

Teacher

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Canada Post Sales Agreement No. 40062724

Public education at stake



Janice Rae explains to the media why she voted "Yes" in the strike vote. Rae, a Vancouver secondary school counsellor was thrilled that so many teachers voted "yes" and is hopeful that the 91.4% "yes" will convince the employer of teachers' absolute commitment to protect and improve public education. Rae is flanked by Jinny Sims and Neil Worboys, second- and first-vice president respectively. (See page 5 "I voted Yes.")

by Peter Owens

The future of public education is at stake in this round of negotiations. We have one of the best public education systems in the world. On international tests, Canadian students outperform students from around the world, including the United States, New Zealand, Australia,

Research proves that students thrive when class-size limits ensure their right to individual attention.

the United Kingdom, Denmark, and Switzerland. But the Liberal government appears to want to emulate models of education in countries, such as the U.S. and U.K., that do not perform as well as Canada.

After providing a massive tax cut, which goes mostly to the wealthy and corporations, the government has announced a freeze on health and education spending. During the election campaign, the B.C. Liberals promised that public education was the number one priority, that it would be protected and enhanced. Everyone understands that the freeze will

inevitably result in dramatic cuts to programs and services to B.C. students. But there are few who would argue that education is less important now than at any previous time.

The employers' representative, B.C. Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA), wants to remove guarantees of equity, quality, and funding. The BCPSEA is proposing to remove class-size limits, to abolish minimum ratios for librarians, counsellors, learning assistance, resource teachers and ESL teachers and to end guaranteed standards for students with special needs. These provisions of our collective agreement have protected services for students over the years as budgets have failed to keep pace with growth and inflation.

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Research proves that students thrive when class-size limits ensure their right to individual

attention. When students need extra learning assistance, they should be able to count on the expertise of specialist teachers. ESL teachers help with cultural transitions as well as language skills. With guidance from teacher-librarians, children can gain the research skills to see them through well into the future. Students with special needs can be successfully integrated with the support of trained professionals.

Faced with the daily reality of inadequate funding for public education, teachers are spending millions of their own after-tax dollars to purchase learning resources for their students. The average B.C. teacher spends \$1,095 per year—more than twice the national average—on classroom supplies. This out-of-pocket spending by teachers contributes about \$45 million each year to the public education system in B.C.

Stable, adequate, and fair funding is essential to maintaining quality public education. Targeting that funding to where it's most needed is how we get the most benefit for students and the best value for our education dollar. It is critical that we succeed at the bargaining table to ensure that the guarantees for class size, non-enrolling teachers, and services for students with special needs are not just maintained but

improved so we can meet the needs of all students who attend public school in B.C.

We can all help move the employer at the table by talking to the administrators in our

This out-of-pocket spending by teachers contributes about \$45 million each year to the public education system in B.C.

schools, the parents of our students, trustees in our school districts, and MLAs representing our communities, as well as our friends, neighbours, and family members. It is critical that everyone understands what is at stake in these negotiations. Our children's future depends on it.

Peter Owens is assistant director, BCTF Organization Support Division and editor of Teacher newsmagazine.

A 15-minute video, "What's at Stake for Our Students?" designed to be used with parents, as well as a pamphlet, is available by contacting your local office or Bev Humphries at 604-871-1875 or 1-800-663-9163, local 1875, bhumphries@bctf.ca.

President's message



David Chudnovsky

The only possible topic for this month's column is my need and responsibility to thank and congratulate our members. We asked you to express your support for the BCTF bargaining team in our first-ever provincial strike vote. Your response was overwhelming.

Since then we have heard from leaders of teachers' unions across the country, from our friends and supporters in the B.C. labour movement, and from the wider public. Their questions are always the same. "How did you do that? How did you manage a 91.4% strike vote?"

Here's my answer. First, this campaign is the members' campaign. You developed it, your bargaining objectives are at the table, your strategy is being pursued, you've been involved and consulted every step of the way. Second, B.C. teachers are not prepared to let learning conditions for our students deteriorate as BCPSEA has proposed. We want improvements in class sizes, specialist teacher availability, and services for students with special needs. B.C. teachers need and deserve a fair and reasonable raise—one that takes into account what we've lost over the last decade, and provides a competitive salary scale so new teachers are attracted to the profession and experienced teachers are retained.

The struggle ahead won't be easy. The obstacles before us are real. But the most important precondition for success is in place. It's our absolute unity. And for that I can't ever thank you enough.

David

It's time to fix teacherages

Teacherages and occupational health and safety, as discussed in the October issue, sparked my interest. In the early 1980s, I was a teacher and principal in Zeballos and Kyuquot. Conditions 20 years ago were as bad or worse than they are now. I suggest that the bargaining folks take this plight seriously. It is well known that small town issues are "beyond Hope" in B.C. It is time for change. It is time for more equal educational opportunity in this province. These smaller issues might well confuse or diffuse the big issue, folks, but they are important to a few. Fellow teachers would do well to think of the dangerous/tenuous relationship that exists between the teacher/teacherage renter and the employer/evaluator and landlord (school board) whilst one exists in a deprived isolated teacherage.

Bob Paulin
Sechelt

Awards divisive

I was on the Surrey School Board for six years (1993-99). We brought in sensible solutions to the problems we faced. We were not afraid to do what we had to do for the betterment of all students, and we received the support of parents and the voters in three elections.

I am now looking in and can see things that the voters do not really like. The district plans to give 10 teachers an "Excellence Award" for being an excellent teacher and \$1,000 to the school in which each teacher works. The plan makes my blood boil. It will pit teacher against teacher and school against school. The teacher's name will be put on a special plaque. No one can pick a small group for recognition if that would be inherently arbitrarily unfair.

Some teachers teach highly motivated students from supportive families. Other teachers teach students who have numerous different special needs and behaviour problems. Who do you think would win the award, and

what about the other 4,000 teachers? Those who don't win the award do excellent work as well but may teach special education classes or students who have behaviour problems.

Once I taught PE and had a good solid group of players who had played together for three years. We won all of our games in volleyball and softball. I was the "talk of the town" at that time. The next two years, we lost. We did not even advance to the finals. I was no longer considered an excellent coach. Why should all teachers be put in the same type of situation when they cannot control many factors such as classroom composition? In my opinion, the school board should rethink its approach to teacher awards.

Ken Hoffmann
Surrey

The value of music in schools

I wanted to throw my two cents in; however, before I do that, I want to state that I fully support David Chudnovsky's latest "President's Message" (*Teacher*, October 2001).

My one criticism (if I can call it that) would be that Mr. Chudnovsky seems to consistently give first mention to teacher-librarians as an example of non-enrolling teachers who are invaluable. Granted they are extremely important; there is no disputing that fact. Likewise are the counsellors and learning assistance teachers.

But please, Mr. Chudnovsky, don't stop there. Please mention (from time to time) music teachers. The school where I teach music (Emily Carr Elementary School, in Vancouver) has a strong music program with great parental support. Our band program (which is not a mandatory curriculum course like math or social studies) has one-sixth of the student body enrolled. The secondary school that we feed into (Eric Hamber) has in recent years had a total enrolment in all combined music classes of one-third of the student body. The Vancouver School Board strongly sup-

ports music programs in our schools, and the stacks and stacks of research papers show the indisputable benefits of music education.

So please, Mr. Chudnovsky, could you once in a while mention the good ol' music teachers as an important part of the non-enrolling teachers sector? They do an incredible amount of service to the school system and to the surrounding community (supporting community bands and orchestras, supplying free concerts at shopping malls and other public places), and they work long hours after their day is supposedly done—just like every other teacher.

Bruce Nielsen
Vancouver



Correction

There was an error in "B.C. tax cuts for top 10%," page 4, October issue of *Teacher*. We had dropped a decimal and printed 39% instead of 3.9%.

The corrected line reads "Someone making \$200,000 will save \$7,797 or 3.9% of their income."

Attention: TQS policy change

Changes in TQS policy related to the acceptability of courses and degrees in religious studies, divinity, and theology come into effect September 1, 2001.

The policy that may affect new and previous applicants to the Teacher Qualification Service is as follows:

Courses completed at a recognized university with content which is directly related to a subject taught or educational practice in B.C. public schools will be accepted for categorization purposes while courses which are not directly related will be limited to 12 credits (e.g.,

Nominations for G.A. Fergusson Memorial Award

Nominations of candidates for the award may be made by any Federation member or by a local of the Federation. The award may be made annually, at the AGM. See page 146 of *Members' Guide to the BCTF* or contact Donna Coulombe (604-871-2151 or dcoulombe@bctf.ca) for more details. Deadline for nomination is Wednesday, February 20, 2002.

AGM 2002 deadlines

- December 15: deadline for submission of local resolutions.
- February 2: deadline for Executive Committee nominations.
- February 4: deadline for candidate statement copy for *Teacher* newsmagazine.
- March 2: deadline for withdrawal of candidate names from ballot and agenda.

BCTF winter holiday closure

The BCTF building will be closed December 27, 2001 to January 2, 2002.

religious studies, divinity, theology, professional programs other than in education).

Prior to this change in policy, most courses and degrees in religious studies divinity, and theology did not contribute to a TQS category assignment.

Teachers who have previously been advised by TQS that some of their course work was not acceptable because of its religious content, may wish to request a review of their category to determine if the new policy affects their category.

— Ken W. Van Apeldoorn
Director of Evaluation, TQS

LOOKING BACK

70 years ago

There are those who think only in terms of the dollar, and those who think in terms of the child. The former are in no way concerned as to the efficiency of the school system; they pay no attention to the obvious injustice despite the economic situation of depriving present day children of their inalienable right to a sound education; they would willingly shift the burden and consequences of their own social, financial and commercial mismanagement upon the shoulders of others, even though it involves a definite handicap upon the rising generation.

(*BC Teacher*, December 1931)

50 years ago

Teachers, as well as their pupils, are entitled to good mental and physical health. Their weekends should be free for rest, refreshment, for civic and other community interests. When they must devote their weekends to school work constantly, because of large classes, they tend to become irritable, to lose their sense of humour - and much of the real joy to be found in teaching. They hesitate to start things that make for self-improvement, because they are just too tired.

(*BC Teacher*, December 1951)

30 years ago

Because we believe in local control of education, we are disturbed by what appears to be a growing trend toward removing from school trustees responsibilities they have traditionally had for determining and providing the education programs needed by their districts. The most recent example is the Minister's incredible interference in teachers' salary negotiations, severely curtailing the rights of trustees to bargain collectively with teachers.

(*BC Teacher*, November 1971)

10 years ago

The new (NDP) government will also have to straighten out the on-again, off-again directives regarding the Year 2000 program for B.C.'s schools. The attempt to impose new programs has either been ignored or resisted by some teachers. Program ideas have been developed by central committees and ministry staff, at times without being rooted in the practice of teachers.

(*Teacher* newsmagazine, Nov./Dec. 1991)

Chris Bocking, Keating
Elementary School, Saanich



Teacher

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BCTF Graphics Department



(Left to right) Graphics Department staff, Luis, Dale, Ruth, and Karen.

Have you noticed the great graphic arts coming from the BCTF office? The Graphics Department at the BCTF is home to four innovative designers: Dale, Ruth, Luis, and Karen. The designers have won awards from the Canadian Association of Labour Communicators and the Canadian Educational Press Association.

The annual BCTF wall calendar, the covers for the *Members' Guide to the BCTF*, the *BCTF Appointment Calendar*, button designs, t-shirt designs, and brochures are projects Graphics produces reflecting the Federation's goals and objectives. Each year the task becomes more difficult as the staff search for new ideas to express the Federation's priorities.

The current bargaining campaign has depended heavily on the Graphics Department to

present information to BCTF members in an attractive and professional format and these designs often feature images of teachers working with children. Backdrops for press conferences, near life-size cardboard models, and bright-coloured pennants you may have seen in photos and at rallies are just some of the materials produced for the current bargaining campaign.

Several of the BCTF's provincial specialist associations' newsletters and journals are produced in the Graphics Department.

