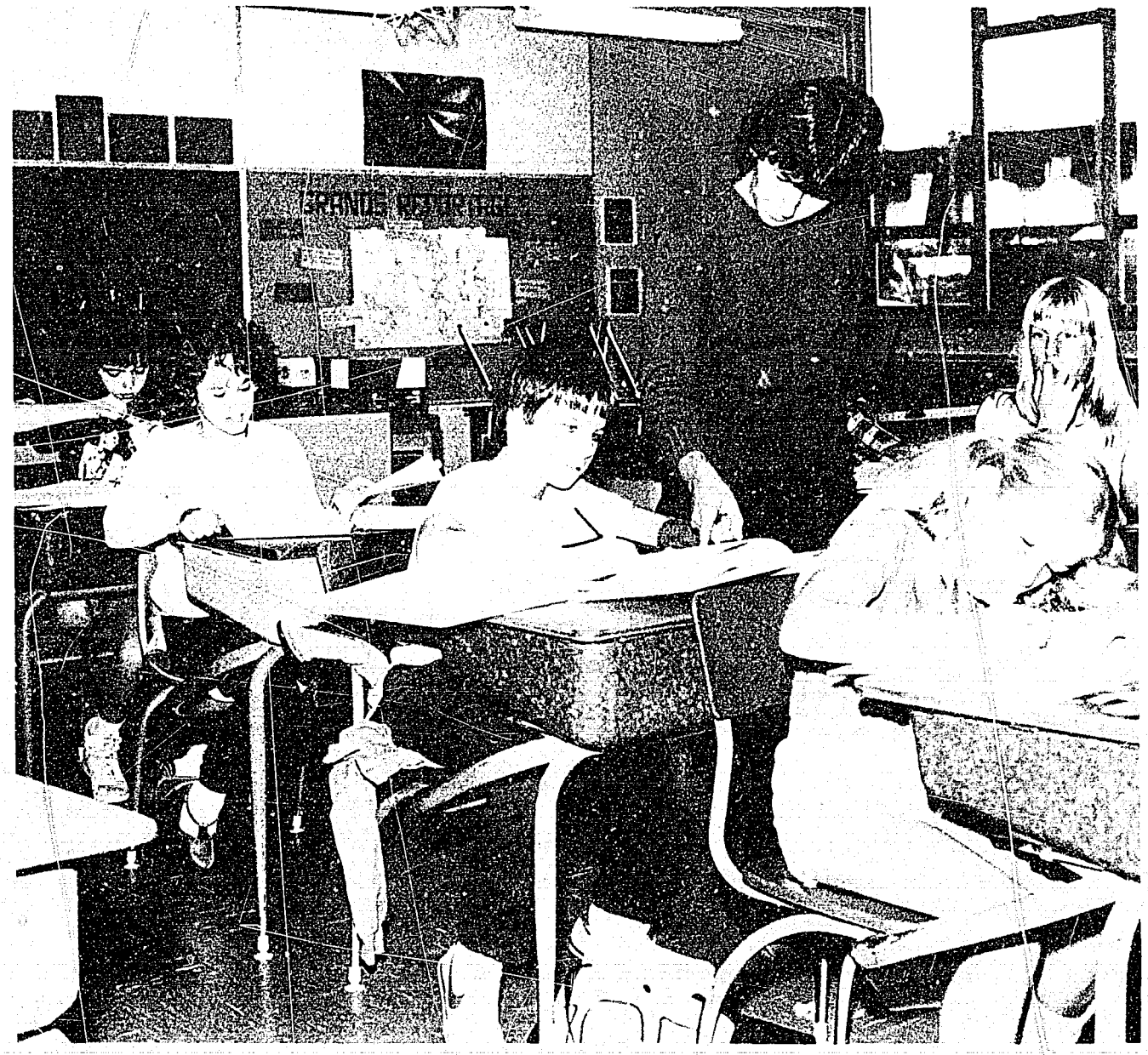
that while there is a good deal of public support for such testing programs, we had the responsibility to voice concerns over their negative aspects.

We have sought to develop in co-operation with the Ministry of Education a program that would satisfy the concern for accountability and at the same time recognize the primacy of the relationship between individual teacher and individual pupil. We have maintained, in keeping with our policies, that it is essential that evaluation be primarily a matter between teacher, pupil and parent.

In a spirit of co-operation, and with this principle of evaluation in mind, the BCTF approached the minister of education in June 1983 and informed him of our concerns about the process of student evaluation in B.C. public schools. At the time the minister demonstrated some sympathy for our position and suggested that the question of pupil evaluation needed study. To this end the Ministry of Education and the BCTF signed an agreement to develop a mutually acceptable approach to pupil evaluation.

> The ministry reneged on an agreement with the BCTF to develop a mutually acceptable approach to evaluation.

The matter was left for the summer under the assumption that we would organize a committee this fall. In mid-summer the Ministry of Education unilaterally decided to undertake its program of examinations for Grade 12 students. The BCTF was informed of the decision to have such exams and asked to participate in their development. In view of the previous



Teachers have worked for years to develop a sensitive, child-centred education system. As professional educators, we must resist attempts to make us technicians, and to have us treat children only as receptacles of information.

BCTF policies on testing recognize the unique and sensitive relationship of teacher and student. We believe the teacher is the one best qualified to evaluate student performance.

The Experience of June 1983

No one should be under the misapprehension that only the BCTF leadership doesn't like exams. In June of this year teachers expressed strong dissatisfaction with the ministry's provincial examinations. Responses from over 3,000 teachers — approximately 40 per cent of those involved — describes the chaos created by an ill conceived, badly executed system.

Even those teachers who favored external examinations found little of value in the process.

Some of the common concerns were:

- Overtesting of students — provincial tests were added to district tests, teacher tests and standardized tests like Canadian Test of Basic Skills. Student response: "I'm sick of all these tests!"
- Testing program disrupted planned year-end activities.
- Excessive testing took away valuable instructional time.
- Unnecessary time was used to mark the test — this was especially true with English 12, but applied in other cases as well.
- Time was spent in administering and marking tests that were not used.
- Most teachers at the elementary level used the tests to "confirm" or "compare with" their own assessments. No real value. Often the tests were marked after the report cards were completed.
- Some secondary teachers used the test results — ranging from 1½ per cent to 50 per cent of final grade.
- Confusion regarding the exemption of students. In some schools exemptions were made for scholarship students and students with learning disabilities, modified programs, English as a second language and reading difficulties. In other schools, no exemptions were made.
- The purpose of the testing program was a major concern. Students, parents and teachers repeatedly asked, "Why are we doing these tests?"
- Parents and teachers reported that some students experienced a high level of anxiety and even illness.
- Tests did not adequately cover the curriculum, were poorly designed, and contained cultural and sexist bias.

The majority of teachers opposed provincial examinations and were extremely critical of the content, form and administration of the testing program.

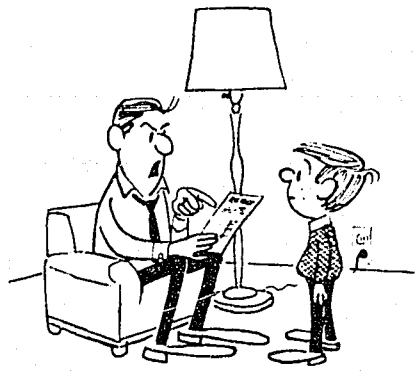
A similar set of examinations in 1984 will determine 50 per cent of Grade 12 students' final grades. Too many questions remain unanswered. Can teachers stand by and allow this to happen?

signed agreement with the ministry, this action of the ministry was one pursued in less than good faith.

The BCTF was given *no* opportunity to deliberate on the advisability of the exams. We were not even informed that they were under consideration. Quite simply, this is a most significant decision, which seriously affects students, put into effect without *any* consultation with the professional people who will be most involved. It is akin to a hospital's offering operations in open heart surgery without asking medical practitioners the advisability of doing so.

In response to this development the BCTF Executive Committee declined to participate in discussions of the program after the fact. The ministry has been duly informed of our dismay with its actions and our reasons, based on our policies on evaluation, for our opposition to the program.

On September 30, 1983 the Executive Committee passed a motion, for recommendation to the Representative Assembly, that members be advised not to participate in the preparation or marking of Grade 12 examinations. Further, the executive subsequently passed a motion recommending the initiation of a commission to study student evaluation.



"I don't like this A in sex education."

These recommendations were adopted in view of our long adherence to the principle of evaluation that holds the assessment of a student's performance is best undertaken by the teacher responsible. That principle is based on a teacher's knowledge from experience of students' capabilities and needs.

Teachers have carried on a long struggle in British Columbia for the development of a sensitive, child-centred education system. As a group of professional educators we are obliged to carry on that struggle. We must resist any attempts to make us technicians, and to make children only receptacles of information. Clearly the ministry's program of Grade 12 examinations brings us closer to that unsatisfactory situation.

THESE TEACHERS HAVE RETIRED

Most of the teachers listed below retired earlier this year. A few had left teaching earlier but were granted deferred allowances. The federation extends to them all best wishes for the future.

John Abrahams, Prince George
Eisie M. Allinson, North Vancouver
Jessie M. Allison, Nelson
Thora R. Anderson, Nanaimo
Vivian L. Antoniw, Kitimat
Agnes Archbould, Victoria
Roland Armstrong, Vancouver
Alan David Avery, Victoria
J. Douglas Ayers, North Thompson
Steven Bahrey, Cranbrook
Norma R. Bald, Powell River
Richard Baril, Trail
John A. Barltrop, Coquitlam
Anne Batryn, Coquitlam
Theodore M. Bayles, North Vancouver
Elizabeth Beatty, Burns Lake
Elnor H. Beet, Central Okanagan
George E. (Ted) Belsham, Burnaby
Ellen M. Bender, Victoria
Mary M. Bergen, Chilliwack
Elizabeth Berger, Powell River
Ernest Berryman, Victoria
Eva M. Bird, Victoria
Irene V. Bisbee, Delta
Rodney B. Bishop, Richmond
John Blackhall, Powell River
Evelyn C. Blair, Vancouver
Peter Boldt, Victoria
Mary M. Borne, Nechako
Barrie Bowyer-Smyth, West Vancouver
Walter Boyes, Victoria
Jean L. Brady, Vernon
John Brannagan, Maple Ridge
Mary V. Brunner, Nechako
Helen B. Buchanan, Williams Lake
Merlin Bunt, Nanaimo
Kenneth E. Burkinshaw, Hope
Beveline Burman, Surrey
Denis W. Burnip, Penticton
I. Gladys Bury, Surrey
Phyllis H. Camden, Victoria
Ruth E. Cameron, North Vancouver
A. Gordon Campbell, Saanich
Raymond S. Campbell, Prince Rupert
Ruth E. Campbell, Richmond
Ruby M. Cappos, Princeton
Doreen Hazel Carswell, Trail
Nancy M. Casswell, Cowichan
Betty T. Cawley, Richmond
Eric Chamberlain, Nanaimo
Joyce T. Churchland, Vancouver
Marion K. Clark, Richmond
John A. Clarkson, Coquitlam
Patrick W. Colbert, Victoria
Jacqueline Collins, North Columbia
Douglas P. Collis, Victoria
Joseph R. Connolly, Richmond
Arny M. Cosens, Peace River North
Helen E. Cove, Victoria
Anthony Cowling, Richmond
Donald Dashwood-Jones, W. Vancouver
Robin H. Dawson, Cariboo-Chilcotin
Louis Dedinsky, Central Okanagan
John E. Derksen, Abbotsford
J. Peter Diemert, Nechako
Christopher Donaldson, W. Vancouver
Robert Douglas, Nelson
William R. Drinkwater, Ashcroft
Raymond C. Dunn, Kamloops
Clarence B. Dyck, Vernon
Eveline A. Dyck, Langley
Henry Epp, Chilliwack
William Esau, Victoria
Ivor D. Evans, Victoria
Dorothy E. Fargey, Abbotsford
Ralph C. Fell, Victoria
Helen L. Fenny, West Vancouver
Donald F. Fitch, Cowichan
William J. Flemming, Sooke
John S. Forge, Saanich
James Foulds, Langley
Hedie A. Fournier, Alberni
Lydia A. Friesen, Chilliwack
Elizabeth Frith, North Vancouver
Willam G. Gardner, Campbell River
John E. Garland, Creston Valley
Janet I. Gauder, Nechako
Margaret Gellert, Central Okanagan
Shirley Gold, Nanaimo
Laura C. Gonzales, Vancouver
June L. Grasdal, Vancouver
Grace L. Hamlyn, Victoria
Martha I. M. Hannaford, Victoria
Georget Harder, Vernon
Eleanor Harper, Richmond
Harry Harris, Comox
William F. Hawkins, Nanaimo
Marian A. Hayman, Richmond
Michael J. Hemming, Victoria
James S. Henderson, North Vancouver
Phyllis Henthorne, Nelson
William Henthorne, Nelson
Richard C. Hesketh, Chilliwack
Richard Hibberd, Powell River
Olive Hill, Trail
Eva E. Hillborn, Mount Arrowsmith
Kathleen Hinkes, South Cariboo
Isabelle Holbrook, Vancouver
John Holden, Castlegar
Mary Holder, Burns Lake
Bryce E. Holland, Smithers
Jack Hopper, Victoria
Jack Harvey Hoteil, Prince George
Robert W. Huestis, Duncan
Margaret Hughes, Powell River
Bernice Hunter, Richmond
Laurence Hunter, Alberni
Roy Hunter, Chilliwack
Kenneth Hurn, Victoria
Edythe M. Isaac, Richmond
Violet E. Jackson, North Vancouver
George A. Jameson, Vancouver
Samuel L. Janzen, Central Okanagan
Gladys D. Jarvis, West Vancouver
Jagdevs Jawanda, Prince George
Royce M. Jenkins, Vernon
Barbro E. Jensen, Alberni
Floyd E. Johnson, Maple Ridge
Muriel M. Keller, Kitimat
Douglas H. Kennedy, Coquitlam
Duncan D. Kennedy, Mt. Arrowsmith
John W. Kenwood, Victoria
Patricia Kero, Vancouver
Gerald W. Kinnie, Langley
Dorothy W. Knight, N. Vancouver
Mildred E. Krause, Cariboo-Chilcotin
Arthur E. Kurz, Chilliwack
Mary A. Laing, Maple Ridge
Hazel J. Larsen, Burnaby
William G. Larsen, N. Vancouver
Ivan Clair Latimer, Vernon
Harry F. Lidster, Kamloops
Ronald W. Lihou, Campbell River
Gwyneth Lindsay, Vernon
Harold Lindsay, Richmond
Ingeborg Livingston, Prince George
Joan Lougheed, Chilliwack
Patricia V. Louis, Richmond
Eunice Lunan, Cranbrook
Alexander D. MacDonald, Penticton
Glenn S. MacDonald, Coquitlam
Roy D. MacDonald, Richmond
Pearl Betty MacKenzie, Vancouver
Morag E. Maclachlan, Vancouver
Ian N. MacLeod, Penticton
Frances M. Malcolm, Nelson
Gordon Malcolm, Nelson
Allen G. Mason, Victoria
Nancy May, Chilliwack
Julian K. Mazur, Victoria
John A. McAllister, Richmond
Vivien A. McCooey, Comox
Raymond E. McFadden, Central Okanagan
William F. McGowan, North Vancouver
Neil A. McIntyre, West Vancouver
Katherine McKay, Delta
John C. McMillan, Kamloops
Brenda M. McNary, Shuswap
Thomas W. Menington, Hope
Lois J. Mew, New Westminster
Audrey B. Millar, Trail
Peter L. Miller, North Columbia
Gertrude A. Miskofski, Sunshine Coast
Olive Mitchell, Coquitlam
Esther F. Moase, Langely
Isobel K. Montaldi, Burns Lake
Thomas P. Moore, Vernon
P. Logan Morrison, Grand Forks
May P. Mossey, Nanaimo
James A. Mugford, Victoria
James Murray, Abbotsford
Clarence W. Nash, Alberni
Edward J. Nash, Central Coast
Terry E. Nelford, Coquitlam
William G. Newman, Comox
Donald Newton, Richmond
Marjorie M. Nicol, Vancouver
Katherine Nielson, Prince George
Florence Niquidet, Cariboo-Chilcotin
James W. Norberg, Chilliwack
Jean M. Norris, Comox
Barbara Norton, Victoria
Margaret A. Oke, Sooke
Eugene Olson, Chilliwack
Marguerite Olson, Alberni
Cornelis W. Ouwehand, Central Okanagan
Ralph T. Page, Victoria
Laddie Palesch, Langley
Irene I. Patterson, Vancouver
Bertus D. Pereboom, Burnaby
Maria D. Perron, Central Okanagan
Lester R. Peterson, Sunshine Coast
Wayne A. Pettit, Vancouver
Archibald Phillips, Kamloops
Randolph D. Phillips, Maple Ridge
Sydney Phillips, Vancouver
Trevor A. Phillips, Cranbrook
Nicholas Picul, Maple Ridge
Carmen Pinfold, Richmond
Kathleen Powell, Victoria
Douglas Prentice, Chilliwack
A. Harry Pride, Burnaby
Marie E. Querns, Quesnel
Lois E. Rain, Richmond
Louis F. Rank, Southern Okanagan
Ross H. Regan, Victoria
Jeannie Reith, Saanich
James Rennick, Central Okanagan
Melbourne D. Richards, Richmond
Doris M. Richter, Kamloops
John D. Rickaby, Cowichan
Richard H. Ridley, Victoria
Rosetta M. Ringheim, Grand Forks
Ioca S. Robb, Surrey
John B. Robertson, Victoria
Gwendoline Rose, Surrey
Miriam Saba, Cowichan
Kathleen R. Salmond, Victoria
Frances M. Sbrocchi, Kamloops
Catherine Schewaga, North Vancouver
Luise C. Schmidt, Chilliwack
Robert J. Schreifels, Penticton
Carolyn Ann Sharon, Alberni
Ralph L. Shaw, Kamloops
Romeo M. Sibilleau, Vernon
Jean E. Sim, North Vancouver
Thomas Smith, West Vancouver
Milton D. Sorley, Maple Ridge
Joan M. South, Sooke
Arend J. Stamhuis, North Vancouver
Nicole E. St. Claire, Alberni
Charles W. G. Starr, Mission
M. Audrey Stech, Delta
John H. Steele, Victoria
Alfred F. Stein, Chilliwack
Donald F. Stevens, Victoria
Margaret B. Stevenson, Summerland
J. Ray Stewart, Alberta
June E. Striegler, Cariboo-Chilcotin
Mabel Stringer, Vancouver
Mavis C. Strother, Vernon
Mearnie I. Summers, North Vancouver
Grace Swanton, Lillooet
Elizabeth Talarico, Grand Forks
John P. Tamblyn, Summerland
Keith S. Thibodeau, North Vancouver
Margaret J. Thomas, Kamloops
John R. Thompson, Nechako
James R. Thomson, West Vancouver
Gwyneth M. Tiemann, Victoria
Thomas Tillemans, Nova Scotia
Johanna Timmermans, Kitimat
Susan Toews, Langley
Eleanor Turnbull, Merritt
Juanita B. Valentine, North Vancouver
Catherine M. Vance, Victoria
Audrey L. Vandenborre, Armstrong
Lewis W. Vath, Richmond
Viva J. Venos, Cariboo-Chilcotin
David A. Voth, Victoria
Philip D. Wakefield, Central Okanagan
Olga Walker, Terrace
Ernest Watkinson, Comox
Douglas A. Watson, North Vancouver
Charles G. Webb, Mission
Helen E. Webb, Creston Valley
Kenneth W. Weeks, Cowichan
Thomas K. Weir, Trail
Martha Welch, Victoria
Velma M. Wells, Burnaby
Alma M. White, Sunshine Coast
June D. Whyte, Cranbrook
Robert L. G. Willan, Penticton
Marguerite M. Wilson, Coquitlam
John G. Windsor, Coquitlam
Charles P. Withers, Richmond
Hughie Wray, Coquitlam
Emma A. Wright, Cariboo-Coquitlam
William J. Wright, Central Okanagan
Edith H. Zust, Smithers

