INTERCAMBIO—SOCIAL JUSTICE UNION INTERNATIONALISM IN THE B.C. TEACHERS’ FEDERATION

By

LARRY MORRIS KUEHN

B.A., Reed College, 1966
M.A.T., Reed College, 1968

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Abstract

The British Columbia Teachers' Federation has a long history of internationalism reaching back to the 1920s, soon after it was formed as an organization. The strategies and approaches to international work have evolved over the decades, reflecting changes in social conditions and the dominant ideas in the organization about the nature of unionism.

The strategy that has framed the work over the past quarter century is characterized as intercambio. This is taken from the Spanish word meaning exchange or interchange. Intercambio is aimed in both its intentions and activities to reflect solidarity, mutuality and reciprocity in relationships between the BCTF and the unions in with which the BCTF works.

Although elements of interchange have characterized BCTF internationalism from the beginning, the forms and depth of exchange by the end of the 20th Century were much more developed. These changes took place not so much by following a theory as by learning from the practice of international work.

Not all international experiences moved in the direction of intercambio. Ideological competition during the Cold War overwhelmed reciprocity and brought what has been called "union imperialism" as a common feature to the broader international labour scene and international teacher union organizations. This competition affected international teacher union relations, including the international teacher organization to which the BCTF was affiliated through the Canadian Teachers' Federation.

With the exception of this Cold War interlude, the evolution toward an intercambio strategy for the BCTF took place in three phases. The first was a post-World War I anti-war internationalism that brought the idea of peaceful relations among countries and peoples to both organizations and classrooms.

The second began in the 1960s with the youthful idealism of that period being expressed through what might be called development solidarity with then recently post-colonial societies. The personal experiences and rewards of making a contribution deepened the commitments of teachers to internationalism.

The third phase has been one of developing a strategy of intercambio. This has involved building structural relationships between unions on both a bi-lateral basis and in coalitions of unions.

The meaning of intercambio as a strategy is explicated further through the description of specific programs and activities. The feminist and gender equity commitments in B.C. carried over to the support of women's programs with Latin American unions. Commitments to anti-racism and equity both at home and internationally are reflected in union training projects in South Africa, Namibia and Cuba. Intercambio in the context of globalization and trade agreements is explored through looking at transnational coalitions in the Americas, the Tri-national Coalition in Defense of Public Education and the IDEA Network.

Finally, some personal experiences are described to give insight into my own participation in shaping and being shaped by the BCTF's intercambio internationalism.
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The members of the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation deserve all the credit for the support that they have provided for nearly ninety years for their union to be an active participant internationally. This has been a reflection of the breadth of thinking of generations of leaders of the union and recognition by many teachers that we must be active global citizens. Hundreds of B.C. teachers have personally engaged in supporting teacher colleagues well beyond our schools and borders. It has been a privilege to be able to make a personal contribution to this work of the union and to have an opportunity to tell others about it through this document.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This is the story of the development and practice of the internationalism of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF). More specifically, it is an account of the evolution of the underlying concept of BCTF internationalism into what is described in this work as “intercambio.” *Intercambio* is a strategy for internationalism that is based on the values of solidarity, social justice and reciprocity.

*Intercambio* is a Spanish word that means “exchange, interchange,” according to the Collins Spanish-English dictionary (Brown, 1970, p. 110). Exchange and interchange captures the concept and intention on which the International Solidarity Program of the BCTF is built. *Intercambio* suggests a relationship of equals, a key element of social justice. That this descriptor is in Spanish is particularly appropriate for an analysis of the BCTF program, since much of the work of the program is with teacher unions in Latin America. *Intercambio* is, like democracy, an objective that can only be defined in its practice. It is a strategy and a process as much as an objective.