Our award-winning web-page design has also been created in that department.

We are fortunate to have these people working behind the scenes creating the materials that present such a professional and polished image of our Federation.

— Kathleen Smith

Yours for the asking

Stats Canada Learning Resources Bulletin

www.statcan.ca/english/edu

The bimonthly bulletin is e-mailed to educational organizations that support primary and secondary teachers in Canada and to individual subscribers. It presents free teaching materials and assistance available on Statistics Canada's learning resources web site.

- To subscribe, send an e-mail to listproc@statcan.ca, leaving the subject line blank. In the body of the message, type: *subscribe statcanedu YourFirstName YourLastName*

- New subscribers can obtain a free map of Canada for the classroom!

- Check out the all-new version of the Canada Quiz (www.statcan.ca/english/edu/canquiz/cquiz1.htm) on the students page of the site. Each question is linked to a statistical table in Canadian Statistics (www.statcan.ca/english/Pgdb).

- Human Activity and the Environment (HAE)**, now available on E-STAT, is a resource for teachers of social studies, science, and environment courses. For a sample list of resources from HAE relevant to Grades 5, 6, and 7 socials and science, contact marion.smith@statcan.ca.

Lectures and backgrounders

The following lectures are designed for PD days/workshops at schools and/or public library series:

- The Brontes (an in-depth look)
- The life and times of Margaret Laurence
- Backgrounds to authors of English literature
- The early life of Louis Riel

- Battle sites of the Northwest Rebellion
- China, The Three Gorges, & the Three Gorges Dam site.

For more information, contact David Harrison 250-964-3824.

EdInfo online

The Ministry of Education's *EdInfo* is a weekly e-mail digest of news and information for the K-12 community.

To view the *EdInfo* home page or to subscribe, visit www.bced.gov.bc.ca/edinfo/.

There is a link to the *EdInfo* site from the Ministry of Education's home page at www.bced.gov.bc.ca/.

International children's conference on the environment Victoria, B.C.—May 21-25, 2002

The conference is inspired by the recognition that children need to be active participants in decisions that affect the future of the planet. The 2002 conference in Victoria will bring together 600 children, aged 10-12 years, from over 115 countries, to learn, share experiences, voice their concerns, and join a worldwide environmental network to promote positive action.

"Local change can make global change," is the conference theme with daily themes of water, climate change, healthy communities, healthy children, and resource conservation.

Canadian classes are invited to submit applications to attend, however, because of space limitations we can not guarantee that all will be accepted. Deadline for applications is Friday, December 14, 2001.

For more information, visit www.iccCanada2002.org or e-mail info@iccCanada2002.

10 New BCTF lesson aids

1 LA 1001 Reading, Writing and Rising Up: Teaching about Social Justice and the Power of the Written Word. Linda Christensen. 110 p. ©2000. \$20.95. This book is a Rethinking Schools Publication, a Wisconsin non-profit educational publisher of books, booklets, and a quarterly journal on school reform, with a focus on issues of equity and social justice. The author is a veteran inner-city school teacher, and this book captures her vision and dedication to teaching disadvantaged high school students. Her style and stories underscore her belief that teaching literacy can be a genuinely empowering experience. The book is filled with samples of student writing from her classes. Grades 8-12

2 LA F9224 Cards eh! Produced by J K Productions. ©2001 8.00\$. Grâce aux cartes et aux symboles traditionnels de Cards eh!, les joueurs peuvent se familiariser avec les faits divers de l'histoire canadienne et parfaire leur connaissance de la géographie du Canada. Le jeu de cartes Cards eh! est un jeu de cartes ordinaire qui peut s'utiliser en outre pour créer de nouvelles variations de jeux de cartes traditionnels. En remplaçant simplement les quatre couleurs standard par les villes, les lieux géographiques, les armoiries et les drapeaux des cartes Cards Eh!, on peut parfaire ses connaissances sur le Canada tout en jouant ses jeux de cartes préférés. Les cartes à jouer Cards eh! constituent un outil éducatif qui peut s'utiliser aussi bien à la maison qu'à l'école. 1e-12e année.

3 LA 9120. How To Write a Story, Grades 4-6, produced by Evan-Moor, Educational Publishers 96 p. ©2001, \$14.95. This illustrated resource book is packed with easy-to-execute ideas and dozens of writing forms that will assist students in refining their sentence writing skills. Lessons and reproducibles help students learn the parts of the story—characters, setting, plot, conclusion. Reproducible planning forms help students organize ideas and write a rough draft; guidelines for writing in six different genres: realistic fiction, historical fiction, mystery, adventure, fantasy and science fiction; and how to set up a writing and publishing centre, including reproducible story prompts and charts for planning stories in different genres. Note that the book is published in the USA and contains some U.S.-based standards and references. Grades 4-6

4 LA 4048 Water: Sharing Our Precious Resource, produced by FORED BC ©2001, \$14.00. This package, produced by FORED BC in co-operation with government agencies, business, environmental groups and others, contains resource information pamphlets, fact sheets, lesson plans, poster,

and a water pollution quiz slide card. Activities include operating a hand-held electrical generator; a school energy audit, water filtration, watershed study and a consumer inventory. Students will be introduced to concepts such as groundwater, aquifer, the hydrologic cycle, and renewable and non-renewable resources. Some curriculum links are included in the package. Grades 8-12

5 LA 8013 Millicent: What Is Friendship? produced by Learning Through Drama 8 p. ©2000, \$6. This drama unit is based on the Robert Munsch book *Millicent and the Wind*. This process drama focusses on teaching an unfriendly child to be friendly. The drama is based on filling in what the book's text does not tell. A picture from the book is examined for its implications. The three dramatic activities outlined take about 45 min. to complete. Grades 1-2

6 LA 9013 Pioneers in a New Land, produced by Learning Through Drama, 19 p. ©2000, \$10. This drama unit is based on the book *The New Land* by Marilyn Reynolds. This process drama, about pioneers in the prairies, uses the illustrations in the book to examine what it is like to start a new life in a new country. The illustrations are the means for taking the children "inside" the immigrant experience. Several drama activities are possible, making for an extensive exploration of the topic. Prescribed learning outcomes for drama, visual arts, language arts and social studies. Grades 3-5

7 LA 9599 Just Drifting Around: The Cycling of Water, Rock and Air, produced as a joint venture between the Ministry of Education, the H.R. MacMillan Space Centre, B.C. Science World and Vancouver Aquarium Marine Science Centre, 73 p., ©2000, \$23.95. This unit complements the new B.C. Science Curriculum IRP for K-7. This activity book is a collection of hands-on curriculum-based activities with illustrations, diagrams, photos and instructions to help students in looking deep into the earth and out into the clouds as they travel the cycles of rock, water, and air. Students will witness the creation of a cloud and the hardening of sediments; become scientists exploring the many aspects of earth as a planet by looking at some of the processes constantly bringing about change; and by testing their ability to save the atmosphere from the effects of greenhouse gases. K-7

8 LA 9113 Saturday's Hero by Brian Pettit. 152 p. ©2000 \$16.95. This novel is about a somewhat troubled boy who becomes interested in the life of World War I and II flying ace, Raymond Collishaw. In his struggle in pursuing his own research about Collishaw beyond the Internet, the boy questions Canadians' attitude toward preserving the history of a war hero. *Saturday's Hero* is well suited to

students in middle and secondary grades where the application of critical thought and analysis applied to such issues as parent/teen relationships, teenagers in politics, hero acclaim, war in the air, and the process of acquiring a knowledgeable affection for Canada is integral to intended learning outcomes. Teacher's guide included. Grades 6 and up

9 LA 9402 Take a Mathwalk To Learn About Mathematics in Your Community by Sandy Szeto and Catherine Little, 96 p. ©2000. \$27.95. Take your students on a mathwalk to explore mathematical concepts (numbers, measurements, geometry, algebra, data management, probability) and discover real-life applications of mathematics in the world around us. This fun, practical guide then brings you back into the classroom for activities to help students expand their skills and knowledge beyond what they've seen. Includes 10 fun mathwalks; special instructions for each grade level; expectations, evaluation, and assessment ideas; teacher background information; strategies for integrating the mathwalks into science; history and other core subjects; pre- and post-walk activities for the classroom and home use; reproducible mathwalk worksheets and parent involvement sheet; safety guidelines; Internet site and teacher resources. Grade 6-8

10 LA 9405 Mathematics Every Teacher Should Know by Derek Haylock and Douglas McDougall. 224 p. ©2000 \$36.95. This book offers a systematic explanation of the most basic mathematical concepts and procedures of the elementary school math curriculum. It provides teachers with the tools to encourage students to explore mathematics, emphasizing the development of understanding rather than mere learning by rote. Includes clear, concise chapter objectives and chapter summary; many illustrative examples throughout each chapter; self-assessment questions; end-of-chapter teaching suggestions and answer key. K-8

For a listing of BCTF Lesson Aids, consult the catalogue in your school library or the Lesson Aids online catalogue. www.bctf.ca/LessonAids To order any of the above lesson aids enclose a cheque payable to the BCTF or authorized purchase order to BCTF Lesson Aids Service 100-550 West 6th Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5Z 4P2. GST and postage/handling are included in the prices. Orders are sent by return mail.

Check out the web site for the B.C. Association of Learning Materials and Educational Representatives at www.bcalmer.ca/ for a source for contacts for many curriculum resources and information.

What's new on the BCTF web site

Workload studies

The BCTF Research Department has published a series of teacher workload studies, which are available on the web site:

- "Teacher workload and stress: An international perspective on human costs and systemic failure provides a review of much of the Canadian and international literature on teachers' workload and stress." www.bctf.ca/researchreports/2001wlc01/
- "I love teaching English, but..." is based on a survey completed by 737 secondary

school English teachers in the spring of this year. www.bctf.ca/researchreports/2001wlc02/

- "What do British Columbia's teachers consider to be the most significant aspects of workload and stress in their work?" is based on analysis of qualitative data from the survey "BCTF Worklife of Teachers Survey Series, 1: Workload and Stress," April 2001. www.bctf.ca/researchreports/2001wlc03/.

Briefs to government

- "Government has a choice," presented to the Select Standing Committee on Education, October, 2001. www.bctf.ca/publications/GovtHasChoiceBrief/
- Education Funding Brief 2001-02, presented to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services,

October 2001. www.bctf.ca/publications/EdFunding/2002Brief/

— Diana Broome



BCTF and wide range of unions protest funding freeze



GARRY LITKE PHOTO

Over 800 union members rally at the Royal Museum in Victoria. BCTF President David Chudnovsky, B.C. Federation of Labour Jim Sinclair, and leaders of other unions emphasized that funding and service cuts will hurt the B.C. economy. They called on the government to reconsider the second round of tax cuts proposed for January 2002.

by Garry Litke

BCTF President David Chudnovsky joined an impressive array of union leaders at the Legislature on October 23, 2001, making presentations to the Select Standing Committee on

Finance and Government Services.

Their message was clear. The Liberal government is breaking its campaign promises, destroying jobs, cutting services to citizens, and threatening the quality of life in British Columbia.

Speaking specifically about

education, Chudnovsky admonished the government to keep its promise to maintain and enhance funding for public education.

"The government promised to protect and improve education," he said. "For that to be meaningful, there must be additional

money put into the education budget. The three-year freeze announced recently means deep cuts to education programs."

He reported that B.C. teachers are already contributing \$45 million of their personal money, an average of \$1,000 each, for classroom resources that the system does not provide. That is double the average found in the rest of Canada. "Teachers cannot subsidize the system any more," he said.

Chudnovsky presented a BCTF brief to the government financial committee (available at www.bctf.ca/publications/EdFunding/2002Brief/) and addressed some of the issues raised in the document:

- The three-year funding envelope may be beneficial in assisting school boards in their planning, but all the advantages will disappear in the context of a funding freeze.
- Increased school board autonomy in funding may be helpful as long as it is not just a euphemism for downloading costs to local government.
- Administration caps and targeted funding should not be removed. The government says education dollars should be spent on students, but evidence from the Cariboo-Chilcotin district, for example, shows that boards

will increase administrative spending even while they are cutting programs, reducing staff, and closing schools. That should not be permitted. Any proposed funding formula must be readily transparent so that teachers and the wider community can hold boards accountable.