A FORMER EXAMINER'S VIEW

REFLECTIONS OF AN EXAMINER

– and advice to teachers facing government exams

A devastating indictment of government examinations and their effects on the public schools during the '50s and '60s.

TOM HUTCHISON

A generation of secondary school teachers has arisen that know not the government examination. Since examinations were once the tides in our educational year and our efforts moved to their rhythms, it is appropriate that we older teachers share our past to prepare you for your future.

It must be remembered that in the 1950s and 1960s, though the high tide of examinations was the June governmental externals, we habituated our students to the process through mass examinations at all grade levels, at Christmas, Easter and June.

Ah, the nostalgia for the school gymnasium at these three periods; the rows of desks, the hundreds of gum-chomping students, the measured pacing of the teacher invigilators, the marking of the fleeting time in solemn tones.

And the contrasts: the hopeless who awaited only the expiry of the minimum time limit, while the indefatigables with flying pens divested themselves of the information burden.

It was serious business. I remember the complaint of a youngster who said, "Sir, it isn't fair for Mr. X to look over my shoulder at what I'm writing and laugh out loud."

But the end of all this process was the June government examinations. As a teacher, one had two responsibilities: first, to teach the children; second to get them through the exams. If one worked the scheme of recommendations properly, one hoped to have the real teaching done by Easter. After Easter, the responsibility was to "cram" with those who did not get recommended and had to sit exams.

Preparing students to pass examinations, and passing examinations, are skills that can be finely honed. External examinations are an incentive to the development of examination skills. Such skills are interesting in that their acquisition is applicable primarily to passing examinations. If one needs to pass a lot of examinations, one may need them. Perhaps we should move to a system of lifetime examinations for all, for business people, politicians, teachers, parents, civil servants, and so on, so that examination skills become lifetime skills.

We could then hear a conversation like this. "Gee, I'm sorry Mrs. Smith, but you've just failed parenting again. We'll have to see the counsellor about extra work in baking, bathroom organization and getting Billy to write to Grandma. In the meantime it's back to Basic Prenuptial Training 10 for you. If you do really well, you'll be back with your family in the fall semester."

But, back to external examinations. It helped to know that the examiner would not spring too many surprises. For example, the Social Studies 30 course (Canadiana), taken in Grade 11, had to be passed by all students. It covered all Canadiana: all history, all geography, flora and fauna, economic development and cultural life. There was even a unit on alcohol, not examinable, which was more honored in the breach than in observance.

One might think it a gargantuan task to

Nothing was relevant beyond the prescribed texts.

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

test this rich mass of knowledge. Not so. First, there were only two texts, *Our Canada* and *This New Canada*, plus an atlas. If it wasn't in these three sources it wasn't examinable. Second, we knew that the examination would give 150 possible marks, 90 for "objective" questions and sentence answers, and 60 marks for four essays. There would be two maps, one of B.C. and one of Canada. There would almost certainly be a matching question on famous Canadians.

An essential element in training to pass examinations was an ample supply of previous examinations, for, ranging over the broad fields of *Our Canada*, and realizing that too great a departure from the norm of previous examinations would raise howls of protest and skew the results, there were only so many changes the examiner could ring. Those of you who prepare students to write the first set of government examinations in January 1984 will, unfortunately, have to fly a bit blind. However, resource sets of examination papers will be made available after the examinations and the comfortable process of teaching to the exam can start again.

In Social Studies 30 the maps were relatively easy. They were the kind that had little dots, numbers and letters scattered over them, coupled with lists of names, places and events that the student matched to the map. We did lots of drill on these.

Our cultural life? Well, Chapter 30 of *Our Canada* outlined the achievements of illustrious Canadians. One has no hope of dealing richly with Canada's cultural life in a small section of a grab-bag course on all Canadiana. Therefore, one had students go through Chapter 30, making as they went along, a table like this:

Healey Willan	Musician	Toronto Symphony
Tom Thompson	Painter	Forerunner Group of Seven
Frederick Banting	Doctor/ Scientist	Insulin co-discoverer

Then we practised sheets of matching questions. A worth-while activity? Of course it was; it was worth, potentially, 10 marks out of 150.

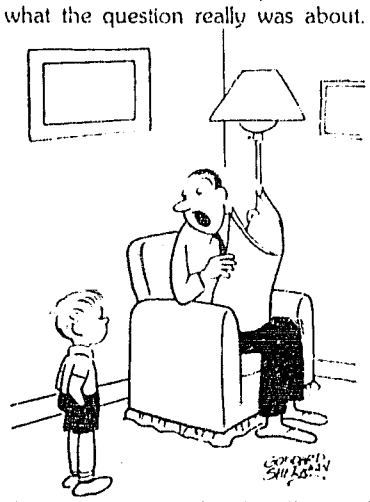
This drill was essential because there were pupils who, if the test were restricted to the essay portion, would never make it. They had to make their pass on the "objective" section.

Those essay questions! In the late 1950s I met students in Grade 11 who had written only three complete paragraphs in the previous year. It was not their fault; it was not even their teachers' fault.

The mode of teaching writing was so convoluted that to write a paragraph, far less string several together to make an essay, was a major effort. But, I am on social studies; I'll get back to English.

Which raises an interesting by-product of the examination system, an insistence by students that you stick to the examinable topic. "But sir, this isn't social studies, it's English." or, "But sir, this isn't English, it's science." Or, "Will it be on the exam?"

Nevertheless, students had to be able to tackle essays. Topics on which essay questions could be asked were limited. Experience showed that there were some 10 basic areas in which questions were asked. However, examiners were sneaky, and questions would be re-worded. The trick then became to train students to read a variety of question modes so that they could sniff out what the question really was about. For example: "It's a leading-up-to-Confederation question; it's a "responsible government question." When students were trained to key words, like Pavlov's salivating dogs, they could produce, in short order, the approximation of an answer. But if they missed the keys!



"Now after this masked hoodlum grabbed your report card and burned it, what happened?"

A conversation when a student emerged from the examination ordeal could go like this:

Teacher: How did you do?
Student: I knew nothing about question two (reproachful look at teacher).
Teacher: But question two was about responsible government.
Student: The question never mentioned responsible government.
Teacher: But it mentioned Lord Elgin, silly.

We would drill them on possible questions from a list built up from experience. We would have them write out skeleton outlines galore. We would give them mnemonics like this: "**S**mall **b**oys **m**ust **e**at" — **S**ydenham, **B**agot, **M**etcalf and **E**lgin, the four governors leading up to responsible government.

In any given year we would refine the list of possible questions. "It's a year or two since they did the Northwest Rebellion; it's due." Or, "They hit Sir John A. MacDonald a couple of times recently; probably they'll lay off him this year." One year, out of my short list of 10 possible topics, students asked me to say what the four questions would be. I had a go. Students, being students, stopped working on the other six, studied the four, and aced the examination. Pity the poor beginning teacher with an enthusiastic and encyclopedic knowledge of Canada who taught for love of country and learning. He or she was beaten because he or she did not call the examination for the students.

World geography, Geography 91, had one text, *The World*, by the famous geographic workhorses, Stamp and Kimble, plus an atlas. A course can be excellent, even with one text, if it is designed well. Geography 91 was a good course on human geography. But I remember as a geography teacher receiving a questionnaire from Professor Robinson of the UBC Geography Department asking, in essence, "What happened to our course?" External examinations happened to it. They turned the course into a classic example of "capes and bays" geography, with the premium on memorization. I doubt the significance, in a human geography course covering the entire world, of knowing the name of the highest mountain in South America. (It is Mt. Aconcagua for those whose education deprived them of this vital nub of information.)

Drill worked well in Geography 91. There were all sorts of maps and matching questions on products and climates, etc. And there were fewer essays. A student could pass on the "objective" questions.

English 40 was beatable. This English 12 course was divided into two parts, language and literature, with an exam in each. At the core of the language program was the book *Mastering Effective English* by Tressler and Lewis. It had a section on diagramming sentences, fortunately non-examined, that would have defied Noam Chomsky.

There was nothing in the use of English that was foreign to this book, from writing a chatty letter, to debate, to listening to the radio, to parliamentary procedure. But above all, it culminated years of student preparation in writing correct sentences and paragraphs, identifying parts of speech, figures of speech, detailed grammar and effective sentences.

We would frighten students entering Grade 12 with a simple, short paragraph on Christopher Columbus. We gave questions to test the students' understanding of the content. Invariably they got them all right. Then we quizzed them on grammatical

points from the paragraph, for example, "Give an example of a copula verb." Equally invariably, most had only two or three correct answers.

The book was particularly noteworthy for what it did with sentences and paragraphs. The book, and the exam, were big on effective sentences. Sir Arthur Quiller Couch wrote a book in 1912 called *The Art of Writing*. He would have blenched at the use made of his ideas in our English course. He favored the active over the passive voice, the short word before the long, the English word before the Latin word, and straight English rather than jargon. Excellent ideas, but in our examinations his thoughts were elevated to laws. Students were given pairs of sentences, out of context, and asked to say which were more effective, and why. They had to reproduce the rule. But rules can be learned, and they can be drilled. Which is what we did.

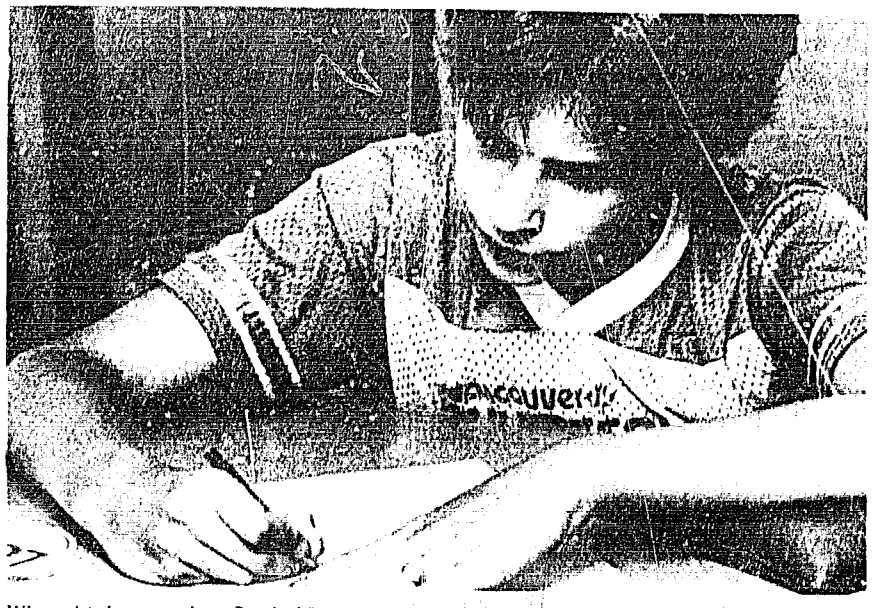
Similarly with paragraphs, without any guarantee that students could really write, we could teach the rules from *Mastering Effective English*. There are topic sentences and clincher sentences and link words and echo words, and there are narrative paragraphs and expository paragraphs and didactic paragraphs and descriptive paragraphs, and there are modes of paragraph development: by example, by details, by comparison and contrast, by definition, by reasons and results, etc.

It was a delight to listen to a group of experienced English teachers debating a government examination question on which mode of paragraph development was being used. One found from experience that if drill were required on paragraph types and modes of development, real life seldom provided them. The sensible teacher developed his or her own specimens. Writing suffered. Students were like the centipede that was asked, "Which leg comes after which?" Which raised his mind to such a pitch, he lay distracted in the ditch, considering how to run.

The literature examination had memorization. Each student had to master X lines of verse and reproduce them. The wise teacher got working on this the first day the class met. Set up a memory book. Set up a specific period during the week to work on memory. Test them regularly. There was a marvellous incentive — get the memory work cold, and some marks are guaranteed. Drill works.

One has fond memories of the literature course. A colleague returning from marking an English 12 examination in Victoria met a former student on the ferry. When he explained what he had been doing in Victoria, the former student said, "I remember that course, all death and birds."

A summation from a student who remembered Browning's *Prospice*, Gray's *Elegy*, Donne saying, "Send not to know for whom the bell tolls," Shelley's *To a Skylark*, Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* and the assorted gaudy mayhem of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and *Macbeth*.



When this boy reaches Grade 12, examination skills will be more important to him than the curriculum. His teacher's prime responsibility will become to get him through the exam, not to educate him.

But the teacher and the student had the assurance of knowing that nothing was relevant beyond the prescribed works, that the examination format would not do a Proteus on them, and that there would probably be one good question on the attitudes of different authors towards death.