BCTF policy describes the purpose of the International Solidarity program as seeking to “build partnerships with teacher organizations” and to “foster equality, mutual respect and reciprocal growth” (BCTF, 2005). This reflects an attempt—with some success and achievements, I will argue—to make the means of working toward social justice consistent with the ends of achieving the goal of a more equitable and just world. The successes of the program flow from building relationships over an extended time, relationships based on respect and mutuality—*intercambio*—and that work toward that elusive ideal of equality.
BCTF Internationalism Evolves into *Intercambio*

Internationalism has been an element of the programs and practices of the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation from its earliest years. However, the nature of that internationalism has evolved substantially over nine decades of the existence of the organization. This evolution of the nature and practice of BCTF internationalism has been a function of the changing social and political context, as well as the social commitments of activists who have provided leadership.

While *intercambio* characterizes the current strategy of internationalism, this has not always been its nature. In its earliest periods, in the 1920s and 1930s, it was greatly influenced by the progressivism that was an amalgam of social responsibility, paternalism and liberal hope for war to be replaced by international dialogue. Then in the first two post-World War II decades, the Cold War shaped internationalism, with both Communist and anti-Communist sides engaged in what has been characterized as labour imperialism. Genuine inter-cultural experiences were overshadowed by surreptitious financing of international activities. “Peace” became a subversive activity and subject to informer surveillance, including RCMP surveillance of the BCTF.

The evolution of BCTF internationalism to *intercambio* really began to develop in the 1960s. The ethos of the social movements of that decade was brought into the union with the many new teachers who joined the rapidly expanding education system from universities rich with political ferment.

Inequalities on an international basis were addressed even before the focus on overcoming inequality within Canadian society. Inequities between industrialized countries and countries newly emerging from colonial status were recognized by BCTF members in the early 1960s. Teachers felt that they had something to share with other
teachers and that feeling was translated into a program of offering in-service training in a number of less developed countries. The contemporary period of globalization, with its global inequalities, has provided a further reason for active social justice internationalism.

**Intercambio is one expression of social justice unionism**

“Social justice” as a concept reflected in union programs has itself gone through a developmental process. Since the 1970s in particular, it has focused on bringing into the mainstream groups that have been socially and politically marginalized. Union policies and programs were developed with the aim of contributing to overcoming that marginalization and producing greater equity. Building from this foundation, *intercambio* internationalism developed in the 1970s and 1980s in conjunction with the social justice programs of the BCTF.

The initial focus of social justice starting in 1970 was on gender, first with a Task Force on the Status of Women, then with a Status of Women program aimed at bringing women into the mainstream of leadership in the union and reshaping the public schools to support equity for female students. The creation in the mid-1970s of the program against racism was aimed at overcoming discrimination and exclusion based on ethnicity. The BCTF’s gender program led directly to international programs focused on both opening the union to women as leaders and on dealing with sexism within the curriculum and practices of the school. The program against racism likewise engendered a focus on Southern Africa and the struggle against apartheid.

Equity was the dominant theme in the new directions of the BCTF—gender equity, anti-racism and, to a lesser degree, overcoming the inequities of social class.
Idealism about the role that education could play in producing societies with more equity was a driver for BCTF programs both at home and internationally.

Three decades after social justice became a formal element of the programs of the BCTF, the 2004 Annual General Meeting added a new clause to the statement of “Purposes” to the BCTF Constitution:

14. To continue to develop programs of social justice, and to provide international assistance to educational organizations (BCTF, 2004).

The incorporation of these elements together into the formal mandate of the organization reflects a substantial consensus among its members that these are appropriately the purview of the union and that social justice and internationalism should be linked.

This thesis outlines the development of the internationalism of the BCTF and its evolution to the intercambio strategy that characterizes the international work over the past three decades. The thesis also links the external social and political environment in which the members and the leadership operate to the particular forms of BCTF internationalism as they have changed and evolved over the nine decades of the life of the B.C. Teachers' Federation.

Some of this internationalism can be seen as an ordinary aspect of the work of any union as characterized by the slogan, borrowed from J.S. Woodsworth and used by the B.C. Federation of Labour, “What we desire for ourselves, we wish for all” (BC Federation of Labour, 2005). Other aspects of the BCTF's internationalism are extraordinary in their directions and scope when compared to the practice of many other unions.