...British Columbia would not tolerate a government agenda that cut jobs and reduced services for the poor, the elderly, the young, and the sick.

- School districts currently spend more than the government allotment for students with special needs. However, B.C. spends less than other jurisdictions.

In presenting the CUPE brief, President Barry O'Neil also focussed on education. He expressed a fear that the funding freeze would reduce service for students with special needs. He reminded the committee that reductions in janitorial and custodial staff would mean dirty, unhealthy learning conditions for kids.

Our bargaining campaign

by Neil Worboys

Members must be full participants in the bargaining process. We knew that from objective setting to ratification, any plan we used had to involve our entire membership.

From the beginning of this round of bargaining, we have dedicated ourselves to including members as full participants.

Eighteen months ago, we started by asking several non-activist focus groups to identify goals for the next round of bargaining. Next we asked the same questions of activists in bargaining seminars. Both groups identified issues for the approaching round of bargaining. We incorporated a plan in which members, in locals, identified bargaining objectives that would meet their own and their students' needs. The BCTF assisted many of the locals by providing a bargaining survey. Using local processes, locals ratified a list of objectives and submitted them to the Federation.

After the provincial bargaining team had organized the hundreds of objectives into major categories, sending some to learning conditions, others to salary, and still more into each of the identified areas, the BCTF Executive Committee examined them. Next, they were circulated to locals for more input. That double scrutiny of potential

objectives was unprecedented.

Representatives from locals, standing committees, and provincial specialist associations met at the February 2001 Bargaining Conference to finalize the bargaining package. The debate focussed on the shape and size of the "package." Should it be limited or comprehensive? The majority of participants favoured a larger, more wide-ranging set of objectives.

The skeletal objectives, under the skilled hands of our bargaining team, fleshed out into bargaining language that we presented to the employers' rep, B.C. Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA), in early March. Unfortunately, the negotiations proceeded at a snail's pace, with virtually no progress as the employer stalled from the start, failing to table their full package of proposals until June.

Overwhelmingly supporting the package, annual general meeting delegates marched to an impressive rally at the Legislature steps. Participation crystallized the vision of all teachers as we acknowledged the political aspects and critical involvement of our members in the bargaining process.

Throughout the spring, the bargaining team informed members, after every session, through bulletins that stated our progress or concerns. We invited interested members to observe at the table. Teachers from around the province shared their first-hand experience with colleagues when they returned to their locals.

June came and went without a conclusion to our four-month negotiations. We reached

another first: summer negotiations, consisting of days in July, as we stood firm in our goal of reaching a deal at the table.

On August 14, the Liberals introduced the nefarious Essential Services legislation, which was subsequently passed.

To reinforce our goal of encouraging, continuing, and increasing membership involvement, the Executive Committee called a special Representative Assembly immediately prior to the summer conference. The RA adopted a two-phased action plan and sent the executive back to expand upon it. The plan alerted all members that unless significant progress had occurred at the bargaining table by the end of September, the Executive Committee would be empowered to call a strike vote.

Members left the Summer Conference on August 23 after a rally at Premier Campbell's constituency office. Charged with enthusiasm and commitment, activists would visit every work site in the province in

The support and commitment members have shown demonstrates yet again their concern about the quality of education in our province.

September to inform members of the latest developments and to encourage a strong yes vote. Unity built as elected representatives, activists, and Federation staff mobilized around the province. If bargaining was to

succeed, we needed massive support for our strike vote.

Although bargaining resumed in late August and into September, we achieved no significant progress. At the table, although members presented their stories, their heartfelt tales fell on the employers' deaf ears. A new teacher from Stikine told of the need for a significant salary increase to recruit and maintain new teachers. Teachers from isolated areas informed the employer of the difficulties of living and working in communities cut off from amenities of modern life. Metro teachers spoke of the difficulties they face in serving students with special needs. ESL and other non-enrolling teachers presented a strong case regarding the deleterious effects the employers' concessions would wreak upon the students. The employers' concessions demands were on everyone's minds.

Zonal and local meetings engaged larger numbers of members as staff rep and PD trainers and BCTF staff facilitated discussion of the plan preparing for the strike vote. Suggestions to modify the action plan were few. Instead, staff-room discussions and member-to-member talks produced overwhelming support for the overall plan. The Executive Committee finalized the interim action plan, incorporating changes to elements of Phase I and Phase II.

From the beginning of this round of bargaining, we have dedicated ourselves to including members as full participants. The devastating events of September 11, economic uncertainties, an education-funding freeze, and relentless bashing

from the media have assailed us. Yet we have not faltered in our goal to be successful at the bargaining table.

On October 9 and 10, almost 35,000 members voted, indicated with 91.4%, an overwhelming commitment to the plan, and a comprehensive understanding of the task ahead of us. The vote underscores the belief that teachers must be informed, involved, and consulted every step of the way. We would be hard pressed to recall another time in the history of the BCTF when we have been as unified in pursuit of a goal. The support and commitment members have shown demonstrates yet again their concern

We need each member to connect with parents, trustees, administrative officers and the public.

about the quality of education in our province.

Our plan for increasing membership involvement continues. It is crucial that all members continue to read the bargaining bulletins, attend local meetings, talk with one another. We need each member to connect with parents, trustees, administrative officers and the public. Tell them that our collective agreement will ensure a comprehensive, universal education system in B.C. Children in this province will benefit directly from provisions in our collective agreement.

Neil Worboys is the BCTF's first vice-president.

Employment equity

by Peggy Salaberry

Employment equity in our bargaining proposal on Aboriginal education arose because we need to address the undeniable issues at hand. Aboriginal students have a much lower graduation rate than non-aboriginal students. Statistics are as dramatic for suicide, incarceration, and substance abuse. The numbers also reveal the less desperate but contributory factors of lower earning power, lower involvement in higher education, and less stable family life in the future of our Aboriginal students.

I live in downtown Vancouver while I'm working with the bargaining team, and I often walk to and from work. I'm not living in the down-and-out part of downtown, but some of the people I encounter on my walk are. Sometimes I talk to the street people. When I don't though, it's often because I am overwhelmed by their situation. I talk least of all to the Aboriginal people, because the gulf between my world and theirs, between my well-being and their deprivation, seems too enormous. I am doubly dismayed when I remember the bright and flamboyant Kindergarten child who, when we talked of heritage, told me she was "half Indian and half person." I remember the teacher remarking in the staffroom of the same school that she had a parent-teacher conference at 3:00 p.m., but the native parents were so late, she'd just have to re-schedule and wait for them to not arrive again. I remember the stoic and non-verbal Aboriginal boys who didn't take to my approach in assisting them to learn. Yet, as I walk through downtown, I'm afraid that we will let these kids down in the same way that systems failed the children who grew up into the people on the street. The thing is, if we don't change what we are doing, the results will not change either.

The BCTF Task Force on First Nations Education identified many barriers to full participation in the school system for

Aboriginal people. In terms of our collective agreement, we have taken on one that deals with employment, as this seems the most appropriate setting for such a matter.

From today on, we have an opportunity to affect the future. Aboriginal students and their families need to feel welcome in schools. It is not that non-Aboriginal teachers do not intend to be welcoming. Indeed, the vast majority of us work earnestly at being approachable. Sometimes, though, our very ignorance leads us to believe we already know all we need to know. We need Aboriginal teachers in our schools because they are the ones most able to bridge the gulf between the profoundly estranged settings of school and Aboriginal community.

When there is a discipline, a body of knowledge, or a set of skills to relate and promote, we look among qualified candidates for the best person to do those things. Employment equity means that as long as it is our goal to promote the success of Aboriginal students, school boards need to hire teachers from Aboriginal communities. They need to give Aboriginal students who might be interested in teaching a glimpse of a reality where they can see themselves in classrooms, in science labs, in school shops, libraries, and gymnasiums, as well as in consultants' offices. We need Aboriginal teachers in our schools to help us examine different approaches to teaching and learning and, sometimes, even to living. Our 46,000 Aboriginal students need Aboriginal teachers in our schools to help them feel more at home. Everyone else in our schools needs Aboriginal teachers there to better understand our Canadian homeland. If that happened, we would see changes. We would alter the status quo. We would not so certainly visit a dismal past upon the bright future.

Peggy Salaberry is a member of BCTF's Bargaining Team and a teacher in Central Okanagan.

I voted YES!

counsellors, teacher-librarians, skills-development-centre teachers, special-needs resource teachers) want ratios and formulas that will protect and enhance their ability to deliver their service to students.

BCPSEA has proposed removal of ratios and formulas for all non-enrolling teachers. Shame!

Teacher-counsellors respond to a wide variety of students' needs, complicated by poverty, violence, abuse, neglect, and specific learning difficulties—teaching in guidance classes, counselling students and their parents and guardians, consulting with school workers and other professionals, advocating for students and public education. We're doing our best to support students, working our hardest, but without a limit on the number of students we're responsible for, we won't be able to provide the service they should be able to count on.

I'm thrilled that B.C. teachers voted "yes" so overwhelmingly. Maybe now BCPSEA will understand our absolute commitment to protecting our ability to provide our students with the education and support services they need and deserve.

Janice Rae is a counsellor, Vancouver Technical Secondary School, Vancouver.

"When kids are placed in that environment, they tend to believe that what's going on around them is not very important," he said.

After the presentations to the standing committee, the union leaders walked across the street to join the 800 union members who filled the lobby of the Royal Museum to overflowing.

At the rally, speeches from Jim Sinclair (B.C. Federation of Labour), George Heyman (BCGSEU), Fred Muzin (HEU), David Chudnovsky, and others told a cheering crowd that working people of British Columbia would not tolerate a government agenda that cut jobs and reduced services for the poor, the elderly, the young, and the sick.

"Welcome to the first public consultation on the budget process," announced Sinclair, who then exhorted government to rescind the tax cuts being planned for January for the wealthiest British Columbians and corporations.

The spending freeze on health and education directly contradicts Liberal campaign commitments.

"The people in this room are sending a strong message to government," exclaimed Heyman. "It's wonderful to see you here!"

"This is democracy in action, and it's just the beginning," declared Muzin.

"We will not be divided," maintained Chudnovsky, reflecting the feeling of unity in the room.

The spending freeze on health and education directly contradicts Liberal campaign commitments. The BCTF and its friends and colleagues in the wider labour movement will continue to advocate with a unified voice as massive cuts to the education system are being contemplated.

Garry Litke is an assistant director in the BCTF's Bargaining Division.

by Janice Rae

All B.C.'s classroom teachers want class sizes that are effective for student learning. B.C.'s non-enrolling teachers (teacher-



L-R: Kitty O'Callaghan, provincial returning officer; Technical Advisory Committee Ron Krickan, Cindy Williams, Josian Ochman, and David Anderson

Sherry Rosner, executive officer, Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation spoke at the November 2001 Representative Assembly. "In Ontario, we have been watching your struggle in B.C. closely. I have been asked by the OSSTF provincial executive to assure you today that BCTF has the unqualified support of OSSTF in your fight-back campaign. I bring you this message of solidarity as you begin your struggle with the B.C. government that has far too many parallels for us in Ontario. Your fight is our fight. We will stand with you, when you need us."



Bargaining for TOCs

I have a bachelor's degree from SFU and a professional teaching certificate, and I have been a teacher on call since 1992. I am a professional teacher, not a housewife or a babysitter. I teach and nurture students when their teacher is away for just a day or when their teacher gets cancer or even when their teacher dies. A teacher on call is there to pick up the pieces and carry forward the educational programs. We offer stability in unstable situations—continuity instead of disruption.

I have taught for nine years, but my school district says I have no experience—even though I have taught all subject areas from K-12 in that district, including woodwork, home economics, and other secondary courses and my training is in elementary. I am ready and available for work every school day even though I may not be called. At school, I rarely get prep time to mark or plan for the next day because the principal often asks me to take another class during that scheduled prep time.

