



# the whistle

the burnaby teachers' association newsletter

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## submissions

We accept written, faxed, or emailed submissions, but we prefer electronic ones.

If volume warrants, we will try to publish extra editions.

All letters must be signed.

Submissions may be edited for length.

## newsletter committee:

Sandra Dueck (Editor)

Arnold Sanderson  
(Maywood)

## PAUL SHAKER, DEAN OF EDUCATION, SFU REFUTES FRASER INSTITUTE IN "THE GREAT DEBATE" ON "HOW SHOULD SCHOOLS BE MEASURED?"

BY SUSAN FONSECA,

HEDY MILLER AND LAURENCE GREEFF

*This article first appeared in the Langley Teachers' Association newsletter, the local.link, Winter 2007, Vol 4.No.2*

Judging by the eruptions of spontaneous applause from a room full of educators, Paul Shaker, Dean of Education at Simon Fraser University, was clearly favoured in "The Great Debate" with Peter Cowley, Director of School Performance Studies for the Fraser Institute. The debate entitled "How Should Schools be Measured?" was sponsored by the British Columbia Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, and held at Newlands Golf and Country Club on January 18th.

The Fraser Institute (F.I.) ranks schools each year on a set of data derived from FSA and Provincial Examination results. Shaker immediately challenged the school rankings of the F.I. by arguing that the rankings were "simplistic and lacking statistical validity" and that "a gloss or veneer of science is put on these claims, but the real science isn't there." In rebuttal, Cowley continually generalized, but didn't provide any facts to support the F.I.'s claims of "objective measurement".

Responding to the question of why ranking schools is bad, Shaker said, "It results in the demoralization of teachers and students, shaming and blaming. It's the Enronization of education; there is nothing behind it, it's corrupt and phony."

Cowley was quick to say the the F.I. tries to give an accurate portrayal of what happens in schools and the rankings show that within reason they have taken pains to show the trends over a five-year period. Shaker responded that factors such as demographic conditions, socio-economic factors, physiological changes in students are not part of the analysis so without this value-added criteria, the rankings are misleading. He suggested that the F.I. does not want to examine these factors because it would mean that they would have to acknowledge the meaninglessness of their rankings.

Cowley conceded that the rankings do not provide a proper statistical analysis of the demographic data impacting on a school, but remained steadfast that he was providing the rankings to give taxpayers, the educational community and

parents a snapshot of how well schools are doing. He claimed that "no one has ever reported what is wrong with our methodology and the Vancouver Sun used 29 pages to publish our Report." To this, Shaker responded that the Sun gives the F.I. "a bully pulpit." Shaker, who completed a Fullbright scholarship on the topic of evaluation, said he'd submitted an 1800 word critique of the rankings which the Sun wouldn't print.

Cowley defended against Dean Shaker's attacks on the F.I. Report Card's reliability by speculating "that Dr. Shaker has not read the text or does not understand the text."

Shaker emphatically asserted that the rankings give an incomplete picture of a school because the rankings are inconsistent with the parent satisfaction surveys. He cited the recent CBC program "Seven" which chronicled Roosevelt Elementary, a school which the F.I. ranks as the worst school in B.C. The program debunked the value that the F.I. applies to Roosevelt Elementary by showing the

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# upcoming

# communications from the Local bargaining committee

by Jim Sanyshyn, Communications, BTA Bargaining Committee



**March 13th, 2007,  
BTA Representa-  
tive Assembly**

**March 17th-20th,  
BCTF Annual  
General Meeting**

**April 17th, 2007,  
BTA Representa-  
tive Assembly**

*This is part two of the Bargaining Committee's Report on local bargaining which took place on June 21st and 22nd, 28th and 29th. Part 1 appeared in the January 2007 issue of "The Whistle".*

### June 28:

This session began with extra-curricular concerns, specifically the indemnity of members to be covered for injury while involved in such activities. Past claims, ruling and appeals to WCB were discussed. Our team was pushing for language to make this area clearer for our members and for the Board. The Board acknowledged our concerns and promised to clarify in short order.