The specific form of BCTF international programs has been shaped by the social movements of the particular time. In the 1920s and 1930s, this was the dream of ending
wars through internationalism. In the 1950s, efforts were aimed at building person-to-
person connections through exchanges across the Cold War divide. In the post-colonial
period, it took the form of offering in-service training to assist in the development of the
education systems of countries recently emerged from colonial status. In the 1970s and
1980s, the peace movement, feminism, and anti-racism and civil rights campaigns shaped
not only programs at home, but the nature of internationalist projects. In the 1990s and
beyond, the focus has been on playing a role in the counter-globalization opposition to
neo-liberal agendas for globalization.

Leadership and Organization Move toward Social Justice

Values and vision are critical to leadership if it is to have transformative impact.
Given the inequalities in the world, achieving any degree of social justice inherently
requires some transformative impact. One role of leadership is to help define and
popularize values and to articulate a vision of what a better circumstance might look
like. However, values are seldom translated into change without other key aspects—a
change strategy and an organizational structure that pursues that strategy with some
resources and continuity. A leader needs to conceptualize a change strategy and be able
to communicate it to the people who must be involved if it is to be a success, including
those who can allocate the resources and those who need to participate in the activities.

The values part is fairly easy in the context of the BCTF, at least today. Although
not espoused by every member, social justice as a value is entrenched in the policies and
structure of the union and in the expressions of the political leaders of the organization.
Many leaders over several decades have contributed to making social justice a core value
of the organization, albeit with focus on gender and ethnicity, not class.
Translating those values into a structure and effective action is much more of a challenge. Part of the challenge is in designing and initiating organizational structures and strategies. Beyond that, there is the challenge of providing leadership in a style that complements and promotes social justice and intercambio. A style that is too controlling and directive can itself be an impediment to the equity that is the aim of the program or activity.

In the discussion of the various elements of the BCTF International Solidarity Program over time, I will look at the leadership role of those most integrally involved in a particular program. Through reflection on my own practice in a leadership position in the International Solidarity Program, I will argue that it is possible to work in ways that lessen the imbalance of power inherent in having greater resources than those people one is working with. I will argue, in particular, that social context and committed leadership, in combination, have made it possible to foster an intercambio strategy of internationalism as an element of social justice unionism.

**Challenges to Social Justice Internationalism**

The potential challenges for a union working on an international scale are many and this thesis attempts to analyze those faced by the BCTF in a realistic and candid manner, while demonstrating how they have been addressed up to now and how they might be handled in the future. The conditions of any particular time can frame and limit the perceptions of spaces for action. The exchange between groups can be threatened, for example, by inequities in access to resources. Accepting Canadian government matching funds for projects can have an undue influence on what projects are supported. Working in different languages can lead to misunderstanding or at least a limited mutual
understanding. Cultural barriers can inhibit effective communication about the work and how it is carried out. Working through intermediary international NGOs (Non-governmental Organizations) may limit the partnership and reciprocity between unions. Even if all these possible impediments are overcome, in the face of the enormity of the problems, these projects may seem to have too little impact to be worth the effort. With the reality of problems faced by teachers at home, members of the union may want to retreat to an isolationism that says that the union should put all its resources into fixing their immediate local situation, rather than supporting unions internationally that are involved in similar struggles on behalf of their members.

Despite these possible challenges, the BCTF program has not only continued, but has expanded in scope over time. To explore the objectives, challenges and successes of the BCTF international programs over more than three-quarters of a century, this project will provide an overview of BCTF internationalism throughout its history and case studies that are designed to illustrate not only the scope of these initiatives, but how these challenges are faced. The case studies do not constitute all of the international work of the BCTF, but do provide both historical and current examples that characterize this work. Each of the case studies includes several elements: a description of the program, its objectives and how it fits into the BCTF's work at home in B.C., as well as its developing internationalism; challenges and achievements of the program; the role of leadership in developing and carrying out the program; and what has been learned that may enhance future work.
The Framework of This Project

The thesis argues through the next six chapters that the specific form of internationalism in different periods reflected the external social and political environment as well as the values and commitments of the members and leaders of the organization. Further, it looks at how specific leaders in each era have translated these values into strategies and concrete programs to pursue internationalism. In particular, it shows the development and practice of an intercambio strategy through an examination of some of the specific programs as they have been carried out.