I have to accept work sometimes when I am unwell because I don't have sick days. I am not entitled to sick days nor medical/dental benefits, so sometimes I accept TOC work instead of keeping expensive medical or dental appointments. I have to accept as many teaching days as possible and even at that, I barely earn \$17,000 a year.

I am a confident, reliable, and experienced teacher who happens to be a TOC. Recently, I applied for a half-time position at a school where I had previously taught for two terms. Without explanation, the school district hired a new person from outside the district. What recourse did I have? I looked through the contract, and there was none.

Once again, I am back on the TOC list. It is in the district's best interest to keep me on the TOC list—I work for less than \$17,000 a year. They don't have to pay me sick leave or my medical/dental benefits, and they don't have to consider me for teaching vacancies.

Why am I treated differently than my colleagues? During a staffroom discussion, it became apparent to me that I had more educational training than the other two teachers—one had three years formal educational training, and the other had four. Yet my colleagues are paid on scale from day one for their education and years of experience. They have a benefits package and are recognized by seniority.

It has become increasingly apparent to me that my education, experience, and professionalism may be better appreciated and rewarded in the private sector. I can't afford to continue making financial, personal, and professional sacrifices. I am not alone in this thinking. I speak for many TOCs in this province who seek a living wage, benefits, and seniority.

Many TOCs have left the teaching professional and others will too unless conditions are changed.

— name withheld

An opinion on the B.C. Principals' and Vice-principals' Association's position on teacher collective bargaining

In whose interests? Not students, not teachers

by Alan Crawford

The BCPVPA's president has been speaking and writing about the need to "restore the balance to our education system." He says, "I am critical of the expanding scope and influence of [collective] agreements on the system." The BCPVPA president further states that "the interests of our children have been overshadowed by...an overpowering labour relations regime. We believe this is wrong." Pretty provocative language. According to Stu Dale, the school system became unbalanced when teachers achieved some basic working conditions.

However, many of his public statements have been misleading. Here are a few examples.

"Principals have limited input in hiring decisions because of increasingly complex hiring rules."

Most collective agreements have little to say about hiring. They do, however, contain provisions that address the transfer, placement, and layoff of already hired teachers. Shouldn't senior teachers' have more job security? What's the problem with more senior teachers having a significant say in their specific job placement within their school district? Too bad very few teachers' collective agreements actually give senior teachers clear placement rights. I guess Dale pines for the good old days when hiring and placement decisions were more clearly controlled by principals.

I remember the Monday morning about 20 years ago when a substitute teacher (as they were then called) dropped into my office. I was president of

continued on p. 6

from page 5

the Vancouver Elementary School Teachers' Association at the time. The teacher was crying. She had quit her assignment. She felt like quitting teaching, but she seemed to know that was a bad idea. She wanted advice. Seems the principal of the school she had been at for two weeks had shown up at her home with a bottle of wine and a possible job offer. You get the picture. Not

On the other hand, school boards routinely staff schools so that classes are at the collective-agreement maximum on the first day of school in September.

the kind of "balance" I want our school system restored to! Or how about the time in the early 1970s when a (male) principal confided in me that he was having difficulty deciding which young woman to hire. He had two choices and thought he'd choose the one with the shorter skirt. Not exactly the proper criterion for choosing a teacher. Is this the "balance" for which the BCPVPA yearns? The BCPVPA president complains about the loss of the ability of a principal to build a quality professional team.

"What we disagree with is the one-size-fits-all blueprint."

The BCPVPA's president is referring to the primary class-size limits that "resulted in some 1,400 students across the province being refused entry to their neighborhood schools..." Even if this grossly inflated number were correct, that's fewer than one student per school in the entire province. Reminds me of the "four million student days lost to strikes" according to Premier Gordon Campbell. The decade Campbell is referring to contained more than one billion student days, so only 0.4% of days were "lost" to strikes by teachers and support staff combined—an average of 27 minutes per year for students. Interesting how numbers can be used, isn't it? I

digress. Back to the "displaced" students. As accurately as I can tell, in all but three such situations involving primary students that were brought to the attention of local teacher unions across the province, the students were not "displaced." They were enrolled at their neighbourhood school. The local and the board in each case worked out a solution.

On the other hand, school boards routinely staff schools so that classes are at the collective-agreement maximum on the first day of school in September. So what/who really causes the "inflexibility"?

I remember the good old flexible days. In 1976 Vancouver teachers began a long struggle to reduce Kindergarten classes to 30 students. So why are they 20 and under today? You guessed it. The bad old teachers' collective agreement is to blame.

Remember the "flexibility" principals had when it came to evaluating teachers? I do. I was also president of VESTA between 1991 and 1993 and grievance officer from 1994 to 1998. Teacher complaints about evaluations being undertaken by their principals changed remarkably between the late 1970s and the 1990s.

My first stint as president of VESTA can be characterized by these examples of complaints. "He doesn't like what I wear." "He wants the desks in rows." "He thinks I should spend more time before and/or after school at the school." "He doesn't like the way I keep my register (of student attendance)." "He thinks my daybook is unclear (to him)."

Teachers and other public school employees are the guardians of the public school system.

In the 1990s, the complaints were more like the following. "He/she doesn't share his/her observation notes with me." "He/she is using inappropriate criteria." "He/she is not following proper procedures." A qualitative difference for the better, I say. What's the difference? Again it's collective agreement provisions.

I could go on at some length about the positive changes teachers' collective bargaining has brought to our public school system. Health and safety regulations, teacher transfer procedures, employee layoff provisions, identification and service provisions for students with special needs, required staffing and funding for inner-city schools, service levels for learning assistance teaching, and requirement to provide schools with teacher-librarians are but a few of the "rules" collective bargaining has created. These provisions have benefited everyone: teachers, students, the public, and, I dare say, principals.

Those who believe things were better in the public school

We must never let anyone take from us the rights we deserve and fought so hard to achieve.

system in some less-regulated bygone era, belong in that bygone era. The potential "confrontation [caused by] collective bargaining" every few years, is a far sight better than the all-too-frequent one-on-one employee-versus-management confrontations of the past. Teachers and other public school employees are the guardians of the public school system. Governments come, and governments go. School boards come and school boards go. Management comes, and management goes. Teachers are always there. We're there for our students, and we take our responsibility seriously. We deserve a significant role. Collective bargaining provides us with that role. We must never let down our guard. We must never let anyone take from us the rights we deserve and fought so hard to achieve.

Alan Crawford is co-chief negotiator on the BCTF Bargaining Team, seconded from his teacher-librarian position at Nootka Elementary School, Vancouver.

All quotes are from "A School System Out of Balance," BCPVPA's *Adminfo*, June 2001.

Health and Safety

Liberal government to dismantle health and safety

The Liberal government has set up several artificial consultation processes to discuss the dismantling of health and safety laws. The minister of deregulation, Kevin Falcon, is examining WCB laws and regulations line by line under the guise of eliminating repetition and unnecessary rules.

One such example of an "unnecessary" rule has already been the delay of the ban on environmental tobacco smoke in the hospitality industry. The BCTF submitted a brief to the government that protests the delay and supports the right of our students to work in smoke-free environments. Many of our students, who are most vulnerable to the health hazards of environmental tobacco smoke because of their youth, are forced to work in restaurants where smoking is allowed. Not only are they exposed to hazardous substances, but also they are encouraged to begin smoking, a complete undermining of the teachers', school boards', and ministries of health and education campaigns against smoking. The BCTF brief is online at www.bctf.ca/etc.

The Federation is also participating in a card-sending campaign to protest the delay of the ban on tobacco smoke. Cards to Premier Campbell may be obtained from the Health and Safety Department of the BCTF; e-mail George Taylor gtaylor@bctf.ca, or call the BCTF.

Another thinly disguised attack on health and safety is the appointment of Alan Winter, a lawyer who represents employers, to hear submissions from only five parties on proposed changes to the act and regulation. Winter represented

the Vancouver School Board in the case about teachers' getting time off for health and safety committee work and educational leaves. The meetings with the five parties (which does not include the BCTF) are being held behind closed doors so that the public is largely unaware of the attacks upon health and safety.

The government has also appointed Allan Hunt, another employer-side lawyer, to review WCB service delivery. Both reviews of health and safety laws and practices that have been in place for a hundred years are to be completed by November 15, 2001!

The third phony exercise is the Ministry of Education's "Dumb Rules Committee" (That's what it's called), which includes no teacher, support staff, or parent representation. It has already met and targeted health and safety committees and health and safety rules as unnecessary and restrictive. According to the committee, education is a low-hazard industry that does not require health and safety regulation. This ill-informed, management committee appears unaware that the injury rate in schools is climbing at an alarming rate, much faster than the provincial rate, which has been declining.

The BCTF is working with other labour groups, including the B.C. Federation of Labour, to oppose any cuts to health and safety. We must stand up for our members' right to work in healthy and safe schools and workites and for our students' right to work in healthy and safety places whether on work experience, in class, or on the job.

— Lynne Sinclair

La solidarité : vous l'avez démontrée !

Le vote a été pris et le résultat est retentissant ! 91,4% en faveur !

Mais, reprenez vite votre souffle car de nouveaux défis nous font face. Vous connaissez bien les propositions que la FEBC débat avec ardeur à la table de négociations. Vous avez eu l'occasion de participer à des sessions d'informations au niveau local. Et vous tenez au courant, en consultant les bulletins de négociations et surtout en discutant avec vos collègues, des enjeux qui découlent des sessions de négociations. Et c'est pour cela qu'il faut continuer à s'impliquer dans les actions que votre syndicat proposera dans les prochaines semaines.

C'est le temps... Notre slogan nous rappelle que c'est maintenant le temps de faire valoir notre profession auprès des gens que nous côtoyons. C'est le temps de faire connaître notre travail journalier : enseignement, rencontres avec parents, réunions pédagogiques et administratives, sorties éducatives, projets, tournois, festivals, compétitions, et j'en passe.

C'est le temps... d'en parler avec fierté et avec conviction.

Les enjeux sont énormes ! On pourrait se retrouver, entre autres,

- sans limite au nombre

- d'élèves dans nos salles de classe
- sans ratio élèves-enseignants pour les collègues sans charge de classe
- sans clause concernant un processus pour régler les plaintes de parents
- sans clause concernant le nombre de préparations ou de niveaux
- avec une perte des droits acquis concernant le niveau de soutien pour les élèves à besoins spéciaux
- avec une limite au nombre de jours de congé de maladie attribués à une maladie.

Vos chefs de file comptent sur votre énergie et votre collaboration pour les aider à accomplir les activités nécessaires pour faire avancer le processus de négociations. Ce qu'on fait aujourd'hui aura des répercussions à long terme. Ce sont nos conditions de travail et les conditions d'apprentissage des élèves, pour les années à venir, qui sont en jeu ! Protégeons nos acquis et visons une reconnaissance monétaire digne de notre profession.

— Paule Desgroseilliers
Directrice adjointe au perfectionnement

Synopsis

Although BCTF has received a strong "yes" vote, members need to continue to remain informed and get involved in community outreach activities.

4 hours, 243 km to collect 1 vote!

On October 5, 2001, Bargaining Mobilization Committee member Al Wilson drove north from Fort St. John on the Alaska Highway, west over logging roads to Upper Halfway School to collect one strike vote. The round trip was 243 km.



Public schools serve everyone

by Lance Read

Luckily, both of my sons were diagnosed as reading disabled/dyslexic when each was in Grade 1. I say luckily, because they were diagnosed early in life. Stuart, born in 1985, and Thomas, in 1989, always showed an interest in being read to, something both my wife and I did every day and frequently. They were surrounded by books, and because we modelled, they copied, flipping pages and pretending to read, from the age of two. Little did we know that Stuart had already, by the age of three or four, mastered memorization and mimicking. He could "read" verbatim favourite stories, *Green Eggs and Ham*, *Cat in the Hat*, and others, that he had enticed us to read hundreds of times over.