"Now, dad, in a complex society like ours you can't expect a guy to know everything."

To master the examination system it made sense to gain experience as an examiner. Thus, in early July, hundreds of teachers would descend on Victoria to mark the government examinations. The pay was not much, but it was a kind of holiday, and one had the unusual experience of marking during a 9-5 day, rather than in the evenings, at weekends and over holidays. In addition one could share experiences with colleagues and accumulate a fine collection of "schoolboy howlers."

Examiners had to swear an oath of secrecy on the proceedings. However, since we are promised — as the dying General Braddock said when his force was ambushed by the French and Indians near Pittsburg in 1755, "By God men, we shall know better next time" — that government exams will now be better devised, some words on how the old ones worked will not offend.

The old exams were made up by one unknown person, with a key. Another unknown person checked the exam. For security reasons there was no testing of the exams on a population. The key to the exam was given to the leader of the examining team. The first order of business for the team was to review the key. Once the key was established it had to be adhered to. Dubious cases were referred to the team leader, or to the whole group. Keys, once established, were seldom changed.

Next, the group divided up the work. No one marked the whole exam, each person had a section. There was a phase of marking in which team members marked questions and had their ratings checked by others. When some agreement on criteria was established, marking began. At that time, marking standards were established in working on the papers of students who had not been recommended. When it was felt that examiners had their act in order, the scholarship examination papers were introduced, for in those days students writing for a pass and students writing for scholarship wrote the same examination. Under the current ministry proposal, scholarship students will write both the standard examination and scholarship, a major flaw in scoring examinations.

Some interesting points come up under

the development of the key. It was not unknown for the team to say of an item, "The answer is not (c), but could be (b) or (d)," for, as we all know, what is in the mind of the "objective" examiner, is not always in the mind of the examinee.

I recall one question on the effects of the St. Lawrence Seaway on the trade of such Atlantic seaboard ports as Saint John and St. John's. Before the Seaway was built there was great speculation on the effect of making the Great Lakes open to seagoing shipping. The consensus was that the eastern seaboard would suffer. This did not happen.

Nevertheless, there was a question on the effects of the Seaway on the eastern seaboard ports. Since the students knew only what they had been taught, namely that the effect would be adverse, this was the accepted answer.

Similarly, I recall a question on deserts in a geography paper. This was "misread" by students, in relation to the key, about one in four times. When the scholarship papers arrived, the scholarship students, reading very carefully for tricks, "misread" the question about one in three. Nevertheless, the key stood.

As the examination process continued and, for a time, the examinations went into a purely objective framework, questions would be thrown out on the basis, for example, that the distribution of answers was so even that chance, rather than knowledge, was the major factor in response.

And this brings us to the factor that is not mentioned in current ministry plans for government examinations — scaling. The public has a mystical awe of percentages and numbers — 86 per cent and up is an A, and everyone knows that the 86 per cent and up is a calculation that is objectively determined.

Very early on, previous examiners discovered that the results of government examinations from year to year were wildly disparate. The ministry itself produced a paper on the necessity for scaling government examinations. This means that in any given year the raw results of examinations are subjected to statistical processing that distributes scores along the normal curve of distribution. It was no secret, then, though we were sworn to secrecy, that a score of 30 + per cent in math could translate into a pass. The actual raw score pass in any subject was a closely guarded secret.

Who knows what is in the minds of examiners and examinees if they don't get together and talk after the exam is given? I remember a question in a geography paper that was based on a picture of women planting rice. Students had to deduce from the picture where the rice planting was taking place. The basic clue was lombardy poplars in the background, so it had to be the Po valley in Italy. There was spirited debate among the teachers on the right answer. On the whole the women did better. They had noted that the bottoms of the women in the picture, well displayed because they were stooping, were too ample for an asiatic locale; therefore it had to be Italy.

I still remember the comment of a Literature 12 student, written despite the fact that they were severely admonished that any writing on the paper other than rough drafts and answers could invalidate the examination, and even though the student had scored over 90 per cent on the paper. It was to this effect: "I have written this exam, but it is not the kind of exam that I should be asked to write."

The exams will hoodwink the public, as they did before, and will mask unacceptable teaching and learning practices.

Where are we going? I believe in examinations and I believe that teachers must use them. However, I helped take to the ministry the first brief the BCTF wrote on the elimination of government examinations. My support for this move stemmed from the dual experience of preparing students for examinations and marking them. At that time, the chief superintendent, Frank Levirs, gave his opinion that the validity for teacher predictions on student success were based on the availability of government examinations. This opinion has been invalidated by the experience of universities and colleges since government examinations were abandoned.

I recall the reaction of a colleague who looked over the first examinations I prepared for students in senior geography. He approved. However, he came from a tiny secondary school in which he had prepared students for examinations in mathematics, chemistry, physics, biology, geography and social studies. He knew beans about geography; he knew lots about passing examinations.

So, if I am giving advice to younger colleagues on how to handle government examinations, have I nothing good to say about them? Consider the following:

- The ministry is going to set an exam that is worth 50 per cent of the total for the year. This means that you can place the total onus for pass/fail on the ministry. It means that if you don't think that a student deserves a pass, no matter how well the student does on the government exam, he or she can't make it. Under a previous examination system, if a student did none of the work that you expected, he or she could still take a government examination and pass.

I recall a student who never even took the course, but asked if he could register for the geography examination. This was at a time when the exam was objective and machine marked. There was nothing to prevent a student from doing this, so he did it. He passed. Exam know-how and common sense, plus some fair general knowledge took him through.

- You can luxuriate in making the government the villain. It's you and the student against the nasty government exam.
- You don't really have to teach. Learn examination technique. Parents will be happy; students will be happy.
- Examinations cannot continue without a very specific curriculum and textbooks. The examiners will want a base for the judgment of students; therefore, they won't rock the boat from year to year to year. You will be able to use the same worksheets and exams for years. You won't have to look too far for enrichment materials.
- On the other hand, if you learn examination techniques and get your students through examinations, you can tell the authorities to go to hell and teach your own stuff.
- Scaling of exams is virtually inevitable. In place of setting your expectations against the course content and your knowledge of students, you can simply set them against the Gaussian curve.

But seriously, the last flowering of exami-

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HOW WELL DO EXAMS PREDICT ACHIEVEMENT IN UNIVERSITY?

Teachers' grades are better predictors of university success than government examinations are, but a combination of the two may be better still.

DANIEL R. BIRCH

●Marks in Grade 12 subjects may be used for many purposes, only one of which is admission to universities, colleges and institutes, but that is the one I shall discuss, with particular reference to the contribution province-wide examinations might make to the quality of university admission decisions.

Unless a university has an open admissions policy (and none has in Canada) those responsible for admissions decisions want to admit those students most likely to succeed. Admissions policy makers will pay attention, therefore, to the evidence they believe to have the most value in predicting success in university studies. A typical approach (to research if not always to policy making) is to study the correlation between various predictor variables and university achievement measures such as average marks at the end of first year or even at graduation.

How well do Grade 12 grades predict?

More than 800 studies throughout North America are consistent in finding Grade 12 grades to be the best available predictor of university achievement for students entering directly from secondary school. Some evidence suggests that prediction from high school grades is best for large schools, worst for small schools and intermediate for medium-sized schools. Recent studies in British Columbia's universities confirm that Grade 12 grades are a good, although not infallible, predictor of university achievement.

A 1983 study entitled *Predictors of Academic Success at Simon Fraser University* reported the correlations between six measures of secondary school achievement and five measures of university achievement. High school average computed from grades in English 12 and three other subjects proved to be a better predictor of university grades than was a high school average based on fewer subjects, and also better than a high school average based on all Grade 12 subjects.

In fact, high school average (four subjects) was not only a good predictor of university grades at the end of the first semester and first year but also a better predictor of the first semester English mark than was English 12 alone, and almost as good a predictor of the first semester calculus mark as Mathematics 12 alone. The English Placement Test proved to be a poor predictor of academic success although it may have served a useful screening function.

But wouldn't Grade 12 grades be even better predictors if province-wide exams contributed to a common standard?

When province-wide exams were discontinued in 1973 (except for scholarship

The English Placement Test is a poor predictor of academic success.

Dr. Daniel R. Birch is dean of UBC's Faculty of Education.

purposes) many university people feared the worst. It was not unusual to hear speculation that we would no longer be able to trust high school grades. Senate admissions committees discussed the possibility of reviving efforts to develop admissions tests.

In 1977, with an SFU colleague, I computed correlations between Grade 12 grades and grade point average on completion of first year for all students admitted directly from B.C. secondary schools between 1965 and 1975. To our initial surprise we found that Grade 12 grades had become marginally *better* predictors in each of the first three years after the disappearance of provincial examinations.

The same finding subsequently emerged from a study at the University of Alberta. The authors concluded:

> . . . to 1972, all Alberta grade XII students were tested on the basis of "standard examinations" prepared by the Alberta Department of Education. While teachers' assessment of the students' performance was considered, the final grades were determined essentially by students' performance on these examinations. These (approximately three-hour-long) examinations are supposed to test a student's subject knowledge learned over a period of several years at the school level. It is quite conceivable that these examinations are not based on the close rapport that exists between students and teachers in a classroom setting. A teacher tests a student's knowledge on the materials and concepts that he or she has actually taught over a period of months or a year and not on materials or concepts that he or she might have thought unimportant and consequently either ignored or laid very little emphasis on. In other words, external examinations might prove to be a hit and miss action in many cases. An evaluation system which assigns a grade based on a weighted sum of assessments on a number of assignments and examinations by the teacher may possibly be a "fairer" system for students' academic assessment. With the introduction of teacher assessed grading procedure at the high school level, similar to the one employed at the University, the correlation between high school and University grades has inevitably shown improvement. In other words, teachers' grades at the high school level would appear to be somewhat better predictors of grades at the University.

Couldn't we make better university admission decisions if we had other measures to use with Grade 12 grades?

Even though high school grades are acknowledged to be the best single predictor of university grades, other measures can be used with them to improve admissions decisions. For example, the Scholastic Aptitude Test, widely used in the United States, is a somewhat less valid predictor than high school grades if used alone but adds a little to the strength of the correlation when used appropriately in a regression equation with Grade 12 grades. (In 827 studies, high school grades, when correlated with subsequent university grades, yielded a median correlation coefficient of .52; SAT scores, .41; and both combined, .58.)

Do we have any evidence that grades may not be comparable from school to school or region to region? Studies in 1982 at the University of Victoria showed secondary school grades from virtually every region of B.C. to correlate strongly with university grades. It is interesting to note, however, that although the province-wide correlation was fairly high most regional correlations were even higher (.56 to .80).

Grade 12 grades are the best single predictor of success in university.

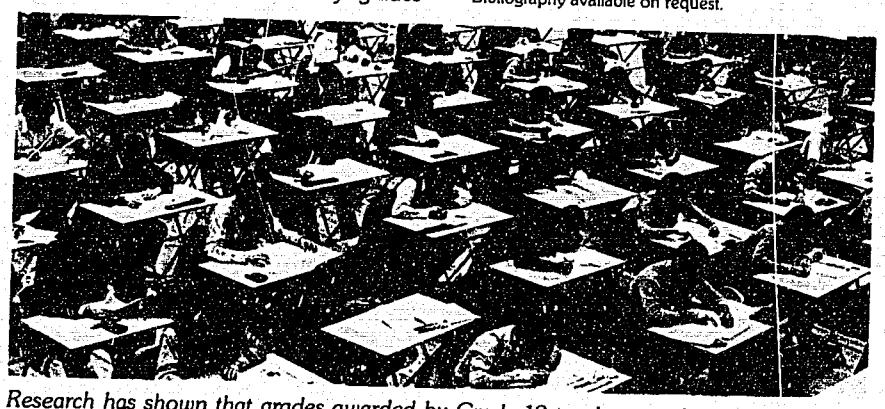
A correlation coefficient is an indication of the strength (and direction) of the relationship between two measures. If a group of students achieved exactly the same rank (and intervals) on two tests, the correlation coefficient would be +1.0. If the two tests resulted in reversed rankings, the correlation would be −1.0 (still a good predictor) and if there were no discernible (linear) relationship between scores on the two tests the correlation would be 0. (One could not be used to predict the other at all.)

Let's return now to correlations between Grade 12 grades and university grades computed for students from different regions. As long as the rankings are similar, the correlation will be high even if the actual grades on one measure are systematically higher or lower than those on the other. What the Victoria studies suggest (although the authors have not pointed it out) is that the ranking of students on high school grades within districts and regions bears a strong relationship to the ranking of those same students according to their university grades. But when students are grouped across regions the rankings are less strongly related. We might conclude that some means of calibrating grades across districts and regions would be helpful to teachers in increasing the equivalence of grades province-wide. It would be helpful to those making university admissions decisions.

Past experience suggests that having a provincial exam count for 100 per cent of the mark for all those not fortunate enough to be exempted from it did not provide us with better information on which to predict success. We can be fairly certain that making an unpiloted examination count for 50 per cent of the final mark will not enhance the quality of admissions decisions either. If, however, the admissions data on each student included both school grades and marks on carefully constructed provincial examinations, reflecting the expected curriculum, prediction of university success would surely be enhanced.

Too great a reliance on any single predictor of success has severe disadvantages, among them the exclusion of a potential Churchill or Einstein. Teacher or school-based marks have the value of reflecting the actual curriculum rather than the expected curriculum. If we are to add another measure, I would opt for either a test of the more general abilities associated with university success or a test based on an agreed upon core (say 25 per cent) of the curriculum in a Grade 12 subject. Either option would lessen the pressure to teach exclusively for the test, a tendency not likely to enhance the quality of education. ○

Bibliography available on request.



Research has shown that grades awarded by Grade 12 teachers are better predictors of success at university than grades earned on provincial examinations.

A STUDENT'S VIEW — from another time and place

FIRST-CLASS MATRIC

A moving autobiographical account of a student in South Africa that points up the tragic effects external exams can have on students.

EDWIN MAY

For hours we had been milling around the giant screen erected in front of the *Cape Times* building, the warm January night acting like an elixir dissipating inhibitions.

By midnight the crowd numbered thousands. High school students, teachers, parents and well-wishers formed a motley crowd gathered for the annual ritual of waiting for the matriculation examination results.

Soon after midnight the big screen lighted up. Chattering groups froze. The results! Shut up! Within minutes names would be flashing across the screen, hours before the morning paper would carry the complete results. Within minutes, thousands of teenagers would learn what direction their lives would take. Nearly two months had passed since they had spent miserable days toiling in examination rooms, each three-hour session a new crisis in a young life.

The long summer vacation, with its decadent interlude of Christmas, had all but wiped out memories of the matriculation exams and the two years of ruthless preparation that had led up to the torture. Now, in the great hush that had settled on the crowd, images leaped across my mind.

The principal's intonation about how the school's honor depended on our showing in the exams. The teachers spotting possible questions, rehearsing the ordeal of examinations until we were sick of the word "matriculation."

There were students who had pinned their hopes on the offerings of various cram schools: *King Lear* reduced to 30 mimeographed pages of sure-fire answers. There were those who looked like good prospects for first-class passes. Like favored football stars, those students had been given special attention.

First-class matric! The slogan echoed through the halls of our school. A school's reputation could be built on the number of first-class passes it could muster. Once that reputation had been established, the principal could over the years attract the best teachers, that is, those who had mastered the examination game.

First-class matric! That meant careful selection of students from the feeder schools to ensure that the roll included a good supply of potential first-class prospects.

First-class matric! Have one of those prizes and you stood a chance for a place in medical school, law school, engineering.

A second-class pass? Well, there was always teaching, commerce or nursing. Anything less than a second-class pass and you were given a senior certificate, a lesser diploma that led nowhere.

Sure, you could try again. There would be supplementals in March. But the cruel system that had brought you thus far looked askance at those who went through the supplemental route. Perhaps a future as a bookkeeper. Or, there was always the

Who were these people whose questions could determine the course of my life?

Edwin May is the co-ordinator of the BCTF's program against racism.

factory. Come to think of it, your whole school life, every one of the 12 years you had given, had been reduced to one set of examinations. Fail in one of the six subjects you were supposed to pass, and everything that had gone before no longer mattered.

I was overcome with anger. I recalled the hard-faced woman who had invigilated our math exam. I could still see her pacing up and down the rows of bent figures, searching for any sign of cheating. I hated math. I hated the faceless person whose name and academic credentials were strung across the top of the question paper, announcing him as the examiner, my tormenter. I hated the faceless professor whose name followed.