As argued in recent work on the revitalization of the labour movement, "strategies matter" (Turner, 2005). The strategy adopted contributes to more or less democracy and more or less reciprocity and mutual support, whether within the union or in its external relationships. Understanding the strategy, in this case intercambio, is important in understanding the results.

Chapter 2 From Trade Union Imperialism to Intercambio.

This chapter describes the context of labour internationalism and that of teacher union internationalism, in particular. It examines the way that the Cold War generated a kind of union imperialism, antithetical to the concept of intercambio, and how the BCTF and its activists who were interested in international activities were inadvertently caught up in the covert activities that were a part of the Cold War. However, social justice values, not enthusiasm for union imperialism, motivated these activists. An understanding of this negative way of unions doing international work has helped to define the qualities that a program should have if it is to be respectful and is to contribute to a social justice agenda.
Chapter 3  Three Eras of BCTF Internationalism: Progressivism, Solidarity Development and \textit{Intercambio}.

This chapter begins only a few years after the formation of the BCTF, with a form of internationalism, focused on world peace, pursued particularly by Harry Charlesworth, the first General Secretary of the BCTF. It then moves to the 1960s and the engagement of the BCTF, and the Canadian Teachers’ Federation, in development assistance, working in countries developing their national education systems in a post-colonial period. Finally, it examines the evolution of the BCTF International Solidarity Program over the past quarter century. It looks at the commitment of the organization to long-term funding, the development of a structure to utilize these resources and the development of an \textit{intercambio} strategy to carrying out the work.

Chapter 4  “Equality is not a question of luck”—Gender Programs in Latin America.

The most extensive and long-lasting BCTF international projects are women’s programs in Latin America. Their origins are rooted in the Status of Women program of the BCTF. However, their development has been framed and carried out by women teachers in Central America and the Andean region of South America. The initial stages of the programs followed a common pattern of creating an institutional structure within a union and offering training that increased the skills, knowledge and confidence for women to participate in their union. Over time, some of the programs have developed further, with the formation of a “pedagogy of gender.” It is from these programs, in particular, that the label and the concept of \textit{intercambio} emerged.

Chapter 5  \textit{Intercambio}—Teacher-to-teacher as well as Union-to-Union

The \textit{intercambio} approach has developed direct teacher-to-teacher work, but always carried out on the basis of the teachers’ unions working together. The oldest of
these programs grew out of the desire of some B.C. teachers to contribute to the
development of the education systems of countries emerging from colonial status. It
further developed in joining the world-wide opposition to the apartheid system in South
Africa through working with teachers in Namibia and South Africa, as the apartheid
system crumbled. Work in Southern Africa was premised on the belief that effective
teacher unions could contribute a great deal to overcoming the legacy of racism in these
countries. The most extensive teacher-to-teacher projects have been with teachers and
the union in Cuba, as it has faced the challenge of the end of East Bloc support and the
more than forty years of isolation through the U.S. embargo. The degree of success has
been quite different in each case and reflection on this provides an insight into the many
complexities of international work.

Chapter 6  Building Counter-Globalization Networks.

*Intercambio* is central to work in responding to globalization. The global patterns
as they are being played out in education are making “the local” more similar to teachers
where ever they work. Exchange and interchange, cross-national research and action, are
all essential in a globalized reality. The Tri-national Coalition in Defense of Public
Education and the IDEA Network (Initiative for Democratic Education in the Americas)
were initiated in response to the need for better communication and more connectedness
in the context of trade agreements and globalization. Three trade agreements—the North
American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the proposed Free Trade Area of the
Americas (FTAA) and the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)—have
provided the impetus for the Tri-national Coalition and the IDEA Network. This chapter
examines both successes and limitations in this work.
Chapter 7  Intercambio at work—reflection on my practice

The BCTF International Solidarity Program has been a part of my work—both as a part of my job and as my personal passion in political work—for much of the past twenty-five years. Writing this dissertation has provided a reason and a framework for reflecting on that work. This has been a rewarding process personally, but also should help in providing clarity to my ongoing work on the program and some guideposts for those who pick up the work along the way. This chapter is a record of some of the experiences that shaped my perspective on internationalism and the *intercambio* approach to my practice.