Perhaps we were naive, perhaps we were just typical proud parents, but sometime in the latter part of Kindergarten, things fell apart as we noticed that when we asked Stuart to follow along with his finger as he read, he was way off, either ahead or behind the words and phrasing. He could not read. Coincidentally and fortuitously, we discovered it just as his public school teacher and reading diagnostics aid did. When they came to us with the suggestion that our son was dyslexic, we were surprisingly relieved. The *p, g, q, t, b, p* mix-ups he was making and his *and, but, the* interchanges finally made sense. He was guessing. He was and has always been above average at math, so three-letter words were just addition to him, not reading. Geometrically shaped letters were interchangeable symbols, not letters.

This is where I am so proud of the public school system. Mrs. Fraser—bless her overworked, underpaid heart—patiently and diligently taught our son strategies that (along with our help as parents with

her direction) by the end of Grade 4, saw him leave the remedial-reading program and enter the mainstream. His teacher-librarian also played a huge role in exciting his need to read. Our son has been on or near the honour roll since that time. As a result of the special reading strategies Mrs. Fraser gave him, he enjoys reading. This summer, while on a very active camping trip to the Klondike, he read a 900-page book, in less than two weeks.

When the second son came along, zoom, we were locked into problems we and the public school system already recognized. He, too, was lucky to have Mrs. Fraser, and he, too, after four years of public school and parent assistance, has become a well-above-average student by Grade 7.

You may note that I have mentioned "public school system" several times in this article. I did so intentionally,

Can B.C. public schools afford to fund smaller classes over all, special programs such as remedial reading and the all-important teacher-librarian?

We cannot afford not to.

partly out of pride and appreciation and partly out of regret.

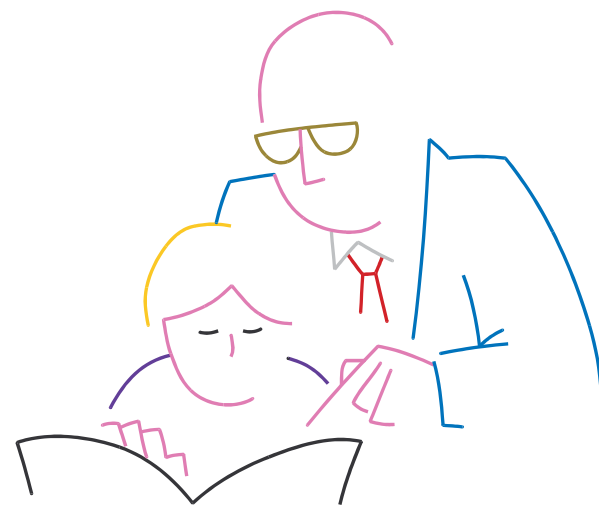
Funding for special needs and smaller classes often seems to be in contention and first on the chopping block. Can we afford to fund smaller class sizes and small groups of atypical students? is a question that pops up during times like this.

Can we? My nephew lives in England. He has attended Birkhamstead "private" school since age four. His older brothers were exemplary, typical, and high-achieving students who have gone on to university in Swansea, Wales. The youngest, reached Grade 7 without ever having been diagnosed, reading disabled. Apparently "they do not provide these extra expense related services" in this prestigious "private" school. His marks in reading-dependent subjects finally bottomed out in the low D range. His GPA was unacceptable in maintaining the over-all achievement rating of his private school. He was asked to dis-enroll. My brother and sister-in-law have had to enrol him in a local government-funded public school. Wonderfully, he is now finally receiving remedial-reading strategies. We all hope the damage, although now far more expensive, is not too extensive.

Can B.C. public schools afford to fund smaller classes over all, special programs such as remedial reading and the all-important teacher-librarian? We cannot afford not to. The costs to society are much higher, the older an individual gets.

If Christy Clarke's son is reading disabled or dyslexic, or Gordon Campbell's kids were educationally challenged, perhaps we would see a real appreciation for public schools and proper funding for them and the devoted teachers who are a part of the great public school system in this province.

Lance Read teaches at Citadel Middle School, Coquitlam.



I am a teacher

by Don Johannson

I am a teacher. I am an enthusiastic, passionate, energetic teacher. I am an inspirer, a nurturer. I will stop my students when they do something wrong. I will stop a student in the hallway so that we can discuss just why using profanity is unacceptable. I remind my students that out in the "adult" world they will need skills that will set them apart from the other job candidates. I try to keep it together in the classroom while the world around us is in disarray. I reflect on the day during my long commute home and get angry and frustrated because my efforts seem wasted and the job too much. But in the morning, I return to class ready to change the world.

Why do I stay in education? I stay in education because I get excited about each year's new challenges, experiences, and rewards. I stay in education because I have discovered that while I may know where we (my students and I) are headed, with skills and concepts in mind, I know that how we will get there will be determined by the students who join me as a community of learners. I stay in education because I know that I am making a difference in my students' lives. Each new school year, I wait to meet them, and then the excitement and

challenges begin—when trust and risk join hands.

I have come to trust my students. I have come to realize that if I put supportive structures in place, my students will respond with enthusiasm to the challenge of learning. They will handle the frustration inherent in real problem solving and emerge with pride and new understanding. They will have opportunities to work together, to share successes and difficulties, and to become resources to one another. My students and I have come to value one another's thinking and individuality.

My previous life experiences have taught me a variety of skills, but the title of *teacher* brings with it responsibilities that do not appear on most job descriptions. In walking through the classroom door, I am charged with the awesome responsibility of sculpting young minds and preparing young people for positive, active, productive participation within their community. I came into the teaching profession to influence and educate my students so that they might achieve their potential.

I am a teacher. I am an enthusiastic, passionate, energetic teacher. I am an inspirer, a nurturer.

Don Johannson teaches at W.J. Mouat Secondary School, Abbotsford.

Students take action with 20/20 Vision's help

There are two well-known ways to participate in our democratic society—voting and becoming an elected official. These two methods don't include students though, so how do you teach them that their opinions matter?

Members of the Global Issues Club at Johnston Heights Secondary School, Surrey, have found their own way to participate—letter writing. It is not a new approach, but it is one way the club uses to address environmental and human rights topics beyond the school level.

The club created a collaborative approach to the letter-writing process. Each month, the club receives a postcard from 20/20 Vision, a local non-profit organization focused on peace and the environment. The postcard asks subscribers to write and express their opinion to a suggested policy maker about a current critical issue.

The postcard is used as a springboard for group discussion. "20/20 Vision helps us get involved and contributing. Often,

we don't have all the details on issues we're concerned about. 20/20 Vision provides that," says Greg Van Vugt, a sponsor teacher for the Global Issues Club.

The club's letter-writing process involves over 50 students from Grades 8 to 12, whose opinions and ideas are shared. From the discussion, one letter is written that combines the ideas of the club.

The postcard and letter-writing process is also used effectively in social studies and English classes around the province. In class, students discuss the facts and their opinions and write individual letters. A personal response from the Prime Minister or Premier is a powerful experience. Letter writing not only allows students to examine with their peers issues concerning them, it also gives them a voice in our society.

For more information, contact 20/20 Vision at 103-2609 Westview Drive, North Vancouver, BC V7N 4N2, phone/fax: 604-983-2525. www.2020vision.bc.ca.



EDUCATING

9-11-2001

by Nancy Knickerbocker

For millions of students and teachers throughout North America, this school year started with the familiar feelings of excitement and anticipation—clear mornings, crisp notebooks, classrooms decorated in welcome. Only one week later, that sense of a fresh start came to a devastating end.

On the morning of Tuesday, September 11, 2001, Shauna Ross was listening to CBC Radio as she drove to work at Mary Jane Shannon Elementary, an inner-city school in North Surrey. She listened with growing horror as hijackers plunged a passenger jet into the heart of the Pentagon and two more planes carved out the 110-storey spines of the World Trade Centre.

"As I pulled into the school parking lot, the second tower went down. I was in a state of total shock and disbelief," she said.

As the vast explosions boomed and the smoke rolled down the streets of Manhattan, New Yorkers ran for their lives. Among them were hundreds of teachers who shepherded more than 8,000 students to safety from schools dangerously close to the crisis area. Some children they held by the hand and others they carried on their backs, but they kept everyone moving together through the falling rubble and panicked crowds.

"The teachers of Public School 234 had to evacuate six- and seven-year-olds during the most harrowing part of the disaster, just after the second trade centre tower collapsed, enveloping the school in a debris-filled cloud," *The New York Times* reported. "Many of the children were screaming for parents who actually worked in the towers. As one teacher stepped into the street, a small child saw the burning bodies falling from the tower and cried out, 'Look, Teacher, the birds are on fire!'"



As the atrocious news flashed around the world, worried friends and family rushed to contact loved ones in New York and Washington. BCTF President David Chudnovsky was anxious to hear from his daughter, Anna, who had been due to fly from New York to Boston that morning. David later told BCTF staffers that he started to tremble only after he received word that she was safe.

At Mary Jane Shannon Elementary, the teachers set up a television in the staffroom but



Shauna Ross, Mary Jane Shannon Elementary School, Surrey, helped students express themselves after September 11 by helping publish a book of students' work. Students from Kindergarten to Grade 7 contributed literary and visual art works, 30 favourites were chosen for the book, and the book sold for \$4 with all the proceeds going to the relief effort.

didn't feel it was appropriate to let young children watch the coverage. "Globalization makes everything seem closer, so these kids were afraid that their own school might get blown up," Ross said. "They were scared about these evil terrorists lurking they didn't know where. They had already picked up all kinds of myths and misconceptions."

Nearby, at the Invergarry Adult Learning Centre, though, "everyone was glued to the TV," Counsellor Marion Malcolmson said, "We have 1,500 students from all over the world—Muslim students, many from Afghanistan. There was a general state of high anxiety and fear. Some students were desperately looking for relatives. Most are accounted for, but a few are still missing."

In the days after the attack, some Muslim students simply stopped attending classes. Others sought out Malcolmson's sympathetic ear, pouring out their hearts. "People were wanting to express anxiety about the direction the world is taking, fear for their children, especially fear of discrimination and racism that might touch their children, and wanting to differentiate themselves from whoever the terrorists are."

She put a sign up outside her office door saying, "Express your thoughts and feelings about peace and justice." One student pinned up a photograph from an Arabic-language newspaper that depicted a woman, partially veiled, with tears pouring down her face.

All that week, flags flew at half-staff in schoolyards around the province. Teachers tried to focus on the material at hand and maintain a feeling of normalcy, but sometimes they had to put aside their lesson plans to give students a chance to express their shock about the terrible events taking place far away, yet as nearby as the television screen.

Carol Myronuk knew that all the talk of terrorism would be particularly distressing for children who have actually

experienced war. She teaches at General Wolfe Elementary School, in East Vancouver. Many of her students have come to Canada seeking refuge from

"Out of our love and sorrow, our school submitted wonderful poems, drawings, journal entries, and stories to our book... We hope this book will give you knowledge that you are not alone in the universe and that we care... I personally feel satisfied and joyful with happiness that I have made a difference in some families' lives around the world."

—Michaela Mitchell, Grade 6

conflicts in Sri Lanka, Guatemala, and elsewhere. Some parents reported that their children were distressed at home and having problems sleeping.

"With it being so early in the school year, we didn't yet know all the backgrounds of our new students, so it was important to keep encouraging them to talk to the adults in their lives—both parents and teachers," she said.

Certainly Shauna Ross knew her students needed time to clarify their understanding of the horrendous events they'd witnessed, and their potential implications. "I felt my job as a teacher is to encourage everybody to slow down, not to always trust the media, to stick to the facts and help them express themselves," she said. "My students were feeling helpless and fearful and

grieving. I really wanted to turn that around."

She talked to the students about different ideas of what they could do, and they agreed they'd try to make a book as a fundraiser. "Our goal was to extend our feelings of peace and empathy to help the victims of the attacks," she said.