Moderator. What did that mean? Who were these people who, through a few questions, could determine the course of my life? What did they know about me? What did they care?

That first question had floored me. We hadn't worked on something similar. My teacher had not spotted that question. I scanned the entire paper. I felt like leaping up and throttling that pacing invigilator. Prison guard. Werewolf.

I glanced at my watch. Fifteen minutes had gone. I had to start. My teacher had drilled us on how to pace ourselves. Read over the entire paper rapidly, noting the questions you can handle best. Do those first. Just remember to watch your time. Don't spend too much time on any question. Leave the ones that cause you difficulty for the last. Allow yourself enough time to review your answers. Check for careless errors.

I could still hear those voices. I steeled myself.

Hell, this wasn't education. This was a military campaign. I was the soldier hero battling the enemy — the whole examination industry: the teachers, the examiners, the cram artists and their silly notes, the small regiment of clerics, retired army officers and pensioned secretaries who guarded me in the examination hall. My pen became a gun. Every answer I contrived to complete marked the death of one more enemy. I handed in my paper just as the invigilator barked, "Time Up!"

My mother had asked me how the exam had gone. I had avoided her eyes. I knew what fantasies she had nurtured. I had to get that first-class pass. I had to. . . . I had. . . . All through the summer vacation we had avoided the topic of examinations. We had not even spoken about the new year. No use to plan. Wait for the results.

As the weeks had ground on, I had come to realize just how vicious the whole business really was. Those provincial examinations were not designed for young minds to demonstrate their abilities. Those examinations catered to an elitist system. And elitism meant exclusion.

I remembered my teacher of English, the one staff member with integrity. He had done no more than go through the motions of covering the prescribed books. Instead, he had taught us to appreciate beauty, form, originality. I remembered how he had ignored the plodding selections we were supposed to study for the exam, and instead had helped us explore the inscapes of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Then we would listen to Gieseking playing Debussy and our teacher would challenge us to read books from his collection. I remembered those discussions on Satre, on. . . .

The girl in front of me began to scream. It's our school. It's our school. Her friends craned to see what would appear on the screen. By now hundreds of names had already flashed on the big screen and excitement hung like a heat wave over the crowd. The girl in front of me let out a groan. Two of her friends grabbed her. You have a first-class. Congrat.. The girl began sobbing. They led her to the edge of the crowd.

More names. The familiar trend was developing. The clerks who always manage to gain control of centralized systems of public education had contrived to make examination results conform to the bell curve. Once more, the top five per cent was drawn largely from the schools in upper-class white neighborhoods. A few first-class passes graced the results from "colored" schools. The bottom five per cent was from black schools where overcrowding and inadequate facilities added to the twin obstacles of cultural and linguistic differences.

Once again the growing clamor for segregated examinations, to cater to the non-white students, arose. Of course, their certificates would not really be of matriculation standard. They would have to get separate colleges where they could learn skills and follow vocations more suited to their predilection for manual labor! How much longer should we have to demonstrate that our black people simply did not possess the intelligence to cope with our exams?

By the middle of the new year, professors were lamenting the "wretched job" done by the public schools. At least half of our first-year class could not cope with university studies. Now that the props provided by the school system had been removed, those products of the matriculation rat race were being weighed in the balance. Many were found wanting.

Meanwhile, the industry spawned by the provincial examination system was gearing up for the next assault on young minds. The chase for first-class matriculants was on. What did it matter if the product was not quite human?○

An Examiner's View

Continued from page 68

nations took place against a background of under-educated teachers and a limited number of basic texts for each course. There were also very specific curriculum guides that teachers, especially those unsure of their academic background, could use as a bible. It didn't matter that texts perpetuated myths, such as the Piltdown Man; if it was in the book it was OK. Today, the teaching force is better educated, better prepared and multiple resources are used. Yet we are to have standardized exams.

This new round is based on a longing, albeit pedagogically unfounded, for accountability, for numbers, for standards. It will hoodwink the public, as it did before, and mask unacceptable teaching and learning practices. We have not the foggiest notion at the moment on how the ministry intends to implement an examination system that is fair to all students, and avoids the manifest flaws of all previous externally imposed examinations. Who will develop the examinations? How will they be validated? How will reliability be determined? How will the needs of the individual be taken into account? How do we know that the examinable curriculum is relevant? How do we know that the final percentage results are worth anything in telling us how students are learning?

A group of students in Glasgow was asked to pick out from a group of birds which one did not belong. The group included the eagle, the wren, the penguin, the skylark and the robin. The expected answer was the penguin, since it is the only flightless bird. But some chose the eagle because it was biggest and a bird of prey; some chose the robin, for it was the smallest; some chose the skylark, because it had the best song. One dumb kid chose the penguin because it was the only biscuit. He had not seen many birds but he had eaten lots of Penguin biscuits.

How do we put the teacher and the student and the penguin in the right context? However we do it, it won't be through external government examinations.○

AN ENGLISH TEACHER'S VIEW

PUT TO THE TEST

Students are a captive audience. Now they will be subjected to a single three-hour exam that could seriously affect the rest of their lives.

BERENICE WOOD

Call him Ray. At some point during your teaching career, he has been — or will be — one of your students. For the past two years, he's been mine in both English 11 and English 12.

Ever since the first class began in a cave, there's been a kid like Ray in the back row. Whether he's squatting on a rock or chipping his initials into a plastic desk top, his type has been around as long as teachers have.

Ray is the survivor type of student, never really at ease with the education system, but gifted with a rat-like sense of how to slither his way through to graduation. Being involved in Ray's schooling is a little like being party to a love-hate relationship. Because Ray realizes that society these days demands at least a Grade 12 certificate for anything but a dead-end job, he respects what the school can do for him. Because he also has a lively sense of his own academic inadequacies, Ray masks insecurity and fear with a swaggering display of adolescent bravado.

Underneath the swagger, however, Ray really wants to make a respectable exit through the front door, diploma in hand. He wants to be able to leave with a sense that the diploma represents the school's affirmation of his worth and his potential as a member of the community. He is willing to do enough work to earn it. Sometimes, despite himself, Ray's interest in a subject catches fire, and the process of his education truly begins.

This year, the Rays of our schools will have to write a provincial final examination, at least in English 12 and possibly in one or more of 12 other subjects, depending on their Grade 12 courses. According to ministry policy circular 07(83-09-21), one of the arguments in favor of provincial examinations is that they will "ensure that Grade 12 students meet consistent provincial standards of achievement in the academic subjects." Whether or not the examinations, as they are now established, will effectively contribute to the process of educating our students is an issue the circular does not address.

While expenses for the entire set of provincial examinations may well run into millions of dollars annually, the human cost to Ray — and possibly thousands of other British Columbia students — is virtually inestimable. Keep in mind, first, that English 12 is a compulsory course required for secondary school graduation. It involves virtually every Grade 12 student. The provincial English 12 examination, therefore, may have devastating effects on our students' opportunities for graduation as well as access to post-secondary education or employment.

Next, keep in mind that the three-hour provincial examination will count for 50 per

For a single exam to have equal weight to the full range of assessments during the year is a gross injustice.

Berenice Wood is assisting teacher of English at the Schou Education Centre in Burnaby.

cent of the final mark for the course — equal in value to the entire school year's work. During that three-hour examination, students will write on five questions to test skills in writing, language, reading, literature, and editing. During the school year, projects and assignments include such varied types as formal and informal oral presentations, dramatic presentations, creative writing of stories and poems, research projects, library skills, critical, persuasive and literary essays, objective content-based tests, debates, and practical writing such as letters and resumés. For a single three-hour examination to have equal weight compared to the full range of assessments done throughout the year is a gross injustice to both students and teachers.

This unjust allocation of marks may put excessive pressure on students to perform during the three-hour examination period. They know its potentially devastating effects on their plans for graduation, employment, or post-secondary education. Such pressure works against students who have conscientiously completed homework and assignments during the school year but who may not achieve satisfactory scores on the final examination. Unsatisfactory scores may easily result from a number of factors not necessarily related to a student's abilities in English 12 — such things as a bout of illness, family or personal problems, and reaction to the stress of the examination itself. Because the examination counts for one-half of the final course mark, a student may end up with a final mark for the course that is not typical of his or her usual performance in the course.

Consider Ray, for example. To him, the self-discipline and persistence required to earn a C in my class meant a major sacrifice. Never a gifted English student, he nevertheless worked doggedly through the range of oral reports, spelling drills, writing and editing tasks, reading assignments, and everything else required in the course. Last year, the provincial English 12 writing test made his final month in school a misery of fear and despair. He understood all too well how freezing up on one examination could cost him his credits for English 12 and, ultimately, his secondary school graduation. How well the experience contributed to the process of educating him, I would not like to say.

This kind of experience is, however, only one of the detrimental effects the provincial examinations may have on our students. Ironically, students may be exempted from the English 12 examination on the basis of deficiencies in skills and abilities that have caused their placement in English 12 Minimum Essentials, but they may not be exempted on the basis of demonstrated competence or proficiency in the school

A final examination mark that counts for 50 per cent of a student's grade in a course discriminates unfairly against the conscientious student who works hard all year and completes all assignments.

year's work. Students registered in English 12 Minimum Essentials will not write the examination, but students in regular English 12 *must* write. It appears that there is no advantage offered to students who have worked consistently throughout the school year and who have demonstrated proficiency or excellence.

Students applying for provincial scholarships will be required to achieve at least 50 per cent on the English 12 examination. However, they will not be able to rewrite the examination for provincial scholarship purposes. This is contrary to former practices regarding the scholarship English Composition examination, which students had the opportunity to rewrite if desired.

The additional time required for students to receive their final marks from the ministry may have serious effects on students' chances for graduation. Marks for the January examinations are to be available on February 22; for the June examinations, on July 23; and for the August Supplementals, September 14. In a semestered school, students will not know whether they have passed or failed courses until several weeks after the second semester has begun. Any student who wishes to repeat English 12, which is the only compulsory course, will not have the opportunity to do so during the second semester. Any student who wants to rewrite the examination will have a gap of several months between the end of the course in first semester and the June or August examination. Some students may be obliged to register for an additional semester to repeat the course and complete their graduation requirements.

Students who want to register for post-secondary institutions will not have final marks until late July or mid September, possibly jeopardizing their chances for acceptance. Especially if enrolments are to be limited, British Columbia students may be at a disadvantage compared to out-of-province students who submit early applications. If they want to apply to institutions outside British Columbia, they may be similarly disadvantaged.

Another major concern related to the provincial examinations has to do with the role of the classroom teacher as a qualified professional. The design and marking of provincial examinations should be realistically related to instruction, curricula, and expectations in B.C. classrooms.

There have been no publicized opportunities for input by experienced classroom teachers into the design and nature of a provincial examination program. The proposed provincial examinations appear to lack the opportunities for input afforded, for example, by the Provincial Learning Assessment Program tests. Provincial Learning Assessment tests employ a system of advisory committees, review committees, and pilot groups at numerous stages during the design, administration, marking, and interpreting of the tests.

In contrast, the proposed final examinations, which may determine students' academic and vocational futures, are apparently being designed and prepared without such opportunities for consultation and advice. Certainly such opportunities have not been publicized for widespread response.

The nature and type of questions may be dictated by concerns for low-cost, convenient marking procedures. The examinations

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A MATHEMATICS TEACHER'S VIEW

I'M ALL FOR GOVERNMENT EXAMS

Students will benefit from preparing for and writing final government exams. The exams will improve education, not weaken it.

BRIAN TETLOW

●At last what many of us were saying would happen is happening. The provincial government is bringing back mandatory provincial exams at the Grade 12 level.

The BCTF immediately reacted to this by saying that teachers should not co-operate with the ministry. So the battle between teachers and the ministry continues.

Before I blindly join in the fight against mandatory provincial exams, I feel it necessary to sit back and reflect on current evaluation practices and their effect on the education of our Grade 12 students.

My opinions on evaluation derive from a number of sources. Personal experience of a variety of evaluation procedures in different parts of the world and subsequent studies of their effectiveness have given me what I consider to be a broad view of the subject.

Most teachers in B.C. use the *formative* method of evaluation. This is usually a short-term evaluation procedure that is intended to be informative and to provide immediate feedback on students' progress. It reveals to students their strengths and weaknesses and thereby indicates areas in need of remediation.

In mathematics and science such evaluation might utilize daily quizzes or weekly and bi-weekly tests. The mathematics curriculum allows little time for the writing of reports or papers, a form of evaluation common in other subject disciplines. However, science teachers rely on laboratory reports for part of their formative evaluation.

Many of us who give end-of-term exams practise long-term formative evaluation. As well as providing constructive criticism of the students' progress to date, formative evaluation encourages and reinforces the retention of knowledge and skills.

The other kind of evaluation is *summative* evaluation. Summative tests in mathematics or science assess students' knowledge of all topics taught in a unit or course up to a certain time. None of these topics is included in future summative tests. During a course teachers may use several summative tests or one test at the end, which is usually referred to as the final examination.

There are, therefore, two types of summative evaluations in B.C. schools: short-term — which could be a unit test — and long-term, a final examination. Most mathematics teachers prefer short-term summative evaluation over long-term evaluation. Short-term summative evaluation assesses the short-term retention of knowledge and skills. Consequently, teachers are encouraging the learn-it-and-forget-it approach to studying and are failing to help

All students should write final exams.

Brian Tetlow is head of the mathematics department at Spectrum Community School in Victoria and an executive member of the B.C. Association of Mathematics teachers.

students develop long-term retention of knowledge and skills. This situation is particularly detrimental to successful progress in mathematics.

Educators achieve formative and summative evaluation in two ways: teacher evaluation and external evaluation. Teacher evaluation is well established in mathematics classes throughout B.C. in the form of daily written quizzes and periodic tests. The students receive their corrected papers and, especially if they are provided with a worked key, can learn much from their mistakes.

District or provincial examinations in mathematics have been part of the evaluation process for some time. However, they have not been used extensively or significantly in the final evaluation of individual students.

Most teachers prefer to use their own tests for periodic and final evaluation because they test what they have taught. This is a source of concern. As long as the teacher has been teaching the prescribed curriculum, this method of evaluation is valid. However, teacher-generated tests are valid in terms of content but not necessarily in terms of curriculum.

If teachers do not teach all topics in the prescribed curriculum, the tests they generate do not have curricular validity. We all have our favorite topics and tend to dwell on these at the expense of other less interesting topics. An example of this might be the exclusion of geometry at the Grade 10 level. Grade 10 teachers might spend most of the time building algebra skills at the expense of geometry and consumer mathematics. Consequently, their tests, which reflect what they have taught, will emphasize algebra.

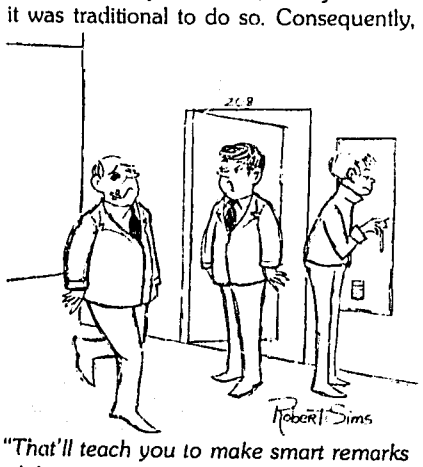
Provincial tests, based on the prescribed curriculum, test what is prescribed and therefore require that the teacher teach to the set curriculum. In an effort to standardize the teaching and evaluation of the curriculum the ministry has made Grade 12 provincial exams mandatory.

The purpose of the provincial examination program is "to ensure that Grade 12 students meet consistent provincial standards of achievement in academic subjects," and "to ensure that graduating students from all schools in the province will be tested equitably when applying for admission to universities and other post-secondary institutes."

Most teachers would agree with the purposes described above, but there is widespread dissatisfaction among those teachers with whom I have spoken regarding the procedures by which the exams were introduced by the ministry. There was no communication with the various PSAs concerned. Certainly, the executive of the B.C. Association of Mathematics Teachers was not consulted. As a result, teachers of Grade 12 have rebelled against the concept and are refusing to co-operate with the ministry.

There are also strong reactions from students around the province, who are also speaking out against the provincial exams. They feel that their futures are being threatened. They are also concerned about the 50-50 split in marks.