Appendices.

A number of appendices are included as an aid to understanding the International Solidarity Program of the BCTF and elements of this project, as well as to provide a record of the participation of many BCTF activists in elements of the International Solidarity Program.

A. Acronyms used in this work.
B. The overview description of the BCTF International Solidarity Program from the BCTF web site.
C. A list of the BCTF international solidarity projects.
D. A list of members of the International Solidarity Committee since it was first created.
E. The Olympia declaration on North American teacher solidarity.
F. The IDEA Network strategy from “Responding to Neo-liberal Globalization in the Americas”

Significance of the Study

The intent of this work is to provide both a record of efforts to build productive partnerships and a critical analysis of the possibilities of union-based, social justice
internationalism. It is intended to assist in grounding the future international work of the BCTF in the values and projects of its history, providing the strategic frame of *intercambio* for how those values might be applied to new situations and new challenges. Two people—Leona Dolan as Coordinator and myself as Director—have developed and coordinated the program through its contemporary period of growth and development over more than fifteen years. Leona Dolan retired in June of 2005 and I am approaching retirement. The International Solidarity Program is firmly established as a part of the BCTF and others will need to take up the work over the coming years. This document is intended to be of assistance in helping others build on the program as they take over responsibility for it.

The study may be of use to other Canadian teachers as well. The Canadian Teachers’ Federation and its affiliated unions carry out other international development programs. The philosophical bases of these programs have not always been congruent with that of the BCTF. An explicit detailing of the BCTF programs may be of use to the CTF and to other unions in thinking about their own strategies for engaging internationally in this age of globalization. It is also aimed at contributing to the understanding of a growing movement of social justice internationalism in the Canadian labour movement that is exemplified by the international programs of the CAW, Steelworkers and CUPE.

This work is particularly aimed at BCTF members who have an interest in the international work that they have supported through their organization for several decades and who want a deeper understanding of the work carried out in their name and with their resources.
There is never only one way to carry out work or only one possible strategy. Choices are made from among the many possibilities. This study makes explicit some of the choices and the reasons for adopting particular approaches in the past—again, to inform the future choices to be made by the members who make these decisions for the BCTF.
CHAPTER TWO: FROM TRADE UNION IMPERIALISM TO INTERCAMBIO

Calls for international solidarity are common in the history of trade unionism, but have often been overwhelmed by national and ideological interests. In particular, the Cold War of the last half of the 20th century produced more of what has been called "trade union imperialism" than solidarity, with both West and East blocs using unions as a part of the international competition between competing systems. Intercambio as exchange and reciprocity did not flourish in this context. This chapter helps to define intercambio by looking at its opposite.

Two new factors at the end of the 20th century have radically changed the environment for union internationalism, opening space for the evolution of intercambio, rather than imperialism. One of these is the collapse of the communist bloc, which removed a rationale for division that has weakened the labour movement for decades. The end of the Cold War has opened opportunities for a less ideological and imperialist approach to internationalism. Additionally, globalization has produced the potential for recognition of mutual interest across national boundaries, seeing that improved conditions for workers in other countries is key to maintaining or improving conditions in all countries. If these opportunities are taken advantage of, there will be a more respectful, cooperative and mutual approach to union internationalism.

This chapter examines some of the history of labour internationalism and teacher union internationalism, including particularly the Cold War competition. We see how the international work of the BCTF, as well as that of the Canadian Teachers’ Federation, was unintentionally caught up in the machinations of the Cold War. Understanding
something of the Cold War climate and how it affected internationalism helps to see
intercambio as an alternative, and its value and necessity.

Labour Internationalism: Solidarity and Division

Labour internationalism has waxed and waned over the past century and a half. Teacher union internationalism as a subset of labour internationalism has a history over a more limited time period, reflecting the fact that teacher unions are basically institutions of the 20th Century, and not before.