The students decided they wanted the whole school to contribute, so they painted posters for the halls, talked it up on the P.A. system, and made presentations in every class. They soon received quite a selection of work, from Kindergarten to Grade 7. The students voted on their favourite entries, and together they chose 30 pages of work—both literary and visual arts. Staples agreed to help with the cost of photocopying, so they made 50 copies and began selling them for \$4 apiece, with all proceeds going to the relief effort. The first 50 were sold sight unseen, and another 150 copies were soon on order.

Ross documented the process on video, and she plans to set it to music, so the students can see the laughter and tears that went into their book. "The kids are so proud of what we accomplished," she said.

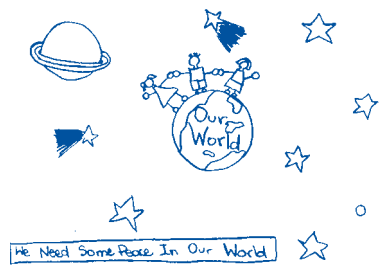
In the wake of the catastrophe teachers are watchful, concerned to continue helping their students through this difficult time. "We want to foster an attitude of understanding and dialogue," Marion Malcolmson said. "There is a real caring from the educators here to make sure that this is an opportunity to foster discussions

♥what I have learned♥

- I learned that a small work could help people around the world.
- Also, I learned that every person could make a difference.
- A small amount of money could save lives.
- I learned that impossible things could sometimes be possible.

about peace and justice."

Nicole Peterson, a Grade 11 student at Seycove Community School in North Vancouver, has been deeply shaken by the saturation coverage of the

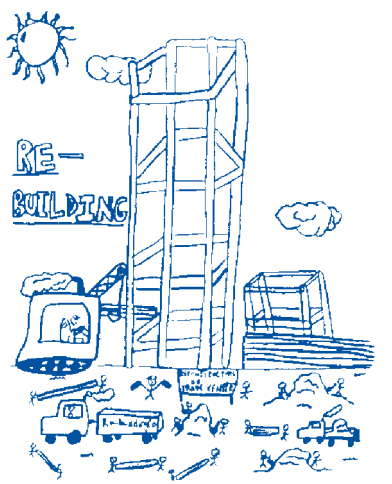


attacks and by all she has since learned on her own and in the many classroom discussions about the war on terrorism.

"I really was not aware of the degree of poverty, violence, unrest, and social inadequacy in the world. The degradation of women, not respecting children, not giving them an education—I didn't even know what the Taliban was," she said. "I first actually learned about the Taliban in French class."

Peterson has spent hours on the Internet, reading articles about the war and the plight of the Afghani people, first under the Russian invaders and now the Taliban. "Some of the information is truly horrendous—like first-person accounts of girls being raped and left to die. It makes you physically sick. I just never thought that humanity was capable of these things."

Does she ever feel she wants to protect herself from such knowledge? "No," she said. "I want to face up to it. I mean, if I can't even read about it how can those people endure it?"



Peterson said that she and many other young people are frightened by unfolding events, but they are also feeling stronger connections as global citizens. "I've really woken up to that. I think we should definitely use this tragedy as an opportunity to come closer together."

Nancy Knickerbocker is the BCTF's media relations officer.

For tips for parents and teachers, go to the web site of the U.S. National Association of School Psychologists, nasponline.org/NEAT/terrorism.html. Secondary teachers wanting to help students explore alternatives to violence, may purchase *A Culture of Peace*, a 55-page guide by Pat Clarke, the BCTF's director of professional development, from BCTF Lesson Aids Service.

FOR PEACE



Students glimpse the harsh reality of refugee life

Afghanistan, Bosnia, Croatia, Angola, Bangladesh, Colombia: These are the grim ABCs of refugee work for the Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders.

Ninety percent of the victims of modern warfare are civilians, and at least half of them are children. There are approximately 39 million refugees in the world today—more than the entire population of Canada. To highlight this growing human tragedy, MSF created an interactive exhibit based on a reconstruction of a refugee camp. The exhibit has toured 12 countries and elicited a phenomenal response, said Clea Kahn of MSF. More than 25,000 people turned out in the five cities along its cross-Canada tour, about 7,000 in Vancouver.



“Nobody can stop time and the evil the adults all talk about will pass.”

— Anel, a six-year-old Croatian refugee from “Childhood Interrupted by War” art exhibit

Students shivered as rain pelted down on the cluster of canvas tents, a latrine with its flimsy walls of bamboo, and a muddy minefield with its orange warning signs snapping in the wind.

“We reminded the kids to dress for the weather, but some of them still didn’t prepare so they’re pretty miserable,” said Willy Wan, a Grade 6 teacher at Tecumseh Elementary School. “But this tour really got them thinking about people who are forced to leave everything because of war, and the prospect of being cold and hungry for a long time.”

Members of MSF won the 1999 Nobel Peace Prize for their service in some of the most difficult and heart-wrenching situations on earth. Overcrowding, lack of privacy, scarce water and food, rampant sickness, pervasive loss and grief—all these aspects of refugee life were starkly illustrated at the camp, and anecdotes from MSF staff enriched the experience.

“It was especially interesting to hear first-hand accounts from the volunteers who have worked in the field,” said Corinna Stevenson, who was accompanying her Global Perspectives 11 and 12 students from Stelly’s Secondary School in Saanich. Stevenson developed the two-year career preparation course for young people interested in international development work. Grade 11 students undertake a local project, and the Grade 12s work on an international project. This year’s class planned to travel to Ecuador and help build a school where young people would learn to be stewards of the rain forest, but since September 11 those plans are on hold.

Both teachers said the accompanying exhibit of drawings done by refugee children was especially touching. To help refugee children heal from psychological trauma, MSF implemented an art therapy program in the refugee camps of Croatia. About 100 children, both Croatian Catholics and Bosnian Muslims, were asked to draw pictures of what their lives were like before, during, and after the war.

The first drawings in each series are full of colour and life, depicting scenes along the banks of the Danube, leafy neighbourhoods in Dubrovnik, pastoral villages in which church and mosque stand peacefully together. The war-time scenes depict bombs falling, houses aflame, tanks and guns, threats of massacre, forced expulsion of civilians, the blocking of humanitarian convoys, and even villagers forced to witness the public rape of a young girl. One child’s work stands out because she simply refused to call up the memories to illustrate her war-time experience. Her page was completely blank.

“It really hit home for my students that that little girl was too shocked and devastated to draw anything at all,” Wan said. “The whole exhibit has opened the kids up to being much more aware. Right after the September 11 attacks they didn’t really connect. They reacted almost like it was a Hollywood-type explosion. But now they have a much better understanding of the global issues and why people have to flee their countries.”

The B.C. Teachers’ Federation has donated \$10,000 to Oxfam to be used for refugee relief in Afghanistan.

— Nancy Knickerbocker



The creation of an interactive exhibit based on the reconstruction of a refugee camp saw 7,000 visitors to the Vancouver site. (Top to bottom) Members of Doctors Without Borders volunteers talked to students at a food centre; demonstrated mines designed in bright colours to look like toys; teacher Willy Wan, Vancouver; Isabel Lizama and teacher Corinna Stevenson, Saanich; a display of drawings by children of their lives before, during, and after the war.

Softwood lumber

by Scott Lunny

One of the most important issues facing the province of British Columbia today is the softwood lumber dispute with the United States. The reason is simple—B.C.'s economy is driven by its resource-based industries and by exports. Nowhere is this clearer than in the forest sector, which constitutes the economic backbone of so many of our communities and underpins our provincial economy.

The forest industry is directly responsible for nearly 100,000 jobs. It indirectly supports about 200,000 more. Stumpage payments alone generate an amount about equal to spending on post-secondary education, while workers' taxes contribute almost an equal amount; forestry generates fully 60% of our export earnings.

Those are the dollars with which we buy everything from oranges to computers to medical equipment. They are, in short, the purchasing power that we use to pay our way in the world, both by buying foreign-made goods and by supporting the important services to people, such as education, that British Columbians expect from government.

The health of our forest and wood economy, then, is crucial to the health, prosperity, and

well-being of our province.

No wonder we look with alarm at unilateral protectionist measures against our wood products, especially when they are enacted by our largest customer. When the United States, which buys almost 90% of B.C. lumber, puts a 19.3% duty on softwood lumber exports from selected Canadian provinces, we have to respond very strongly.

We have to overcome a lot of misconceptions about the issue, on both sides of the border. The powerful U.S. lumber lobby, for instance, suggests that the protectionist duty is necessary because of unfair Canadian government subsidies to the forest industry, particularly in B.C. This argument has been refuted by numerous academic studies and rejected by international trade tribunals. Canadian lumber is no more subsidized than U.S. lumber. The most inefficient American mills just cannot compete against the combination of a low Canadian dollar, extremely efficient Canadian mills, and abundant timber supply in Canada. The Americans, especially in the southern pine region, having failed to improve their productive capacity are facing growing timber shortages. They have responded not by improving stewardship or investing more, but by blaming Canada.

Another misconception is that the softwood duty will lead to better forest practices. That's not true, on either side of the border. Most of U.S. timber comes from private woodlots and plantations. Most of B.C.'s wood comes from Crown land. The U.S. has already overcut many of the private lands, where forest practices are not nearly as restrictive as they are under our Forest Practices Code. In B.C., for instance, we have replanted a larger area than we harvested every year but one since 1987, and we will continue to do so. We already have better forest practices than do the Americans.

Indeed, it's ironic that the Americans do not complain

We already have better forest practices than do the Americans.

about "subsidized" B.C. raw logs, with which many Pacific Northwest sawmills are topping up their output in the face of severe timber shortages. Logs enter the U.S. duty-free; companies on both sides of the border would love to do away with the log-export rules that keep the vast-majority of Crown-land logs from going to the States, taking thousands of

manufacturing jobs with them.

We need to mobilize society in support of a fair deal for our lumber exports. In response to a letter to mayors and councils of some 300 forest-based communities, I.W.A. Canada has already won support from nearly 40 and look forward to many more. An opposition-day motion in the federal parliament saw speakers from all parties pledge support for fair-market access. We have also received tens of thousands of names on petitions calling for the same.

It's crucial that British Columbians work together, urge the federal government to act and gain a fair, level playing field for all lumber producers, whether from Canada, the U.S., or other countries.

I.W.A. Canada and other wood-industry workers don't want or need any special advantage. With fair rules, we know we can compete with anyone when it comes to producing high-quality, competitively priced manufactured wood products. And when we do, we know it benefits our families and our communities and that we are helping to fuel the economy that all British Columbians count on.

Scott Lunny is the IWA's director of policy and information services.

For more information, visit www.IWA.ca.

Where is the common sense in Gordon Campbell's revolution?

by Stephen Hume

I wondered how long it would take for the new gang in Victoria to switch its attention from self-congratulatory pay raises and political patronage appointments to punishing the poor for the government's economic blunders.

Not long, it turned out, although I was surprised that a usually decent chap like Human Resources Minister Murray Coell would choose Thanksgiving to frighten the most marginalized and stigmatized among us.

The weekend when we collectively celebrate the value of generosity hardly seemed an appropriate time for the government to announce it wants to chop 100,000 people from its income-assistance rolls. It was a mean-spirited bit of political theatre.

What's next, a "Bah! Humbug!" and pink slips on Christmas Eve for all those soon-to-be-redundant civil servants?

According to Coell, the intention is positive: to build people's self-esteem by putting an end to what he calls the "culture of entitlement"—that is, the misguided notion that those without means or ability have a right to expect basic sustenance from the state.

Perhaps somebody will draw to his attention Article 25(1) of the International Declaration of Human Rights. It sets out the obligations of a government toward its citizens. Everyone has the right to food, clothing, housing, medical care, and necessary social services and the right to security in the event of unemployment or other lack of livelihood.

...what business rewards its managers with some of the highest wages in the country and pays a \$1.5-billion dividend to its shareholders while running itself \$6 billion into the hole?

It doesn't say that this is a privilege that may be withheld by the government in order to coerce certain kinds of behaviour that fit its agenda for social engineering. It says basic sustenance is an entitlement. And the last time I looked, Canada's signature was on that charter.