I have given a final examination in Algebra 12 for years and have counted it for 20 per cent of the year's mark, mainly because it was traditional to do so. Consequently,



"That'll teach you to make smart remarks while supervising the government exams."
©Innovations Unlimited

my students have felt that the ministry's weighting of 50 per cent for the final exam is too high. However, having been advised that, in most other parts of the world, namely Europe, Asia, Australia and South America, students leaving secondary school are faced with a whole battery of final exams, all of which count for 100 per cent, their feelings have changed.

I believe that a 50 per cent weighting for the Algebra 12 exam, with the other 50 per cent's being based on performance throughout the year, is very fair. If the score provided by the teacher for a particular student is significantly different from the score on the provincial exam, the teacher should take a close look at the reasons for the differences. Perhaps the student suffered from examination nerves or was sick on the day of the exam.

If all students in an Algebra 12 class had scores significantly higher or lower than the scores on the provincial exam, the teacher would be well advised to re-examine his or her evaluation procedures; perhaps his or her tests are too easy or too difficult; perhaps there is not enough emphasis on the testing of long-term retention of knowledge and skills.

I have heard students remark, "What if I have an off day when I write a final exam?" My response to this question would be, "That's too bad!" I believe that if a student is adequately prepared for an exam, a cold or the flu should make little difference to the overall grade. An emotional upset could have more of an impact, especially if it has prevented a student from preparing for the exam. If this happens, a student can write the supplemental exams in August or the principal can write to the Board of Examiners, which will adjudicate the concern.

I think it bears repeating that for years such countries as England and Australia have had externally set final exams that are the only ones that count. A certificate is issued giving those grades only. A student preparing for those exams makes sure that he or she is ready for them and the teacher usually plans to have enough time left over for adequate review. If a student does badly, the only recourse is to repeat the examination at a later date.

I believe that it is far better that *all* students write final exams, and I suggest that the mathematics and science teachers who do not give final exams are short-changing our young people. There are several benefits to be accrued from the challenge of sitting final exams. It is a common practice to test only those who have not done very well at the end of a course while the more successful students are exempt from the examination and graduated by recommendation. This is unfortunate, because it is likely that the more successful students will carry on in mathematics and science beyond secondary school. They will then be faced with university or college exams that are more inclined to be of a long-term summative nature. Therefore, we should not only be encouraging our students' long-term retention of knowledge by testing but also familiarizing them with techniques for tackling the exams with ease and success.

In B.C. the results of the August supplementals are not released until the middle of September. No doubt the post-secondary institutes will have to make provision for those students wanting to enter after writing supplementals.

Some teachers have remarked that provincial exams take away teacher flexibility — that teachers are forced to teach to an exam. I see nothing wrong with this provided that the exam is well-constructed and has curricular validity. I have heard teachers complain about the quality of previous provincial exams. I am hopeful that a multiple choice format will be avoided for Algebra 12, because I believe that solutions should be student-generated at that level.

Teachers are also concerned that the examination results will be sent to superintendents and that teachers may be judged on those results. I am hopeful that the results of the exams will be examined with

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A PRIMARY TEACHER'S VIEW

IT'S REPORT CARD TIME!

Evaluating students fairly is especially difficult — and important — in the primary grades. Here are practical suggestions for improving your evaluative techniques.

BEVERLEY McWHINNEY

At the end of September the doors of the school open for Meet The Teacher night. All the arriving parents eye their child's teacher warily, and, even after the notice that went home that same day, rush up with the question, "Well, how is my child doing anyway?" Even after playing The Name Game for the last two weeks, this question is challenging at best — threatening at worst!

Now, however, as October disappears as quickly as the Thanksgiving turkey, the *Report Card* looms ever closer! Evaluating the students fairly and as accurately as is humanly possible starts haunting our every thought. Evaluating, assessing, appraising, *valuing* every child for his or her efforts in the classroom.

The definition of *evaluation*, according to the World Book Dictionary and Webster's Third New International Dictionary, is the act or process of evaluating. To evaluate is: (1) to estimate the worth or importance of, to appraise; (2) to examine and judge concerning the worth, quality, significance. When one looks at it in this light, and realizes the responsibility of assessing a person's worth and significance as well as the quality of his or her performance, it is no small wonder that the task seems an onerous one.

How does a classroom teacher with 25 or more active, busy students in possibly two grades and many levels of thinking, feel comfortable when the report cards go home?

The answer we are hearing more and more seems to be a return to standardized testing, and certainly this is an evaluative tool for gaining information of one kind, but only one of many. I feel sure no-one is advocating that we use only this method, yet I have seen this mark go down on a child's permanent record card as an indication of his or her ability. There are many better and more relevant methods to indicate worth and quality of performance, if we are looking at the whole person.

After teaching in an inner-city school where children came for one month and left again when the final flag dropped at the horse races, I learned quickly that one must take children from where they are and progress from there. The evaluations that were most helpful were pertinent, anecdotal, and positive.

First and foremost, if evaluation is to be effective, a climate of trust and respect must be established. The teacher must be firm,

If test results are low, I must question my teaching.

Beverly McWhinney teaches at Kidston Elementary School in Vernon.

consistent, and fair! A classroom is not a place for tricks!

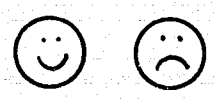
For example, one young teacher in a summer workshop wanted a mathematics question for a primary classroom, a question for which there was no answer, supposedly to challenge the students. Unless there was an extremely strong relationship between this instructor and the students, all this would lead to would be frustration and distrust.

Children must know the classroom procedures to operate in a manner appropriate to the setting. We have six DO rules in our Grade 2 room, which came about through discussion in the first week of school. Since these are the children's rules as well as mine, they are well accepted. The classroom covenant is also posted, and the children learn the rights of each individual and his or her importance as a unique and special person. Thus it becomes easy to assess social interaction as the year progresses. This approach follows the child out onto the playground as well as elsewhere in the school.

Developing *sensitivity* to peoples' rights is all encompassing, and rather than call out names, I now try to let my students volunteer answers in the classroom. When the children realize my attitude to their answers is an accepting one, they feel more confident in responding, and respond more frequently. To single out a child who is not anxious to answer can lead to a fearful, quiet environment. How well I remember myself as a student seeking the back seat in the mathematics classes so as not to be noticed — then living in constant fear that even this wouldn't work.

I try to know how my students feel each day. This sounds impossible with larger classes. However, one method I have used with success is to have an attendance board at student level with a paperclip attached beside each name. As the child enters the room, she or he puts up a face to indicate how she or he is feeling.

I FEEL I FEEL Adam



Children who are ill, have a family problem, or just haven't started the day with breakfast because of rushing, generally perform poorly. I can note the faces and then chat quietly with an unhappy child before class rather than have the problem evolve in the middle of opening exercises. My name is part of the chart as well — when the children realize this, everyone works together to help those feeling poorly to have a better day! This has not been just a exercise in classroom management but an assessment of social interaction.

Once the atmosphere is comfortable and all concerned are aware of each other's rights, the teacher is able to use a wider range of evaluative tools. As one's program should be multi-faceted, so should be the methods of appraisal.

Like breathing, observation is a necessary function in the primary classroom. I keep a dated notebook on my desk, and as the children work in the math centres, on reading activities, art projects or other independent tasks, I continually move among them rather than sit at a desk. Thus I see and hear much I might otherwise miss. Periodically, throughout the day, I make anecdotal records of what I see and hear occurring.

At a workshop I attended years ago I remember being told that a teacher wears many hats, the observer's hat being one of great importance. One notes social interaction, attentiveness to a task, alertness, readiness to solve a problem, pride in work well done. In a large classroom, observing two or three children throughout the day and then working through the class in this manner ensures that every child is given equal attention. Checklists can be used in this way as well. (See Figure 1.)

Example of Observation Sheet

OBSERVATION:

Date_____ Scale G S N

Materials or Activity:

_____

_____

_____

Degree of interest			
Listens to directions			
Practising rules			
Offers suggestions			
Verbalization			
	Susan	Michael	Shannon

Figure 1

At the end of each week I try to stop and think about the class as a whole. This always helps to evaluate my methods and procedures as well as tidy up any thoughts I am having about my notes.

Throughout the week, classroom assignments have been completed. Any sheets are turned in and each child has a personal file folder in which dated work is kept. After each reporting period, these sheets are stapled together and sent home.

Notebooks are checked for improvements — for example, ideas, capital letters, punctuation, spelling. I try to mark books or sheets with the child as soon as possible after an assignment so he or she can explain the thinking that took place or clear up any misunderstandings. Children are assessed individually when humanly possible to avoid any humiliations and/or pressure of competition.

I teach thinking skills to my class, so they learn to use many ideas, see other points of view, and look for solutions to problems that are original and can be added to. In other words, fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration. This makes it easier for the children when I teach them how to write a test.

Everyone gets a favorite book or magazine to place on his or her table when he or she is writing a test. I also have extra pencils and erasers handy and I explain to the children the need for practice in writing tests. I am most concerned that the children learn to try all the questions rather than stall on one; that they pace themselves and, at a *stop*, that they proofread their work by becoming "Sherlock Hemlock — world's greatest detective."

They read and enjoy their magazine or book while waiting for the next section to commence. In this way, the children become familiar with tests and do not view them with fear. Again, I would never test material that had not been taught thoroughly and if results are generally low, I must question my methods of teaching rather than the children's marks.

I often make up unit tests in social studies or science that follow the integrated theme of the month. Here I try to present a wide range of questioning techniques, all of which have been used by the children prior to the test situation. These tests might include: matching items, lists, fill in the blanks, labelling an illustration. It is imperative during these situations that I remember what is being tested. The tests are to check information gained; they are not reading tests. I usually return them for discussion, then keep them in the child's file for reference.

I am always delightfully surprised by the results on these quizzes. Some of the less successful readers do extremely well when questioned on high interest material.

I try to involve the parents as much as possible. As they become more comfortable, they share information about their children, which is often most beneficial in appraising a child's behavior.

As a young teacher, I was very apprehensive at reporting time. Now, with good anecdotal records, test results, and supportive colleagues, I look forward every year to meeting and discussing a child's progress with his or her parents.○

WHAT DID THE READING EXAM *REALLY* MEASURE?

Internationales Einrichtung
Fuer Erziehung
Stephansplatz
Wien

Mr. James Bowman, Director
Government Division
B.C. Teachers' Federation
2235 Burrard Street
Vancouver, B.C.
V6J 3H9

Dear Jim,

Thank you for sending me a copy of the 1983 British Columbia Grade 7 provincial examination in reading. Because of your strong antipathy to standardized tests I'm afraid you will find some of my comments somewhat distressing. I know, however, that you will accept them in the true spirit of research and in keeping with a professional relationship spanning three decades.

Your first criticism concerning the literacy quality of the examination is not borne out by the boxed example given before the first question.

Example:
The *staff* at the library was very helpful.
Here *staff* means

A. the horizontal lines on which music is written.
B. a crosspiece in a ladder.
C. the people working at an establishment.
D. a long stick, carried in hand.

ANSWER: C. the people working at an establishment.

A	B	C	D	E
①	②	●	④	⑤

I did not expect the compilers of the examination to be familiar with the obscure autobiography of Johann Adolph Hasse, *Adler Brüten Keine Tauben* — a classic to musicologists. There is a passage in that book where Hasse, a contemporary of Mozart's, describes the finding in the king of Saxony's library of a long-lost harpischord piece written on music sheets with 10 lines and 9 spaces. Hasse, a true eagle of a researcher, had to perch precariously at the top rung of a ladder while using a long pole to remove music sheets from a shelf near the ceiling.

When asked later about this aspect of his research activities Hasse said, "The staff at the library was very helpful." Generations of doctoral students in music at European universities have pondered this enigmatic statement. Was he referring to the 10-line staff on the sheet of music itself? Did he mean the pole that allowed him access to the farthest shelf? Was he referring to the 92-year-old stone-deaf librarian? Your examiners must be privy to some hitherto unknown information to be so certain of the answer. Please convey to them my profound admiration and congratulations.

Your second contention that the test is unfair to those whose native language is not English was not borne out by my research. As you know this institute is a veritable babel of tongues catering to only the most brilliant of students from almost every country in the world. When the test was given to students without one word of English in their vocabularies, the results ranged from 92.5 per cent — a Bulgarian lad reputed to be psychic — to 25 per cent, the mark one would get for always choosing C as an answer to each of the 40 questions. The test became, as you will have discerned, a matter of the operation of the mathematical laws of probability and chance.

This test was an example of good language usage?

On the other hand, the English-speaking students fared worse. One spent his time worrying about why there were five circles on offer but only four statements in each question from which to choose. Most of the others challenged various of the proffered answers at some length so they did not come close to finishing the test in the allotted time. None of that caused me concern. The essence of education in this establishment is the questioning and challenge of all orthodoxy — so I expected nothing less.

One of the students (an editor's brat) spent the whole hour correcting the language of the test. I have included a sample of the passage as it appeared in the test booklet and his "corrections." (Ed. See box item.)

Another boy made up E statements, which he argued were better answers than any presented to him. Obviously he got no marks at all but in many cases he had a point. For example, one of the four questions asked about "The Caribou are Crossing" is as follows:

The man carrying the caribou most likely returns fire . . .

A. to help his friends.
B. to see how well he can shoot.
C. for some fun.
D. in order to protect himself.

The statement that he added said:

E. because most North American hunters are trigger happy.

Having spent a sabbatical year in New Hampshire I must agree with his "answer" without reservation.

I have to agree with you about the last story in the test booklet, "A Kind of Courage," where hero Davy chooses to display a different kind of bravery before the girl of his dreams and suffers the shame of apparent cowardice before his contemporaries. It is not only totally unreal but didacticism of the worst sort: a return to Madame de Genlis and the moralists of the 18th century. However, if I am to believe recent news reports reaching Vienna, your government in British Columbia appears to be moving in the same reverse chronological direction, so the story may not be entirely inappropriate.

You did not mention what I find to be the most intriguing aspect of the test — the method of answering the questions. In a test of language, to restrict students to shading in a number of small circles seems somewhat bizarre. One assumes that teachers in British Columbia are not much different from those teaching in other jurisdictions and that they will make sure that their students are well versed in the technique of coping with examinations imposed on them by the authorities. I should imagine there

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The Caribou Are Crossing

The caribou are crossing. Someone has just come to town and said that from the air you can't see the ground for the animals. Twenty or thirty thousand of them. It's fifty below. Quickly the town begins to empty as a long snake of smoking vehicles moves out the highway. When they arrive at the appointed place, the animals are still behind a ridge. Cars and trucks park in a long line at the shoulder of the road, engines and heaters running; together they send a mile-long hackle of ice-fog into the flawless winter sky.

The waiting begins and could last for days until something occurs to the milling animals. Always there are a few men who won't wait. They leave their automobiles, sling their rifles and make for the ridge-crest. After a while, there are shots. Then the intervals to clean the kill. Those still waiting grow excited, impatient, expectant.

The first to kill and clean his caribou drapes the carcass around his shoulders and begins climbing the ridge toward the road, the long antlers bouncing as he walks. The rack is higher than the hunter's head, and those waiting see this before they see the man beneath the animal against the horizon at the top of the ridge.

Doors open and several race across the road. Shots. The man carrying the caribou drops the carcass, flattens himself behind it, and fires back at the line of cars. The sound of a bullet striking the metal or the glass of a vehicle is almost indistinguishable from the sound of a bullet entering the body of a caribou or a bear.

Here are the student's comments:

The caribou are crossing.	Crossing what? A river? A highway? A railroad? A mountain range? Their eyes?
Someone has just come to town and said that from the air <u>you</u> can't see the ground for the animals.__	"you" should be "one" The period should be a colon or a dash, to connect the following phrase or the sentence.
<u>Twenty</u> or thirty thousand of them.	Twenty caribou or 30,000 caribou? Which?
<u>It's fifty below</u>.	What is fifty below? And below what?
Quickly the town begins to empty as a long snake of <u>smoking</u> vehicles moves out the highway.	Picturesque but inaccurate.
When they <u>arrive</u> . . .	Confusing. "They" appears to refer to "the animals" in the succeeding clause.
. . . at the <u>appointed</u> place . . .	"Appointed" by whom? And to what?
. . . the animals are <u>still</u> behind a ridge . . .	The animals are not still. They are milling. (See below.)
The waiting begins and could last for days <u>until something occurs</u> to the milling animals . . .	What does this mean? Until something happens to the animals? Or until something comes to their minds?
After a while, there are shots.__	The period should be a semi-colon; again the succeeding fragment should be incorporated into the sentence.
Then the <u>intervals to clean</u> the kill . . .	Intervals do not clean kills.
The <u>rack</u> is higher than the hunter's head . . .	What is this "rack?"
Doors open and <u>several</u> race across the road.	Several what? Doors?
Shots.	Another sentence fragment.
. . . The sound of a bullet striking the metal or glass of a vehicle is <u>almost indistinguishable</u> from the sound of a bullet entering the body of a caribou or a bear.	Nonsense!