The issue of fundraising for school supplies and basics was then discussed. Examples from members in Burnaby elementary schools were given. Marianne Neill reinforced our position that teachers should not feel pressured to raise funds for the basics, and our fears of inequalities developing between various schools. The Burnaby School Board felt that this position was political and did not belong in our collective agreement. We agreed to revisit our proposed language for the next session on June 29th.

The issue of letters of discipline in personnel files was next on the agenda. Our position was to have limits placed on such letters and to introduce a standard, objective process to removing such letters. Marianne pointed to the numerous locals that had limits on such letters. The Burnaby School Board stated

that they were not interested in discussing time frames for said letters, despite examples from other locals. Doug Berardine pointed out that teachers could apply earlier than our suggested two-year limit if they chose to.

### June 29:

After an hour and a half of bargaining and caucuses, the two sides were able to sign off on new contract language, the first time in many years this has happened! D.12.3 and D.25.2b were signed off by Doug Berardine and Marianne Neill.

Marion Hartley then joined us as an expert witness in the session. We began to negotiate final language concerning letters of discipline and the idea of sunset clauses, that is to say, limiting the amount of time a letter of discipline could remain in a teacher's personnel file. Specific and personal examples from members were used (with their permission), and districts with limits on discipline letters were mentioned again. The Burnaby School Board team stated that they would have to research this more and get more direction, but stated that the current system works, and that teachers could apply to have their discipline letters removed from their files.

Our team moved on to tackle the issue of fundraising in schools. Our position on this matter was clear; we were looking for a statement in contract that School District 41 opposes fundraising for the basics in our classrooms.

A clear, philosophic and ground breaking approach to government shortfalls and cutbacks. Alas, the Burnaby School Board team was reticent, and decided to end negotiations with almost an hour to spare. Dates had been set for the fall for mid-contract modifications and we were still awaiting a provincial agreement.. There was no guarantee that our remaining clauses would be discussed again in mid-contract. Marianne expressed to the Burnaby School Board team, our team's mutual disappointment at the pace of progress in negotiations.

My experience with local bargaining has been rich. I found the process fascinating yet, at times, frustrating. However, it has shown me that the will of the collective is strong, and that improvements to our collective agreement are crucial to our working conditions and the learning conditions of our students. I look forward to representing the teachers of Burnaby in the next round of mid-contract modifications.

Stay tuned!

*Members of the BTA Bargaining Committee:*

*Frank Bonvino, Lori Hope, Cora Kinoshita, Marianne Neill, James Sanyshyn, Rosemary Stone, Debra Sutherland, Emily Sutherland.*

## news from here



We are very pleased to note that **Susan Lambert**, Burnaby teacher, and past Vice-President of the BTA, is running again for a position on the BCTF Executive Council. This year Susan has put her name forward for the position of BCTF First Vice-President.

Susan has been a long-time BTA and BCTF activist who has supported teachers with great integrity and dedication. The BTA Executive Council and Representative Assembly have endorsed her candidacy.

We are proud of her commitment to our profession and to our Union.

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## a teacher's voice: the status of women and the Harper Government

Marianne Neil, BTA Executive, Burnaby Mountain Secondary

*In October 2006, the BCTF Status of Women Action Group hosted a conference in Creston, B.C. Over 100 people attended from across British Columbia, and there were many speakers from various parts of Canada.*

*Participants had acquired a new awareness that women are still suffering discrimination, abuse and inequities. One of the most glaring indicators of the fragility of women's gains is changes made by the Harper minority government during its short time in power.*

*Shelagh Day, Co-Chair of FAFLA, <http://www.fafia-afai.org/> was one of the speakers. While it is impossible to adequately summarize her talk here, I will mention four central statements, and encourage you to go to the FAFLA website for more information, and to find out how to join the protest against the cuts.*

### What has Harper done?

1. **1.2 billion was taken from proposed National Child Care Strategy, even though 72% of women with children are working.**

The Pay Equity Task Force had made recommendations which are being ignored by the government, even though women still make 71% of what men make.