Those civic obligations are reiterated in the United Nations Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. It clearly states that adequate food, clothing, housing, living conditions, and a basic standard of living are a right—not a conditional gratuity to be played with at the whim of the government. It, too, bears Canada's signature.

Expect nothing and gain everything



Jadzia Prenosil and her husband sponsor this family and promise to help break the cycle of poverty.

by Jadzia Prenosil

As I read and watched the "Back to school" ads, I reflected on the summer just past. The trip to Oaxaca, Mexico, was the highlight of the two months. My husband and I had decided to spend part of the summer volunteering at "Oaxaca Street Children Grassroots Centre." We had read an article about the organization in the winter issue of *Teacher*. Both of us knew it would be a different kind of vacation, but we looked forward to the challenge. Over the years, we had visited Mexico on many different occasions. We hoped that our previous experience and knowledge of Spanish would pay off.

The centre where we would be helping out was founded in 1996 by an American couple, and it continues to function on international donations. About 400 children receive help from their sponsors. In Oaxaca, public schools are not free. Costs include tuition, school supplies, books, uniforms, shoes, and more. Such costs are out of the question for many families. Most of the sponsored families make less than \$100 a month.

Our first day at the centre, a holiday for most of the children, was an eye opener. The centre, usually echoing with screams and laughter, was quiet. The children were helping their parents sell sweets, crafts, and other products on city streets. The centre was moving into a larger building, so the regular activities were disrupted. To be helpful and useful we relied on skills teachers use daily: creativity and initiative. Each volunteer found a spot and performed the many tasks that needed to be done: shopping for and preparing food, cleaning the courtyard, washing dishes, playing with the children, etc.

Because my husband and I could speak Spanish, we ended up working in the office registering students for the new school year. The work involved entering personal information into the computer, taking pictures of the children, assisting them with the writing of letters to their sponsors, and accompanying them to the store to buy uniforms. We were quite privileged to meet the families (usually a single mom with up to five children) and impressed by

the women many of whom, themselves illiterate, were keen to provide their kids with education. There was a lot of laughter and interesting conversation as we learned about one another. I will never forget some of the faces and stories.

In addition, a homestudy for each family receiving sponsorship had to be completed. We did a homestudy and visited three families in their villages. During one of the visits we realized the real value and function of the centre. We were asked to complete a form regarding the family's economic situation. The house, a one-room shack, its walls made of corrugated aluminum, had a dirt floor, no electricity, no running water, and no sanitation. The furniture consisted of a single mattress, a small table, and two chairs. The family owned a goat and five chickens.

Sitting in the heat above 30°C staring extreme poverty in the face, we quickly answered the questions on the form on our own. The family definitely qualified for help, and it felt appropriate for us to sponsor them. We spent unforgettable moments getting to know the single mom and her four children, aged 14, 10, 4, and 2. Our brief conversations and their kind gestures (on one occasion the mother brought us a few eggs), taught us more about what the centre does for families in such a predicament. It fills in the gap between the possible and the impossible that would otherwise get bigger and uglier. Without education, the cycle of poverty is certain to continue.

Our time in Oaxaca came to an end, but our real work and the experience are just beginning. We made a choice and a promise to help one family to break the cycle. Ojala! May it be so!

Jadzia Prenosil teaches at Killarney Secondary School, Vancouver.

For more information about this organization, visit www.oaxacastreetchildren.org or e-mail streetchildren@spersaoaxaca.com.mx

B.C. volunteers

by Lori Dewinetz

Many thanks go to Jacqui Birchall for her article about the Grassroots Street Children Organization in Oaxaca, Mexico (*Teacher*, Nov./Dec. 2000).

As a result of reading the article, a colleague and I, from New Westminster Secondary School, spent time in Oaxaca this summer working at the centre. It was an awesome experience, enriching and inspiring. We were very impressed with the work of the organization, which depends solely on volunteers and donations. Through the vision, hard work, and enthusiasm of Jodi Bauman (and her late husband) a giant step has been made toward breaking the cycle of poverty through education.

While we were there, we met half a dozen other B.C. teachers, a group of volunteers from the University of Edinburgh, and families from the U.S.A.

Bauman was amazed at the number of volunteers who came from B.C. She asked that I pass on her gratitude for the article and for all of those who volunteered as a result of it.

Thanks for making us aware of that wonderful organization and the chance to be a part of it.

Lori Dewinetz teaches at New Westminster Secondary School, New Westminster.

Apparently the “culture of entitlement” has more authority than Murray Coell thinks.

In politics, as in comedy—in British Columbia they often seem indistinguishable—timing is everything. And the timing of the Liberals in picking Thanksgiving to announce that they intend to reduce the province’s \$1.7-billion welfare costs by up to half showed either cruel bad taste or laughably poor judgment.

I suspect the latter. The Liberals’ performance increasingly suggests that the emperor is wearing no clothes. These folks keep reciting the mantra that government should be run like a business.

B.C.’s public employees take the smallest percentage of any provincial budget.

But what business rewards its managers with some of the highest wages in the country and pays a \$1.5-billion dividend to its shareholders while running itself \$6 billion into the hole? What business appoints the most bloated management team in its history, proposes to fire up to half the employees just after it’s launched a national hiring campaign, and then winds up dismembering the corporation because it can’t increase revenues? A totally incompetent business, that’s what.

The first ominous sign came when the Liberals’ brainy economic adviser David Bond warned that given the softening economy, deep tax cuts were not fiscally prudent.

Economic growth would not be sufficient to recover short-term revenue shortfalls, and the government would have to run deficits even larger than the worst of the NDP it once ridiculed for profligacy.

Apparently deluded that their majority had something to do with their genius rather than the stupidity of the NDP, the Liberals dumped Bond’s ideas and barged ahead with cuts even deeper than those delivered by Ontario Premier Mike Harris in his “Common Sense Revolution.”

The problem is that B.C., with its dependence on volatile commodity market cycles, is not Ontario, with its stable domestic manufacturing base. And the economic conditions at the beginning of 2001 were far from those of 1995.

Ontario’s tax cuts came at the beginning of a boom—precisely when tax cuts should be made.

B.C.’s cuts came when the economy was already signalling that it was headed for the tank—precisely when tax cuts most exacerbate revenue declines.

Now it doesn’t take rocket science to track the U.S. leading index. All it takes is a computer terminal and a few minutes visiting the U.S. Conference Board’s web site.

Yet even as the Liberals were ignoring Bond’s warnings, the U.S. leading index had been in decline for seven consecutive months. Job losses in the United States, which is a major B.C. market, were already climbing toward levels not seen for more than a decade before the terrorist attacks of September 11 blew a gaping hole in what was clearly a fragile economy.

Next, just as the ever-pragmatic U.S. President George Bush is rediscovering the value of Keynesian

economics and pouring \$40 billion U.S. into stimulating his sagging economy and our own federal government is telling us it is our patriotic duty to spend, spend, spend, B.C.’s Liberals announce they would like to get rid of up to half the public-service jobs in the province.

The last time I checked, B.C. and Ontario already employed the smallest number of provincial civil servants per capita—about 40% fewer than the average across Canada—and B.C.’s public employees take the smallest percentage of any provincial budget.

So the proposed downsizing isn’t about productivity or efficiency, it’s about gutting the quality of service provided to the public in order to cover the government’s financial mismanagement. You can bet that there are no plans to chop almost half the cabinet posts, with their six-figure salaries, as the size of the civil service is slashed.

Given the pall cast by the Liberals’ scorched-earth economic rhetoric, I don’t imagine too many of B.C.’s public servants will be doing their patriotic duty to stimulate the economy by purchasing a new car or spending much money in restaurants for the foreseeable future.

Worry and uncertainty have that effect on people’s spending patterns.

This kind of doom-and-gloom approach contributes to the downward spiral in the economy. I was out for dinner in Victoria last Saturday night at a restaurant that’s usually packed. At 8 p.m., my guest and I were the only ones in the place. The manager was waiting on tables, and the only other employee on duty was the chef.

Just before my lonely dining experience, the boneheads now

This kind of doom-and-gloom approach contributes to the downward spiral in the economy.

running the province were telling the thousands about to be laid off in the airline industry that there’s a plan to help them in B.C.—it’s called welfare. Of course, under Coell’s version of income assistance, if these unfortunate victims of the World Trade Center disaster don’t show that they’ve been making a reasonable effort to secure employment, their benefits will be discontinued.

It’s all very well to talk about moving welfare recipients into jobs, but where are those jobs going to come from?

Canada as a whole created 22,000 new jobs in September, and that was the first bright light following three consecutive months of job erosion. All the signals suggest that job losses will soon be back with a vengeance.

For the Liberals’ magnanimous new plan for moving the poor from income assistance and into employment to succeed, B.C.’s economy alone will have to generate 100,000 new jobs over the next couple of years.

Is anybody confident that’s likely to happen with a Liberal management plan that seems driven by Premier Gordon Campbell’s unthinking ideology rather than genuine common sense?

— shume@islandnet.com

Source: Reprinted with permission, *The Vancouver Sun*, October 13, 2001.

The Harris era: Was it good for you?

by Naomi Klein

For almost a year, I carried Premier Mike Harris’s \$200 tax cut in my wallet. Its edges frayed, and the ink began to smudge. I looked at it from time to time, then put it away.

Refuse to cash it—what does that prove? The money has already been taken out of public accounting. It’s not like my uncashed cheque was going to go to a high school teacher’s salary or to a homeless shelter.

Many people, confronting this dilemma, gave their tax cuts to charity, trying to plug some of the gaping holes in the social fabric left by Mr. Harris’s cuts.

But I decided to be more proactive: I gave the money to the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty, the most committed Harris-haters Ontario has to offer.

With health scares spreading, borders closing, and a U.S. recession deepening, what looked like common sense now looks plain reckless.

So there was a certain poetic justice to yesterday’s news: A militant anti-Harris demonstration, organized by OCAP, turned into a street celebration of Mr. Harris’s resignation. Victories are rare these days; they must be savoured.

I know, I know. Mike Harris wasn’t forced out, certainly not by OCAP. He chose to spend more time with his family. And yet there is no denying that he leaves at precisely the moment when his political career is on trial. It’s more than the mounting evidence of his involvement in the police shooting of Dudley George at Ipperwash Provincial Park. And it’s more than the embarrassment of having to testify about whether his government’s policies contributed to the deaths in the Walkerton water tragedy.

What is increasingly on trial is the blind faith that underpinned the “Common Sense Revolution.” With health scares spreading, borders closing, and a U.S. recession deepening, what looked like common sense now looks plain reckless.

Cutting our way into a recession

by Marc Lee

British Columbia’s economy has been hit hard in recent months—the U.S. trade actions on softwood lumber, a global economy grinding to a halt, and the economic aftermath of September 11. Those factors are affecting B.C. exporters, weakening consumer confidence, and driving up unem-

Mike Harris came to power not with a platform so much as

The crumbling infrastructure, the overstressed healthcare system, the uncollected garbage, the people on the streets, seemed, to many, to be a price worth paying for prosperity.

a doctrine, a hermetically sealed belief system about how economies work. He believed that he could make Ontario a Club-Med-style dream vacation for foreign investors—handing out tax cuts, gutting labour laws, eroding rent control, putting golf courses downtown.

Some regulations were dismantled; some ministries were simply cut back so dramatically that regulators could no longer do their jobs. To Mr. Harris, it was common sense that the public sphere was inefficient and bad for business, so school boards, hospitals, and municipalities were slashed and merged as if they were private companies and he was a godlike management consultant.

Our emergency rooms can’t handle flu season; can they handle the worst-case scenario?

Mike Harris did this because he believed that what was good for investors would be good for everyone—eventually. So religiously did he pursue his agenda that he came to see evidence that it wasn’t working as an unwelcome interruption. His casualties were quickly reconstituted as security issues—panhandling or squeegee problems to be cleaned up with tough new legislation—breeding precisely the kind of angry militancy seen at the OCAP demo.