A RETIRED TEACHER'S VIEW

EXTERNAL EXAMS REVISITED

Here are the pros and cons of the controversy over the government's reintroduction of provincial examinations.

JOHN S. CHURCH

●The announced intention of the provincial government to re-introduce Grade 12 external examinations has evoked from me three different responses.

One has been to review the history of the long campaign to have the examinations withdrawn.

A second has been to speculate briefly on the nature of the belief system of those teachers and members of the public who support external examinations.

A third has been to reassess, to reorganize, and to recapitulate arguments, including my own, against the use of outside examinations.

A BRIEF HISTORY

Did you know that the first B.C. Royal Commissioners on education, Putman and Weir, in their *Survey of Education*, 1925, recommended the abolition of external examinations? They stated that grades or marks are opinions, not measurements. "Nobody could be sure what was measured, or how closely the measure tallied with the reality," they observed.

It took almost 50 years to implement in full the Putman-Weir recommendation. In the mid-thirties, Grade 8 entrance-to-high-school examinations were abolished. In 1937, the principle of accreditation was introduced. Accredited high schools could pass, without the external examinations, 40 per cent of their students. In later years, the percentage of students recommended was increased to 60 per cent.

By 1966 a major step toward the abolition of the Grades 11-12 school-leaving examinations had been taken, when examinations in the constants — English 12, Social Studies 11, Mathematics 11, French 11, etc. — were removed. Students might still be required to write examinations in one or both of the elective courses numbered 12. However, these exams were objective in format, one hour in length and counted for only 50 per cent of the final mark; the other 50 per cent was given by the classroom teachers.

Because of the partial phasing out of the departmental tests, scholarship examinations were introduced at this time. The phasing out of the school-leaving examinations was completed in 1973 with the removal of the requirement that some students might have to write two electives, which would count for 50 per cent of their marks.

Some have blamed the removal of the school-leaving examinations on the New Democratic Party, but this is not in accord with the facts. The decision to complete the

Grades or marks are opinions, not measurements.

John Church, now retired, was formerly a BCTF staff officer in the Professional Development Division. He is known as one of the province's foremost scholars of education.

withdrawal of the examinations in 1973 preceded the election to government of the NDP in August 1972.

SUPPORT FOR EXTERNAL EXAMINATIONS

Those who now advocate the return of external examinations must subscribe to a belief that the purpose of education is to reach a common and easily measurable goal or destination.

Change the metaphor. Students are assumed to be travelling at approximately the same speed in a common make and year of vehicle toward a previously agreed destination. What is important is arrival at this destination, not the quality of experience en route. Supporters of external examinations contend that it is possible to measure in a fair and equitable way all aspects of how well each student has reached toward the agreed to and understood objective.

They must believe that B.C.'s students are "standardized." Gary Begin, past-president, B.C. School Trustees Association, stated one year ago that "standardized tests are fine if we have standardized children, but in B.C., we don't."

Exponents of external exams distrust relying solely on the critical judgment of teachers. They place as much (if not more) faith in the examination measurements as they do in the extensive observations and recordings of the teacher over the length of the course.

Many taxpayers and many members of the business community and of universities and colleges argue that they have a right to expect secondary school graduates to be competent in the core subjects. They state that the external examination can guarantee this expectation.

OPPOSITION (INCLUDING MINE) TO EXTERNAL EXAMINATIONS

The reintroduction of external exams will cause many concerns. One group of concerns will be the extent to which it is now possible to reach consensus on the objectives of education in a province that is presumably committed to the principles of multiculturalism and pluralism and that has, therefore, no consensus on societal goals.

Those who believe that education is the cultivation of the infinite uniqueness of each individual will be concerned about the effect of common external examinations. The uneasiness will be compounded by the realization that even if there is consensus on the goals, not all aspects of skills or concepts can be equitably and fairly measured. Because some will be emphasized, others treated lightly or ignored, the teaching curriculum will quickly become distorted, for the reality of teacher survival is, as Eisner has noted, "what is counted, counts."

The teacher will narrow the focus to the exam. Innovations and variations in teaching methods will quickly disappear. Classrooms will again assume the deadly dull appearance of the '50s, except that today's students, unlike their parents, many of whom were in school in the '50s, have been mesmerized by TV.

Those who advocate more future-oriented studies will be concerned. They argue that external examinations focus on having students find *THE ANSWER*, not on helping students to pose heretofore unasked questions for a future that will be vastly different from the present.

Another concern involves the question: What is knowledge? Is it external, objective, common to all? Is it internal, personal and made meaningful in different ways to each individual? Those who lean toward the latter perception are opposed to the re-establishment of external examinations.

As Gary Begin has stated, B.C. students are not standardized. Because of the infinite variety of backgrounds — influenced by socio-economic and, even more now than in the '50s, by a wide range of ethnic factors, occupational and educational levels attained, particularly of the father, family composition and placement of the child in relation to siblings — children start school at different levels.

Many of the things the school does reinforce those societal-induced inequalities, and the comparatively minor variations in education found in the primary years in any classroom have therefore expanded greatly by the senior secondary years. Moreover, size of school and its location — accessibility to cultural and recreational facilities and post-secondary institutions — are factors that influence student achievement.

A system of common external exams is not the answer to members of the public who want assurance of competence by secondary school graduates. Teachers can select from among extensively used and standardized tests the one or more appropriate papers to administer to their students. What is important is that those who are directly involved determine what they want to check or "dip-stick." Teachers can interpret the results in relation to their own tests, their extensive observations and notes on the students, the comments of the parents and the self-evaluations of the students. The results would be additional information available to the public. It is important to have as broad a base of information about student achievement as possible, not just a one-shot mark.

A fundamental question is whether or not the provincial government has the right to evaluate students. Would adults permit a central government to evaluate their reading or writing skills? One year ago, my former colleague, Mike Zlotnik, unequivocally stated that "the basic responsibility of the provincial government is not to run the school system, or determine the curriculum, or supervise teachers, or evaluate students." He added that the task of the ministry is to ensure that each group in education pursues its appropriate rights and responsibilities.*

The most serious message of the common external examination is the reminder to students and teachers of dependence and personal distrust. "Do not trust your own observations, judgments, senses or intuitions; rely, rather, on the information that the examination can provide."

It is insidious what a once-in-time examination does to the participants' own senses of judgment. One of the most important goals of education is the cultivation of self-evaluation skills. Those school systems that promote standardized external examinations certainly stifle in all participating learners — both teachers and students — the acquisition of, and faith in, self-evaluation. Is not the alienation of the student, the teacher and other disadvantaged citizens already a serious malaise of late 20th century society?

The external examiners' message is brutal, frank and stark. "Trust me, your once-in-time drop-in visitor, not the cumulative recordings, observations, intuitions and markings that you as teachers and students have collated, discussed and mulled over during a school-term or year together."

IN SUMMARY

The concerns of those who are opposed to the re-introduction of external examinations include:

1. Societal. Lack of consensus on goals.
2. Educational. (a) Lack of agreement on objectives; (b) distortion of the teaching curriculum to fit the narrow focus of the examination; (c) ignoring of future-oriented studies; (d) uncertainty as to the nature of knowledge.
3. Socio-economic, ethnic, family, geographically-induced variations among B.C. students.
4. Broad base of teacher information in reporting to the public on the competence of secondary school graduates.
5. Lack of right of the provincial government to evaluate students.
6. External examinations promote dependence and personal distrust among students and teachers. ○

*See also Mike Zlotnik's article elsewhere in this issue.

A STAFF OFFICER'S VIEW

THE POLITICS OF PROVINCIAL EXAMS

Because the government has no legitimate authority to impose provincial examinations, teachers have a professional responsibility to resist those exams.

MIKE ZLOTNIK

●"Whatever my personal views, if the Ministry of Education imposes provincial exams, it is my job to teach and to co-operate in the administration of the tests. As a professional, I have no business opposing provincial exams."

Such views are sometimes expressed by teachers. I challenge the particular view of politics and professionalism implicit in such statements.

The novel feature of the analysis I offer here is the focus on the *political* case for and against provincial examinations. In doing this I confront the advocates of provincial examinations on their strongest ground. More importantly, the crucial moral issues, the questions of students' rights, of political accountability, and of professional responsibility are most clearly revealed in this approach.

Before proceeding we need to establish some basic points. The first is that the issue of provincial examinations is inherently political. Actually, I would be prepared to argue a much stronger thesis, namely, that any systematic evaluation policy is a political matter. However, in this context it should be obvious to even the most politically naive person that because provincially mandated and controlled tests involve the exercise of state authority, they are a political action. Therefore, if some teachers have misgivings about being drawn into politics by responding to the government's provincial testing policy, it must be said that teachers, students, and parents have been thrown into a new political relationship by the government. It is the government that has politicized education, in this instance by using its legislative and executive powers to alter the control over student evaluation.

Dr. Mike Zlotnik is the director of the BCTF's Professional Development Division.

THE POLITICAL CASE FOR PROVINCIAL EXAMINATIONS

Having established that provincial testing is a political matter, it is appropriate to consider whether the government has the legitimate authority to implement this policy. For those of a sufficiently authoritarian disposition the answer is unquestionably "yes." The provincial government has jurisdiction over education and the provincial legislature possesses this authority. So much for the authoritarian perspective.

However, a fundamental feature of democratic societies is that there are certain restrictions on the exercise of government power. No government has the moral authority to order surgeons to perform frontal lobotomies on political dissidents or persons from ethnic minorities. No government has the moral authority to order teachers to carry out practices that harm children.

At this point one might conduct a pedagogical analysis, pointing out the professional opinions and research findings for and against provincial testing. Although those findings support the case against provincial testing, the pedagogical approach would be a mistake in method. Examples from other fields may make this clearer. Consider the question of public investment in the extraction and export of north-east coal. Does the government have the authority to implement this controversial policy? Many people consider it a wise investment while many others think it is stupid and possibly a rip-off. Nevertheless,

A highly centralized system of state education produces child abuse on a massive scale.

mistake or not, the government has the authority to implement this policy. Even governments are entitled to make mistakes.

Contrast this public policy issue with a hypothetical example of a government proposal to confiscate the property of all members of a certain ethnic group. On this sort of policy we say government has no legitimate authority. We distinguish the two types of cases by saying that the latter is a matter of *rights*. At the heart of the idea of rights is the conviction that governments must be prevented from doing certain sorts of things or (in other cases) compelled to do certain things. Nearly everyone agrees that there are rights that cannot be overriden by the legislature. However, some people mistakenly believe that these rights arise from the constitution or the bill of rights. But in a moral sense the legitimate mandate of government power is derived not from a constitution but from certain principles about how people are to treat one another.

If this is correct, the task is to expose the moral meaning of provincial examinations. Who is being evaluated? The students in our public schools. Who controls the evaluation? The answer to this question is government. Don't be fooled by claims that panels of teachers, parents, and professional experts are involved. Any such involvement is advisory. The power and control rest with the majority political party in the legislature. Likewise, don't be deceived by those who claim that it is parents who control the evaluation by "delegating their parental authority" to government. I am a parent, as are my mother and father. We have never delegated our parental authority to government. There is no political process allowing us to do so and the whole idea of such delegation is either nonsense or political deceit.

The plain and simple fact is that when government imposes provincial examinations, government controls student evaluation. The moral meaning of this is that the lines of educational accountability reach to government. This means that whether or not the government has a legitimate right to impose provincial exams depends on whether the main line of educational accountability should be pulled by government.

ACCOUNTABILITY IN EDUCATION — THE DEMOCRACTIC PERSPECTIVE

From a democratic perspective there are two basic aims of education: one is personal and *existential* — it focusses on the student. From an existential orientation each of us has a project structure. We are in a world in which we have a history, future goals and aspirations, a caring disposition to our activities and to other persons. All of us, young and old alike, have a personal need for education that helps us to make sense of our world and to develop the powers to cope with our own meanings and commitments.

In a democracy every child has a right to an education for citizenship. When a government moves to impose "standards" to select out students, it violates the basic norms of social justice.

For eight-year-old Stephen, James Bond movies, a digital watch, Saturday soccer and a friend gone to Australia are incredibly important. For 15-year-old Erin, Sunday school teaching, Donahue, Ronald Reagan, and the threat of nuclear annihilation are strongly felt realities. The quality of their learning cannot be assessed independently of the experiences and meanings Stephen and Erin bring to it.

The second basic aim is the *social aim;* it is concerned with the development of character, dispositions, virtues, powers, knowledge, understanding, and skills for democratic citizenship. In other words, here we are concerned with making Erin and Stephen capable of living and working with others in a society based on peace, harmony, justice, and fellowship. Hence, the community and society make claims on the education of children — which is why, for democrats, a fully private system of education is unacceptable.

These two aims are both essential. Equally important, each of them stands on its own; neither one can be simply incorporated in the other. Those who say that the aim of education is to have each child realize her or his fullest potential are missing half the story. Likewise, those who say that education aims to produce good citizens and workers are missing the other half. The fact that there are two basic aims is the source of much of the tension in teaching. Often the teacher is torn by the conflicting pulls of the two aims.

On another occasion, I would like to elaborate on the conditions required to achieve the social aim and how in fact schools are in crisis in this respect. In this article, I shall merely observe that there is a role for both the local community and the wider society in articulating goals and objectives for the social aim.

"Well, I sure learned how to pass the exam. Too bad I didn't learn anything about the course."

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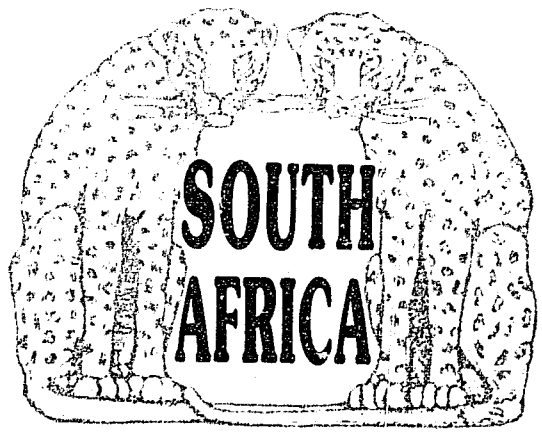

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Regarding the existential aim there are three main findings:

- The communication between children and their teachers must lead to the generation of goals, objectives and activities for learning based on the personal histories and meanings that children bring to school.
- The learning activities must produce positive growth in the personal powers, confidence, and self-concept of all the children.
- The teacher must have a substantial measure of professional autonomy.

The existential aim can never be reduced to some preplanned goals, objectives, activities, etc. It is always intensely personal.

I have shown that the existential aim requires substantial professional autonomy for the teacher. It also requires significant participation by the parent and child. If we take the existential aim seriously, the idea of children's rights becomes extremely important. Not only is Erin to be protected from physical abuse, sexual abuse and emotional abuse; not only is Erin entitled to have her welfare needs met, but also she has a right to have her own existential project and her personal meanings taken seriously. You see, Erin's own situation, her previous history, and her vision for the future are crucial to articulating the existential aim applying to her. Every really good teacher knows this; knows the importance of communication with students, of being able to connect to the child's meanings and interests.

What has this to do with accountability? For the existential aim to be realized, the teacher must be accountable to the individual child and parent. For the social aim to be realized, the teacher must be accountable to bodies representing the community and the wider society.

Therefore, a state system of education is unacceptable. When the government, by centralized prescription, sets the curriculum, determines the criteria for student evaluation, sets examinations, etc., it ties all lines of accountability to the state. It operates according to the hierarchic, competitive paradigm. It makes education into a competitive win or lose game. It drastically reduces the capacity of teachers to respond to the existential aim generated by each student. In brief, a highly centralized system of state education produces child abuse on a massive scale.