2. **The Government is cutting nearly half of the staff responsible for the advancement of women's rights at Status of Women Canada.**

A substantial portion of the funding has always gone to women's organizations, and some to research. Now, groups

such as the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, the Conseil d'intervention pour l'accès des femmes au travail in Quebec, the New Brunswick Coalition of Transition Houses, among many others, including the National Association of Women and the Law, the Canadian Research Institute on the Advancement of Women, and the Canadian Feminist Alliance are in jeopardy.

3. **Most significantly, Harper has not only taken out money, but has changed the terms and conditions of the programs.**

The word 'equality' has been removed from the goals of the program, as have 'political' and 'legal'.

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## the great debate

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tremendous work of the teachers in a school faced with overwhelming community social issues. How do you tell students who are struggling with self-esteem issues that the F.I. regards them as a “loser school”? The reality is that the rankings have little regard for those students because they are designed to use statistics to shame and are “the furthest thing from enlightenment.”

Cowley countered the CBC show by saying that all Toronto-based reporter, Mark Kelly, demonstrated was that teaching is difficult in a school with many serious challenges. He said, “The Report Card provides ample evidence of this and it hurts. No one is saying that people at the bottom are bad or that teachers are bad or that the students are stupid.” Cowley suggested that Roosevelt simply needed to examine what other schools who have a “0” ranking do, and should meet and share ideas on how they could improve: “I’d like to open education to people who might try to do things a different way (read privatization)... to make clones of schools that have been successful.”

When asked what he would do to improve schools, Cowley’s answer really stirred the audience.

“That’s a topic for another day. I think I will dodge that question right now. But, I will offer this: Is it possible we are not doing enough testing?..... That’s what the F.I. is interested in: more competition and reports.”

To the same question, Dean Shaker responded that his first priority would be making a concentrated effort to reassert the value of professionals’ authority on the topic of education: “My great fear is the erosion of the professional in society. Their views should not be put aside as if they’re the ‘man on the street’ as has been happening in the Sun.”

To the audience, that was game, set and match to Dean Shaker, who closed by saying that the F.I. was engaged in a process of denigrating the complex work of teaching and devaluing the professionals who are engaged in the very important work of educating young people. He said that it is important for him to continue to speak out against those who want to reduce education to league tables and promote the corporatization of education.

During the brief question period, a teacher, a principal and a superintendent all directed their questions to Cowley. Richmond School Superintendent, Brian Bairsto, asked if the F.I. included the statistical margin of error in the reporting of the rankings. He wanted to know if this measure was included because it is a key factor in the accuracy of the measurement. All the major professional polling companies report margin of error as a matter of course because it establishes reliability for the statistical analysis. Cowley said, “No”; instead the Fraser Institute prefers to focus on comparing one year to another and looking to show a trend.

Dean Shaker has invited Peter Cowley to continue a series of debates and for those who were unable to attend “The Great Debate” it will soon be available on the Dean’s web site at <http://www.educ.sfu.ca/newsitem/a-great-debate> and available in DVD.

## status of women

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Status of Women Canada has played an important role in understanding how policy affects women. Now they may only address economic, social and cultural participation. They cannot lobby or advocate. They can provide services but not look at policies.

### 4. Very significant is the cancellation of the Court Challenges Program.

Without constitutional challenges, the constitutional guarantee of equality is useless. If you don’t have \$150,000 you cannot oppose violations of constitutional rights. There have been a total of 1 billion dollars in cuts to women. The biggest hit has been the dismantling of infrastructure for critical thinking and constitutional challenges.

To find out more and to help restore the court Challenges Program, go to <http://www.fafia-afai.org/en/node/365>.