Like all fanatics, Mr. Harris

was so in love with his beliefs that he treated his constituents as distractions. Tuning out “special interests”—teachers, nurses, students—was a testament to his faith. No wonder the only consensus about him is that he kept his promises.

The question, as Mr. Harris departs, is: Was he right? Ontario under Mike Harris was good for investors, but was it good for everyone?

During the economic boom—and before September 11—the answer very much depended on your perspective. Many people enjoyed tremendous wealth; there were signs of growth all around. The crumbling infrastructure, the overstressed healthcare system, the uncollected garbage, the people on the streets, seemed, to many, to be a price worth paying for

...if we’ve just been through the best of times, what’s in store for the worst?

prosperity. The *Globe’s* John Ibbitson says it is “foolish and unfair” to dwell on Mr. Harris’s messy recent past, that we should instead concentrate on happier times for the departing premier. But now is precisely the time to measure the Harris legacy. Our crumbling public infrastructure seems much more menacing with fears of bioterrorism all around. Our emergency rooms can’t handle flu season; can they handle the worst-case scenario?

In other words, if we’ve just been through the best of times, what’s in store for the worst? When the economy was soaring, it was only the people who fell through the cracks who found out that the safety net was really gone.

In the coming months, many more may find out exactly what Mr. Harris has traded away to make Ontario such a relaxing place for doing business.

Mike Harris isn’t sticking around to find out if his policies are about to send this province into a true crisis. I’m sure, to him, that seems like common sense.

Naomi Klein. Reprinted from *The Globe and Mail*, “Comment,” October 17, 2001.



ployment rates. Yet the provincial government has committed itself to deep spending cuts that will only make the situation worse, and that could push the B.C. economy into a full-blown recession.

If B.C. were to roll back the planned 2002 tax cuts, and the surprise tax cuts for the affluent in 2001, while putting this same money into new spending, it would have almost double the

economic impact of the tax cuts alone. Such an economic stimulus package would create 16,000 jobs and boost GDP by about \$1 billion.

Marc Lee is an economist in the B.C. office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

To read the full report go to: www.policyalternatives.ca/opinion79.html.

2001-02 Retirement planning seminars

All teachers age 40+ should plan to attend one of the retirement-planning seminars listed. There is no pre-registration, nor fee. Seminars are on Saturdays from 09:00 to 16:00. The agenda includes what retirement is, the Teachers' Pension Plan, legal issues, retirement experiences, pension calculations, and personal advice. Make sure to bring a calculator and your most recent pension statement. **Younger teachers are welcome.**

Date	Location
November 24 2001	Nanaimo, Coast Bastion Inn
December 1, 2001	Richmond, Best Western Richmond Inn
December 8, 2001	North Vancouver, North Shore Cont. Ed.
January 19, 2002	Coquitlam, Westwood Plateau G&C Club
January 26, 2002	Vancouver, Plaza 500
February 2, 2002	Burnaby, Radisson Hotel Burnaby
February 9, 2002	Delta, Town and Country Inn
February 16, 2002	Abbotsford, The Inn at King's Crossing
February 23, 2002	Langley, IWA Canada
March 2, 2002	Prince George, Coast Inn of the North
March 9, 2002	Vernon, Prestige Inn/Avonlea Conf. Centre
April 6, 2002	Kamloops, U. College of the Cariboo
April 13, 2002	Penticton, Penticton Lakeside Resort
April 20, 2002	Fort St. John, Northern Grand Hotel
April 27, 2002	Williams Lake, Overlander Hotel
May 4, 2002	Victoria, Victoria Conference Centre

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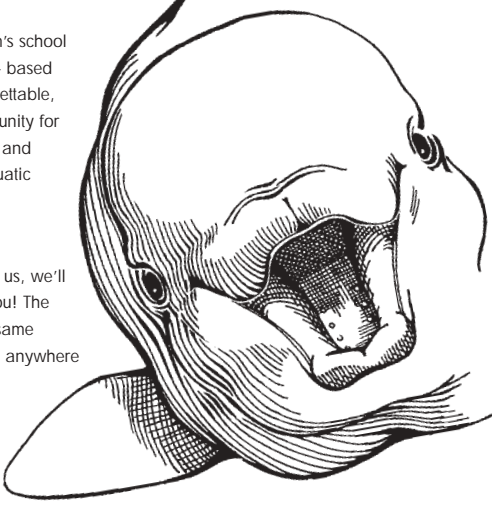

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Lori: My Daughter, Wrongfully Imprisoned in Peru
by Lori's mother Rhoda Berenson

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Project Overseas 2001

Uganda

by Sandra Holmes

When I accepted the job of team leader for the first Project Overseas project to Uganda in ten years, I wondered if I had the skills and the courage to lead a team of three other women to a country I had never visited. In Ottawa in the first week in July I met Dominique, Janice, and Melanie. Our ability to adapt to living in a foreign situation, deal with uncertainty, and work together as a strong team for the entire project was integral to the success of the project. Through workshops, facilitated by the CTF Project Overseas' staff, we began a month-long adventure. We landed at Entebbe Airport late at night and a taxi was waiting to take us to Kampala.

The next three weeks in Uganda went by in a blur of meeting people, establishing a



routine in our lives, and trying to understand the culture. We had been sent to teach primary methods in English, math, and science. In the Ugandan Teacher's Association officials I recognized colleagues dedicated in their work for children. They met us with the expectation that we Canadians could share some tools with them to ease their load. The Ugandan Teacher's Association (UTA) had been a leading professional association working to better children's education and improve conditions for teachers. But much of its good work had been washed away by strife in the country, economic difficulties, and lack of vigilance by the teachers as to the running of their affairs. Changes are under way. New teacher leaders correcting faults in the system. UTA is connecting and informing teachers of the benefits of once again joining as a union. A government initiative called Universal Primary Education gives all children the opportunity to attend primary school for free. The implementation of this basic concept has been a nightmare for teachers and children. I visited a variety of schools where the teachers were valiantly working to provide an education for the children. I walked among 102 children crowded into one classroom, barely able to discern the faces of those at the dim back of the room. Some children were sitting on mats on the floor; others were sitting on benches, so full that children overlapped shoulders in order to fit. I walked through a classroom that had sharp metal edges sticking out from the tin

walls, shards of glass in the window frames. Toilets were stand up holes. Lunch programs consisting of popcorn.

Other schools were in excellent condition by comparison. Children were served their morning porridge, and lunch programs consisted of beans, rice, and *matooke*. Some schools were day schools, and some had adequate boarding facilities. We were guests at a music, dance, and drama festival. Students in traditional garments danced enthusiastically to the rhythm of drums, and one class sang a beautiful traditional greeting to us. In all these varied classes there were children who, in their short lives, were dealing with the death of parents, siblings, or friends from HIV/Aids, who daily feared ebola, polio, and malaria. We were told that in the north of Uganda, children's lives are very precarious. We heard of the group of students and their teacher who were shot to death in a National Park while on a field trip in January. Many folk live in pro-

tected communities as guerilla warfare spreads terror on a daily basis and women and children who return to the fields to work are the most common victims of land mine explosions. Young children are stolen from their families and brainwashed into living in communities of guerilla fighters. Bombs are tossed into restaurants, and the struggles for life are everywhere.

The Universal Primary Education Policy, when implemented effectively, will provide these children some opportunities to live to their fullest potential. With the dedication of teachers like those who attended the Project Overseas workshops and the officials we met from the Ministry of Education, positive changes will continue to happen in Uganda.

The hope that those dedicated people working for education in that county have for their future will be rewarded as changes continue and children's lives are improved through education. Education is too important a right to allow any part of what we have attained slip away. The cost of ignorance is too dear, and the struggle to regain losses too difficult.

I am grateful to the BCTF and the CTF for providing this program and for choosing me to participate in it. I would encourage anyone who has the courage to look at the world from a different perspective to apply to be part of the project.

Sandra Holmes is a teacher on leave from SD 73 (Kamloops Thompson), working in SD 50 (Haida Qwaii/Queen Charlotte).



Rose Mnyenyembe and Mary-Leah DeZwart work on creating curriculum for a two-week training session for principals and head teachers.

Malawi

by Mary-Leah DeZwart

This was my second Project Overseas experience in Malawi, and I was prepared for my return to Lilongwe in July. I knew what the sweet smell of Africa would be like; I didn't have to worry about where we would be staying, what we would be eating, and how we would be treated. I also knew what we would not have: overhead projectors, computer access, chalkboard erasers, textbooks, and photocopying.

The Teachers' Union of Malawi officials were happy to see me and greeted me with big hugs and handshakes. The shy students sought me out and commented on our time together last year. It was almost like going home.

In 2000, I taught home economics to teachers already in the field who wanted to upgrade their qualifications to Malawi State Certificates of Education (Grade 12). We used the "cram for the exam" method, my co-tutor and I teaching everything that the students wanted to know about the examinations they would have to write. This year, I was very lucky to work with the leadership group—50 or so principals and head teachers sent by their individual districts to a two-week training session. We had one week with our Malawian counterparts, Rose Mnyenyembe and Moses Mwenye, in which to create the curriculum. My fellow Canadian, and British Columbian, Madunli Rajoo (Raj), won the hearts of the Malawians with his philosophical and passionate talks. I used some of my communication games to work on creating a sense of community and co-operation. Raj inspired everyone (including me) with his presentation on the meaning of leadership. I had one of the most revealing and educational discussions I have ever been privileged to lead on gender issues. An open forum on HIV/AIDS was handled frankly by a professor from one of the universities, and the discussion spilled over into our leadership session. I realized more than ever before that HIV/AIDS is an extremely complex issue, closely tied to health care, economics, culture, and traditional gender roles. In Malawi, up to 40% of the population over the age of 15 is thought to be HIV-positive. I can only imagine the potential effects on the already overburdened public school system, since many teachers are included in that percentage.

We saw firsthand how the Malawi Teachers' Union serves as a political force as well as a union. The opening ceremonies became a political forum as well as a ceremonial event in which one side (the union) and then the other side (the government) took turns at making their demands for improvement.

While it is hard to translate salaries directly, I wonder how many Canadian principals would work for the equivalent of \$1 extra per month above their regular salary of \$120 for the privilege of being headmaster or headmistress as in Malawi? How many Canadian teachers would continue teaching if they had not been paid for three months? The spirit and determination of our Malawian counterparts is against all odds.

As the only returning member on the Malawi team, I realized how much I had learned in my previous project and how fortunate I was to be able to go again. This might not have made me more patient as I watched others struggle with the currency, the vendors, the health worries, and the etiquette of photography. We all attended the same orientation session in Ottawa, but it is still difficult to prepare for living with seven strangers with whom your only commonality is that you are all teachers. However, it was wonderful to be on a team with Raj, whose roots in South Africa helped us all, and with our team leader, Jean-Paul Gaboury, who had an unfailing sense of humour and good will.

I can't pinpoint the moment I realized that I want to contribute to education in a more meaningful way than Project Overseas can possibly offer. It could have been when I talked with Rose about the school she has started in a very poor area in Northern Malawi. When she and her husband retired from teaching a few years ago, they started the school. Originally intended for girls, it opened to boys when it became apparent that they were in just as great need. Maybe it was when I decided to sponsor a student in Rose's school instead of buy souvenirs. At any rate, I want to return to Malawi for three months in the future and volunteer at Hillside Secondary School in Chitipa, Northern Malawi, the school started by Rose and her husband. Even though I will have to pay my own flight and expenses, I will be forever grateful that Project Overseas opened the door for me.

One of the most popular giveaway items at the Leadership Seminar was a BCTF badge: "Teachers Make a Difference." Teachers in Malawi, and Canada too, need that reassurance. Project Overseas is one way to create links between the "haves" and the "have-nots" in education. If you have thought of applying for Project Overseas, please do so. Malawi is one of 12 countries aligned with the Canadian Teachers' Federation Project Overseas. If you aren't free to contribute a summer to Project Overseas, then please support it in other ways through your union activities.

Mary Leah DeZwart,
mldz@interchange.ubc.ca.