Let us see if we can now focus the preceding arguments about accountability directly onto the issue of provincial examinations. Clearly, if the government had 100 per cent control over student evaluation we would have a completely unacceptable system of educational accountability. In actual fact, the government is proposing that the provincial tests will count for 50 per cent of a child's grade. Many teachers sense that this is excessive. When the government decides 50 per cent of the final grade, is there sufficient scope to reflect both the community's objectives and those personal existential goals of the student? Clearly not.

More importantly, if a provincial exam has *any significant weight* in student evaluation it will tend to trivialize the existential/personal aim. Provincial exams entail standardization, and standardization is a threat to both individuality and cultural diversity. Those who will be especially hard hit by provincial exams will be the children from ethnic "minorities" and cultures based on values that diverge from those that define the norms for the tests. In British Columbia that means most children will suffer.

Provincial examinations represent the illegitimate exercise of state power. They are more than a mistake; they violate the rights of children and youth.

Some may say this judgment is too harsh; that government is only trying to exercise its responsibility for maintaining educational "standards." However, we are not concerned here with vocational preparation or esoteric disciplines, but with basic education for citizenship. Every child, in a democracy, has a right to this education. Whenever "standards" are interpreted in terms of selecting out students — and this is clearly a motivation of the testing program — we violate the most basic norms of social justice. Therefore, the conclusion stands — the government has no legitimate authority to implement provincial exams.

Others observe that they took the tests and it has done them no harm. Whether they have come through unscathed I do not know, but in a sense they are the "survivors" — it is rather like survivors of a strafing attack saying it wasn't that bad.

But enough of these attempts to shift the issue off its moral basis.

I have ignored here the pedagogical arguments that standardized tests tend to

WE SHALL MISS THESE TEACHERS

In-Service	Last Taught In	Died
Dale Irene Berezowski (Currie)	Vancouver	May 30, 1983
Charlcie J. Breece (Loeppky)	Victoria	August 26, 1983
Marianne G. Johnson (Purvis)	North Vancouver	July 17, 1983
Florence Pegues (Wilson)	Quesnel	August 16, 1983
Brian R. Taaffe	Terrace	May 28, 1983
W. Donald M. Sage	Vancouver	May 5, 1983
Retired	**Last Taught In**	**Died**
Anna Marie Bealowas (Dukart)	Nanaimo	August 11, 1983
Nora Campbell	Vancouver	September 8, 1983
Charles Carpenter	Chilliwack	June 6, 1983
Verna Beryl Coates (MacDonald)	Langley	August 15, 1983
Catherine Collins	Vancouver	August 9, 1983
Helen Colquohoirn (Hardie)	Penticton	August 15, 1983
Charles J. Dillon	Burnaby	August 31, 1983
Frank Dutton	Victoria	June 10, 1983
Violet Ford	Vancouver	October 9, 1983
John C. Hayman	Courtenay	August 3, 1983
Constance Holmes (Tobin)	New Westminster	September 2, 1983
Albert Hunter James	Burnaby	September 8, 1983
Frances M. Large	Vancouver	July 28, 1983
Rose Lenehan (Rice)	Ocean Falls	June 22, 1983
Isobel McMillan	Vancouver	August 27, 1983
Alan McLuckie	Burnaby	August 29, 1983
Kathleen Madge	Vancouver	October 13, 1983
Jennie Schooley	Vancouver	August 19, 1983
Mervyn Morton Smith	Maple Ridge	September 5, 1983
Nellie Stewart (Dodsworth-Walsh)	Kamloops	May 30, 1983
Dorothy Stuart	Vancouver	July 7, 1983
Alvin H. Thicke	Ladysmith	February 4, 1983
Florence Williams	Vancouver	July 17, 1983

Correction — In our September-October 1983 issue we listed Agnes E. Henning in our list of deceased teachers. We are pleased to report that Ms. Henning is alive and well in Victoria, and apologize sincerely to her for the error.

trivialize knowledge and to emphasize lower level thinking skills.

A government concerned to exercise its proper role in educational accountability would have nothing to do with provincial examinations. It would leave testing policy up to schools and districts with this proviso — parents (of younger children) and students (as they mature) would have appeal processes for any evaluations that might contravene their rights. In other words, government would be the guarantor of students' and children's rights to fair evaluation.

THE PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

There are several key criteria for a profession but the most basic of all is the concern for the client. And this means that to be a professional teacher is to take a certain sort of political position. This position has nothing to do with being conservative, liberal, socialist, communist, etc.

As a professional, a teacher puts the welfare of the student first; that means that the teacher sets the good of the student above the orders of the state, and above the law.

Adolf Eichmann was convicted of war crimes. His defence against the most hei-

There are two sets of aims for the education of these youngsters, personal and social. Both are essential. Those who say the aim is to educate each child to his or her fullest potential miss half the story. Those who say the aim is to produce good citizens miss the other half. Teachers are often torn by the conflicting pulls of the two aims.

nous of atrocities was simple — he merely followed orders. To do what you are told when it means harming innocent people is now called "Eichmannism." Eichmannism is the opposite of professionalism.

Now we come to the point of moral decision. Is compliance with provincial examinations Eichmannism? Many teachers will be unable to really face this question. Some have already defined their clients as those who pay their salaries and not as the students. For them there is no moral issue at all.

For others, perhaps, the issue is still not clear enough. Philosophical arguments such as this are simply too abstract and they will have to wait to see the actual tests. For the sake of the children, I hope these teachers will act in defence of the rights of their students when faced with the tests.

Our most professional response would be a collective refusal to participate in the testing program. However, in the real world, it appears that many teachers do not share this view of professionalism, and many lay citizens would misinterpret teachers' refusal to participate. There is going to be no satisfactory resolution to this controversy until we reach some sort of morally justifiable consensus.

It seems to me that the steps needed to reach that morally justifiable consensus are the following:

- Conduct the debate on provincial exams within the profession;
- Make sure that during the debate all participants are treated with respect regardless of the views they express — this is often difficult but absolutely essential;
- Where and when teachers are ready, take the debate into the community (for the children's sake, teachers better be ready soon!);
- Provide BCTF organizational support to those teachers, parents and students who reject provincial government incursions into areas of professional autonomy or students' rights;
- Do *not* at this time, employ sanctions against teachers who simply follow government orders.

There are both pragmatic and principled reasons for this last point. We should be more concerned with defending children's rights than with punishing teachers. Additionally, we hardly help people to take personal responsibility when we punish them for not following orders to not follow orders.

In conclusion, I have argued that government has no legitimate authority to impose provincial examinations and that teachers have a professional responsibility to resist these examinations. The longer term resolution of this conflict requires a morally justifiable consensus within our province.

In the meantime, teachers must demonstrate both professional integrity and tactical shrewdness because teacher martyrs in a losing cause will not do. In the face of the cruel, competitive forces trying to seize our province and reshape its social structure Jesus' advice may be timely:

"Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; therefore be shrewd as serpents, and innocent as doves." ○

Put to the Test

Continued from page 74

may therefore not represent tests of the most important aspects of the course. For example, reading may be tested by a machine-markable objective test rather than by an instrument that deals with students' ability to read for understanding, enjoyment and appreciation.

The qualifications of markers represent another major area of concern. The numbers of student papers involved, particularly for English 12, will required a substantial

increase in markers over the number usually required to mark the scholarship papers. In the past, markers have been required to be teachers of the course and grade level; that is, a teacher must teach English 12 to mark the English composition papers. If this requirement is not maintained, the markers may be unrealistic in their expectations of the standards for Grade 12 students. The results would be detrimental to the students, whose academic and vocational futures may be affected by the resulting marks.

Also at question is the fundamental issue of whether of not there should be a mandated provincial examination for English 12. The ministry designed secondary English courses as resource courses. That is, a wide variety of tests is intended to allow for variations between districts, schools, and classes according to the needs, interests and abilities of individual students and according to regional or geographic differences between communities.

As the current curriculum is set out, no core selections have been identified as essential for every student. An examination that does not allow for such variations in content and emphases may be to the detriment of many students. The very existence of a provincial examination worth one-half the course mark will inevitably have strong influence on what students cover in class, as teachers react to pressure to narrow the curriculum down to what will be on the test. Ultimately, control of curriculum may shift to the Learning Assessment Branch, away from the Curriculum Development Branch and the revision committees of classroom teachers who designed the secondary English program.

Finally, the provincial examinations appear to be costly repetitions of assessments routinely carried out by classroom teachers. It is a matter of great concern that the examinations represent a lack of faith in the professional judgment of the classroom teacher.○

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care and that constructive criticism will result from any analysis made by superintendents or principals.

The ministry claims that it is also reacting to concerns from the public for "improved standards in education." One problem the universities and colleges have been facing is interpreting the meaning of grades from the many secondary schools throughout the province. The provincial exam is designed to minimize the discrepancies in grading that naturally exist. One of the main reasons for introducing the Grade 12 provincial exams is to standardize provincial grades in the academic subjects.

In summary, I believe that the provincial examination program should bring about some gains in the education of our students, who will benefit from the preparation for and writing of final examinations — in other words, from meeting greater challenges. They will also benefit from being exposed to all topics in the curriculum. Teachers and students will work together to prepare for the final exam.

Although the provincial government has acted rather hastily in implementing the examinations without consultation, I believe we should co-operate with the ministry in the writing and marking of the exams for the good of education in this province.○

Continued from page 80

will be daily circle-filling-in sessions so that by the time students are ready to graduate — you did say that provincial examinations had been reintroduced to Grade 12? — they will have become quite sophisticated in handling these kinds of tests.

Unfortunately that will only add to your problems. If your situation is at all like ours in Vienna the critics of education who demand externally wrought examinations are the same people who insist that students cannot write their native language in a clear and correct manner. After a few years of shading in circles in order to answer questions, that will undoubtedly be true. The critics will then insist on even more tests to "improve" the teaching and learning of language.

With that cheering thought I will bid you auf wiedersehen. Obviously I do not share all of your concerns about standardized tests. Teachers have always had to "render unto Caesar" and no doubt they and their students will survive the latest onslaughts. Perhaps though, you could suggest to Caesar's mob that they should put their own house in order before they get too involved rearranging the furniture in ours.

Best wishes,
W. Wolfgang Schmirnoff, PhD,
Director

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

●I recently wrote a column posing questions about policies for handling different kinds of material. Although I didn't receive much response, one reply did suggest reviewing "books on the cutting edge." Alvin Toffler's *Third Wave*, reissued by Bantam, is described as "the book that makes sense of the exploding eighties." Is it really on "the leading edge" or has it been replaced by *Megatrends*? However you may decide, I now have a large pile of books that don't fit any of the categories in my previous column. I have decided they can best be summed up as "What kind of a world do we live in, anyway?"

What kind of world is it when the blurb touts as an "exhilarating book" *The Nurse's Story* (Carol Gina, Bantam) about pain and death and disillusionment? Douglas and McIntyre offer Vancouver author Crawford Kilian's *Tsunami*, a science fiction *disaster* novel described as "highly entertaining." His previous books are certainly successful; people *like* to read about disasters. The prestigious *Kenyan Review* editorialized on "The Uses of Vulgarity" with specific reference to London Ganning's *Dictionary of Bad Manners* (R.W. and B). Is this what our world finds as comic relief from disaster?

What kind of a world is it when Paper Jacks are "fascinated and intrigued" by a Pocket Books issue called *What about the Russians — and nuclear war?* by an American association that calls itself Ground Zero? The language of the blurb is less disturbing than the idea that the association knows, and is able to tell to the public, which "has a right to know", "everything you ever wanted to know about Soviet nuclear policy and how it affects us all"!

The answer may lie in a short book by journalist and peace-worker Bob Overy called *How Effective are Peace Movements?* (Harvest House, 1982). By analysis and classification he tries to evaluate; his conclusion is not very hopeful.

The world we live in persuades a popular publisher (Bantam) that it will be profitable to offer for sale a set of four paperbacks on civil liberties, namely: *The Rights of Prisoners* (but not their victims), *The Rights of the Critically Ill*, *The Rights of Gay People*, and, twice as large as the other three, *The Rights of Women*. I know that women have, in times past, been classified with "criminals and insane persons." I note that to those associates have now been added the critically ill, who have a right to obtain manuals on suicide. Is there a message there? (To be fair, all four books are quite straightforward statements of American law.)

Somewhere between disaster and how-to is *Dennis Smith's fire safety book* (Bantam, 1983). Sit near the exit in a restaurant; keep an exit route in mind in a shopping mall. (The day I saw cans of high-test gasoline stocked head-high in the centre of a large department store I made a horrified hasty exit.)

As if the world we live in were not sufficiently confusing, British Columbia Press Porcépic has released a new novel, *Making Movies*, by Toronto writer David Halliday. The reader of the book is supposed to imagine himself or herself a TV viewer. To support the publication a video is being produced, acted by Halliday himself. The publisher says they "have tried to expand the boundaries of the written word through sound poetry, illustrated poetry, and Telidon art." This deliberate admixture of media, too, is the world we live in.

If, after all that, you still feel confident enough to raise children in the world we live in, you may wish to peruse *The Complete Dr. Salk: an A-Z Guide to Raising Your Child* by Dr. Lee Salk (New American Library, 1983).

So much for the world reflected in adult books. What about children's books? By far the biggest push in publishing now is romances. Juvenile romances make the teen fiction of the '50s look like stern realism. Bantam has gone to two a month with its Sweet Dreams series. (Sweet Dreams titles are read eagerly by little girls in Grade 4.) Signet Vista, without, perhaps, as large a stable of "romance" writers, released one "original" romance in August and turned to the past to reprint *A White Bird Flying* by Bess Streeter Aldrich, first published in 1931. Even they are outdone by Seal Books with reprints of the much older "Emily" series by L. M. Montgomery. It seems sheer escapism, and one can hardly wonder that it sells.

However, just to give children the illusion that they have responsibility and are able to control their choices in this world we live in, there are the violently popular multiple plot books. "Choose your own adventure" No. 25 offers 28 possible endings. These books are as far as possible removed from literature, and as close to games as print gets. Comic books have more plot line.

Near the bottom of my pile is the annual report of the Overseas Book Centre, devoted to Development through Education and "promoting literacy in developing countries." One is tempted to ask "Whatever for?" The what-for follows: express your faith in the world by learning to talk with your hands in *Signing* (Bantam); by *Building your own kitchen cabinets* (Taunton Press); or by teaching a course using as a text *Electronics, a practical introduction*, by P. W. Braley (John Wiley, 1983).

Electronics brings me to a couple of items that just missed the last issue: *The Illustrated Computer Dictionary* (Bantam), said to assist adults to communicate with kids; and *The Friendly Computer Book: a simple guide for adults*, also Bantam, with the same bland reassurance as the multiple-plot books, namely that you are still in charge.

That isn't quite what Toffler said, but he did say that the responsibility for change lies with us, that we can start the process of reconstruction now, so our children can take part in a "reconstitution of civilization." It is, after all, up to you. ○

BOOKS RECEIVED

Glickman, Yaacov. *The treatment of the Holocaust in Canadian History and social science textbooks* by Yaacov Glickman and Alan Bardikoff, Downsview, League of Human Rights of B'nai Brith, Canada, 1982. 101 pp. paper, no price. 0-9691094-0-7. Order from League for Human Rights, 15 Hove Street, Downsview, Ont. M3H 4Y8. A study that found Canadian textbooks quite inadequate, because the dominant ideology in Canada is "polite racism."

Holt, John. *Teach your own*. New York, Dell, 1981. 369 pp. paper, $11.75. 0-440-58539-2. A manual for parents who want to "allow their children to learn" outside of schools. And, by implication, an indictment of public schools and a manual for improving learning therein.

Hanks, Kurt. *Wake up your creative genius* by Kurt Hanks and Jay A. Parry, Los Altos, William Kaufmann Inc., 1983. 138 pp. paper, $9.95. 0-86576-051-9. Essentially a self-help, self-hype, cartoon book for inventors; nevertheless includes a number of ideas to assist creative thinking.

Martin, Jack. *Personal development: self-instruction for personal agency* by Jack and Wyn Martin. Calgary, Detselig, 1983. 200 pp. paper, $14.95. 0-920490-29-8. A self-help book to teach yourself skills, thinking patterns and emotional responses to direct your life.

Ragsdale, Ronald G. *Evaluation of Microcomputer Courseware*. Toronto, OISE Press, 1983. 119 pp. paper, $10.95. 0-7744-5065-7. Highly academic discussion of its topic, and such special problems as computer programming.

Teacher today Vol. 25 No. 4 April-June 1983. The Quarterly Journal of the Directorate of Primary and Secondary Education, Rajasthan, Bikaner, India (also Vol. 24 No. 2, No. 3, and Vol. 25 No. 2, No. 3). A bilingual professional journal discussing such topics as "Educational philosophy of Karl Marx," or "Thoughts and concentration."

AUSTRALIA

***Journey: Australasia's Geographical Magazine.* Dee Why N.S.W. 2099 Australia. Rigby House. Subscription A $19.00. Order from Koala Books, 14327-95A Ave., Edmonton, Alta. T5N 0B6**

"Give us Liberty!" Ironically echoing the words of an American patriot, the yachtsmen of Australia II clamored for American blood in the closely contested series of races for the America's Cup. In the light of the over-all Australian victory of September 27, 1983 seems Australia's year to crow.

In particular, British Columbia's present awakening to its status as a Pacific Rim country, and Vancouver's popularity with immigrants from Down Under, its Rolf Harris image, and its vigorous ANZA club, serve to prime us for the appearance of *Journey*, Australia's answer to *National Geographic*.

There is the same air of up-and-at-'em ambition about *Journey*, "Australasia's Geographic Magazine," originating in New South Wales. Koala Books describe it enthusiastically as "one of the world's top geographical magazines." Re-named in this issue for overseas distribution, *Journey*, formerly *Geo*, can be seen as a natural rival for the honors and the public long enjoyed by the American-published *Geographic*. The two journals are similar in appearance and format; *Journey* uses a larger page-size — perhaps an indication of a heavier reliance on photographs; there are, by rough estimate, 12 doublespread color photos and twice that number of full single-page pictures, for a total of 36 pages of the 137 in this issue (Sept.-Nov. 1982). Every page either sports its own photo or map, or faces one. This emphasis on pictorial materials culminates in the "color project supplement," a large display sheet that picks up and reprints on a smaller scale pictures used in each of the 12 articles. The net effect is a handsome book of pictures printed on high-gloss paper. Johnny doesn't have to be able to read to enjoy this new magazine about far-away places.

As might be expected, a majority of the

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TEACHING

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articles — seven of the 12 — are based on home ground; places of interest in Australia and New Zealand. The other five articles range over the wider demesne claimed by *Journey's* sub-title: South-East Asia is represented by two articles on the Thailand-Burma-Laos triangle, the Pacific Region by articles on Papua New Guinea and the Cook Islands east of Fiji and Samoa. Antarctica alone is not represented in this issue. The distribution of coverage seems just. Two pieces on the drug trade in the Golden Triangle open to us the study of world affairs by way of sensation and arm-chair travel.

In a broad impression, *Journey* is probably less finished than the *Geographic* and more the result of happy eclecticism. It has the air of honestly finding the road better than the inn, of identifying the traveller with a Prince of Serendip. The text is relaxed, with no steely educational resolve. It assumes that children, like adults, enjoy novelty and adventure, and offers itself as our contemporary in such allusions as "Kermit's cousins" (frogs) and "A little bit country" (Brisbane).

The Australian publication appears to maintain only a small staff and to rely mainly on the submissions of contributors, regulars who are enthusiasts or professionals variously in photography, horticulture, languages, the film documentary, journalism, teaching, and herpetology; it "invites suitable articles." Although it solicits advertising through far-flung offices in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, Hong Kong, and Tokyo, it contains very little advertising. *National Geographic's* chivvying of the consumer's imperative is absent; the half-dozen commercial appeals are for such related goods as cameras and airline tickets.

Journey is published quarterly at a yearly overseas subscription rate of A$19 — about $21.50 Canadian. For little more than $5.00 an issue, your school library can receive this useful and attractive supplement to *National Geographic* coverage of the living world.

—Tony Allingham, Vancouver

CURRICULUM

Leithwood, Kenneth A. (ed.). *Studies in Curriculum Decision Making.* Toronto, OISE Press, The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1982, 310 pp. paper, $18.95. 0-7744-0220-2.

The OISE is the graduate studies arm of the Faculty of Education at the University of Toronto and exercises great influence over education policy and research in Ontario — and therefore in the whole of Canada. From its magnificent building on Bloor Street flows a steady stream of papers and collections of studies on all aspects of education, of which this volume is a typical example.

Studies in Curriculum Decision Making is a collection of studies arranged under three general headings. Describing Teacher Decision Making, Describing Typical Interventions, Improving Curriculum Decision Making. Within each of the first two areas the studies are presented in the strictest (and, one must note, the driest) tradition of social scientific research; although the conclusions reached will surprise no teacher.

It has been found that the strongest influences on teacher curriculum decision making are to be found in the classroom; the strongest of all being the needs of the students as perceived by the teachers. Other important factors are the past experiences of the teachers and the image of what it is to be a good teacher.

Far less influential are such non-classroom elements as system and ministry guidelines, consultants, principals, area superintendents and parents. (Some of the studies go so far as to rank these elements, which makes up some of the most interesting reading.) Near the bottom come the universities.

OISE suggests that co-ordinating and integrating teacher pre-service training, professional development and postgraduate studies will improve curriculum and decision making. No one would argue with that. What this collection fails to face up to, however, is that precisely such a volume as this, with all its social scientific enquiry and data tabulation and analysis resulting in well known conclusions, serves only to increase teacher wariness of non-classroom factors. OISE studies have great influence over *policy*, not over what actually goes on in the schools, in the classrooms; this collection, therefore, is an example of the very phenomenon it seeks to describe!

— Simon Ruddell, Delta

TEACHING

Levin, Tamar. *Effective Instruction* by Tamar Levin with Ruth Long. Alexandria, Va. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1981. 100 pp. (no price) 0-87120-105-4. Order from: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 225 N. Washington St., Alexandria, Va. 22314, U.S.A.

For those teachers who have not yet become allergic to "how-to" books or immune to the idea that educational research can have practical value, it will be easy to appreciate this little book. The stated aim of *Effective Instruction* is to help teachers improve their teaching by providing them with a jargon-free interpretation of results from many studies done on classroom processes in the past two decades. The first part of the book describes three major types

of classroom variables that are all highly related to student learning outcomes. (So much for being "jargon-free.") The second part of the book, the annotated bibliography, provides a readable summary of educational research articles that support the classroom procedures suggested by the authors.

Although (at times) the book seems to dwell on the self-evident (does it take 23 research studies to prove that "more active learning time results in greater learning" (p. 3.)?), it can nevertheless provide a useful stimulus for teachers in thinking about their work. As a matter of fact, Benjamin Bloom, in his Preface to *Effective Instruction*, suggests that teacher friends get in "trios" or "quartets" to discuss and try out some of the described classroom processes. Not a bad idea.

The three big "how-to's" of the book focus on: (1) how to increase active learning time of a class and of individual students; (2) how to use feedback and corrective procedures in such a way that students actually learn from their mistakes rather than just being "labelled" by them; (3) how to give better instructional cues to suit class and individual needs. There is also a chapter on evaluation of instruction, including some useful rating scales, questionnaires, a teacher self-evaluation check-list, and a student self-report check-list.

In the final chapter the authors discuss their view of the ideal classroom climate: high academic orientation with plenty of homework relating directly to the learning objectives; strong teacher leadership that is sensitive to students' reactions; structured, systematic patterns of instruction and class management within which students know when to learn, what to learn and why — without such structures stifling flexibility, spontaneity and intuition; mutual concern and co-operation among students as they help each other achieve group goals rather than competing for teacher attention for rewards and grades; and, finally, support and concern for individuality, which is modelled by the teacher and reflected in the students' way of relating to each other. A pretty picture? Yes, and one that is based on wide ranging observations of real classrooms from kindergarten through to adult education classes. Good classroom climate can be realized in our own classrooms.

Perhaps, in our present B.C. *staffroom* climate, we need to be reminded that good instruction really matters. This book can help us to look beyond the static view that school learning is determined largely by characteristics of students and teachers. There is more to success in school learning than the genetic and environmental background of students combined with the personality, verbal ability and training of teachers. The *way* in which students are taught also plays a major role. In the words of the authors: "management and instructional processes, learning materials, and activities that are carefully developed and used widely can enhance students' ability to attend, to focus on relevant aspects of ideas being taught, to master the objectives set for them, to retain knowledge, and ultimately to learn how to learn."
— B. Mundel, Summerland

THE TEACHING PROFESSION

Miller, John. *Teachers in transition: a study of an aging teaching force* by John Miller, G. Taylor and K. Walker. Toronto, OISE Press, 1982. 66 pp. typescript, $6.95. 0-7744-5057-6.

We have only just begun the new school year and here the book review editor sends me a review copy of a study on an aging teaching force! A conspirational hint or simply a psychic awareness of my daily thought process? For after 23 years in full harness the importance of it all has become a subject of frequent meditation. Never mind!

This informal study by John Miller and associates is basically an outflow of the type of social research that put Gail Sheehy on the best seller list with *Passages* a few years ago, that is, an attempt to identify a common pattern in adult development to understand ourselves better. I should be honest now, and admit that I am not a disciple of Sheehy, but look upon this type of equalizing research with the cynical interest I usually reserve for my daily horoscope and my Sagittarian blueprint. Some things fit; some don't. Still, it does make for interesting speculation.

What, then, is the outcome of Miller's slim — about 60 pages — study? Nothing really startling. Teachers very much follow the pattern (not surprisingly) for all adults as identified by Sheehy and Levinson. To capsule those findings, from ages 20-30 teachers have questions and doubts about their careers and goals. From 30-35 the focus is more on career, especially for men. Women still concentrate on family and nurturing. The startling event is the crossover that occurs at 35-40 when men start finding fulfilment in women's roles, such as the family, while women become more work oriented. From 40-45 this crossover intensifies, and from 45 up, both men and women seek the integration of work and family.

For those of us who have reached these upper years of discernment and introspection, the study seems to be basically common sense. It deals with the questions we often ask ourselves about our roles, our satisfactions, dissatisfactions, our needs, our hopes and our disenchantments. Miller voices these questions and triggers thought. Somehow I feel that, in addition, we could benefit from a Merle Shain to supply us with gainful insight and wisdom regarding our human and professional journey. Perhaps she could be asked to write a teacher compendium for us to chart our course by.
—Jan van der Have, Duncan

Snap Shots...

GEOFF HARGREAVES

PREACHING THE NEW MORALITY

Until the bracing effect of the premier's restraint policy really hits your schools, I guess that most of you are continuing to undermine the province's competitive ability by preaching the outdated values of compassion, sensitivity, meekness, and altruism.

But we teachers here at John Galt Secondary have already taken responsibility for ourselves. We're out in the forefront of the New Education, experiencing the hard, exhilarating pleasure of laconic action in every classroom, displaying naked purpose and ingenuity in our lesson-planning, tossing the inconsequential students out of our programs, and closing our eyes with an almost unendurable contempt to the slack, weary, time-wasting, loose-muscled practices that have brought education in this province to the point of collapse.

We guys here at John Galt are lean, clean and mean. Physically as well as mentally. Before school we swim, we jog throughout lunchtime, we pump iron after classes. Long gone are whiskery chins and golden earrings; we burnt our Tarot cards, dumped the *I Ching* in the garbage pail, and most of us can't remember anymore what sign we were born under. We like to think of ourselves as "warrior teachers"; our job is to instruct students how to slaughter a difficult course, how to go gunning for academic success, how to shoot down in flames competitors for prizes, and how to blast hostile government examiners out of the water.

Naturally, there's been a striking effect on the teaching of our subject matter. *Lord of the Flies* is still one of our basic English texts but today we take a thoroughly different approach to it. Before, we had students sunk in maudlin grief over the deaths of the boys least fitted to survive in their island jungle; now we set essay questions like: "Demonstrate clearly how Jack's worship of the pig's head allowed him to transcend the disabling idealism of Piggy and Ralph" or "Compare the province of B.C. to the society the boys establish on the island, tracing the swift evolution from a simple-minded democracy to a singleminded business venture through a downsizing of the consultative process."

We've also discovered regrettable errors in the traditional approaches to Shakespear's tragedies. *Romeo and Juliet*, we've found, should really be interpreted as the tragedy of Tybalt, showing how an independent, spunky young man is destroyed by two silly lovers, sentimentally blind to the advantages of a family rivalry that had made Verona such a bonanza for late Renaissance investors that their parents could erect lifesize statues in solid gold without a second thought. Predictably perhaps, Iago has now become the hero of *Othello*, proving that you can't keep merit from climbing the career ladder and that a self-indulgent sympathy for minority groups only backfires in the end.

A lot more of us are now attending church on Sundays. Of course, our Christ isn't the shocking-pink messiah of certain bishops who have confused ordination with a mandate to meddle in the economic decisions of experienced politicians. No, our Jesus is the son of a small business man, a carpenter who wasn't afraid to relocate when times got tough. Our Jesus is the superachiever who by Grade 7 was capable of defeating Ph.Ds in discussions of a highly technical nature.

Disadvantaged though he was by a small town upbringing, he rose above it all. Sure, he came in for some pretty rough treatment. His competition thought they had him out cold, dead and gone forever. But what did he do? Three days later he was back on his feet, in better shape than before, ready to expand his enterprise to the farthest corners of the globe. That's our man! And despite the weight of iconographic tradition, we have a deepseated suspicion that he was in fact clean-shaven.

So obviously we have little time for losers, sinners, weaklings or outsiders. But that's where our lovely wives come in. They've been very, very good, I must say, at dealing with the riffraff we see dropping out of school. For those losers who have enough responsibility to take advantage of it, our wives are offering a special class on Sunday mornings after services in the basement of the church. There they teach basic survival skills, encouraging these no-hopers to get back into the ring of life, so to speak, to get back in there and slug it out, to beat their opponents to a bleeding pulp with strong, clean, exhilarating jabs to the more sensitive parts of the body. After all, what's a low blow here or there? We don't want to be a province full of sissies, do we?

Well, that's a quick roundup of things in and about John Galt Secondary. It's a tough life, I grant you, but there are some surprising compensations. One is that, since we guys are no longer the idealistic wimps you see lounging in most of the province's staffrooms, the female teachers here seem to have gotten more womanly; their skirts are getting shorter, they trail clouds of delicate perfume after them, and many of them appear to be taking better care of their fingernails. I shouldn't be amazed if in the next week or two a really cute bouffant hairstyle showed up here and there. ○

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

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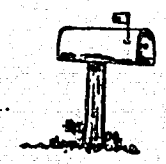

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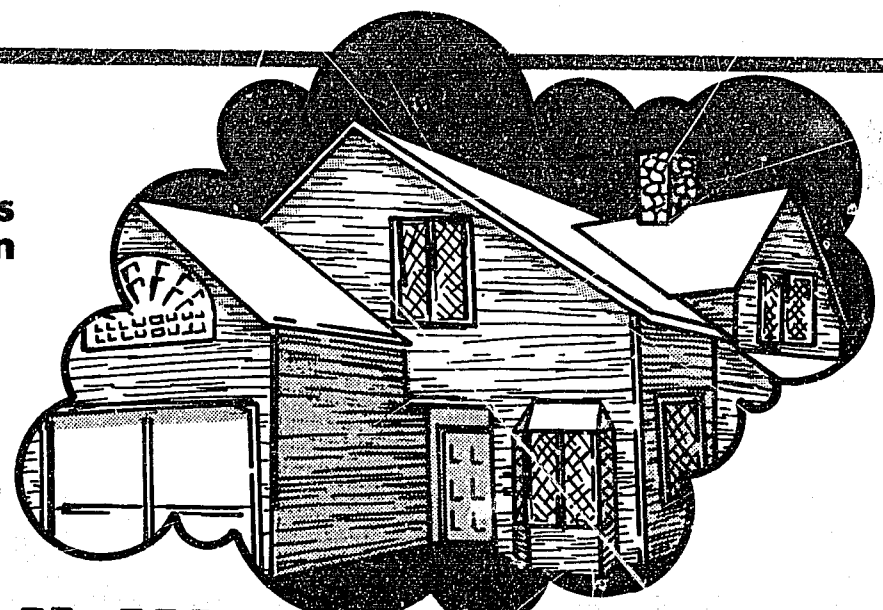

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