The history of labour internationalism is one of alternating periods of solidarity and fragmentation of interests and action. The development of industrial labour in Europe in the 19th Century provided the base for both unions and internationalism. The motivation for this internationalism was captured in an address from British to French workers in 1863: “A fraternity of peoples is highly necessary for the cause of labour...not to allow our employers to play us off one against the other and so drag us down to the lowest possible condition” (cited in Van der Linder, 1988, p. 331). This sentiment was translated into an organization when the International Working Men’s Association was formed in 1864. However, this first International dissolved with acrimony in 1876, having been torn apart by personal and political differences, many centred around the work of a key founder of the International, Karl Marx (Joll, 1966).

The Second International, formed in 1889, brought together worker-based, socialist parties, primarily from Europe. In theory, workers in one country saw a common interest with workers in other countries, a class identification that reached across national boundaries. However, the pressures to identify with nation over class led to the eventual demise of the Second International with the outbreak of World War I. In
1914, many workers rushed to sign up for the military of their country, rather than undertaking the international strike to stop war that had been the rhetoric of class-based internationalism (Munck, 2002).

The 1920s and 1930s saw the formation of the conflicting forces in labour internationalism that would play out for most of the rest of the 20th Century and have an impact on the nature of teacher union internationalism. The Third International was formed by Communist parties, which created in 1924 a labour arm called the Red International of Labour Unions. The Communist-dominated unions in all countries had an internationalist philosophy and supported anti-colonial liberation; however, they also followed directives that subordinated their interests to those of the USSR.

During the 1930s, in both the U.S. and Canada, organizers who were members of the Communist Party—although not necessarily openly—played a key role in creating new industrial unions. In British Columbia, the most important of these new unions was the IWA, which became the major union in the forest industry. An alternative approach to the communist call for change by revolution was a reformist strategy, associated with a social democratic philosophy and electoral action. Unionists with this philosophy were also at work during that period, and were often allied with the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), the predecessor to the New Democratic Party. Because they supported an approach to change through electoral processes, which are based within a nation, and less focused on class as the central political element, they had a less internationalist position.

These conflicting perspectives were present among the leadership of the BCTF in the 1930s. Some of the activists in the BCTF, including John Sutherland, who served as
BCTF president in 1939-1940, were influenced by the political and organizing philosophies of the IWA organizers and joined the Communist Party. The conflicting views were obvious when, even as Sutherland took office as BCTF president, the editor of the B.C. Teacher ran an article on “How to Forestall a Communistic Revolution” by the Dean of Columbia University’s Teachers College (Russell, 1939). A later BCTF president (and mayor of Vancouver for a time), Tom Alsbury, was active in the post-war period working with the “white bloc” in the IWA that expelled communists, many of whom had been key in organizing the union, from the leadership of the IWA.

The war to stop fascism brought together an alliance of the countries in the West with the Soviet Union. This muted, although it did not banish, the difference in strategies between communist and social democratic or liberal leaders. Because of this period of relative unity of East and West, after the end of World War II it appeared that it might be possible to develop a single labour international that was a big tent that included unions based on different political philosophies. The formation in 1945 of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) seemed to signal a unity between communist and non-communist unions. However, a split in the WFTU occurred over the U.S. Marshall Plan to rebuild Europe. One of the key aims of the Marshall Plan was a capitalist approach to economic reconstruction that would reduce the chance of communist parties winning elections and forming governments in the war-ravaged economies of Europe. Citing the WFTU opposition to the Marshall Plan, the British and U.S. unions left WFTU and led the creation of the anti-communist International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) in 1949 (Munck, 2002). The WFTU continued to exist, but primarily with unions with communist leadership and a focus on support for the Soviet Union.
Struggles between these two conceptions of the role and political alliances of unions consumed a significant amount of labour's organizational energy for most of the rest of the 20th century. These resources might have been more productively used in making gains for workers and in influencing the managing of the private and public sector, or in organizing workers who did not belong to unions.

The amount of attention to these Cold War battles may have affected the relationship of the BCTF to the rest of the labour movement in Canada. The BCTF had affiliated in 1944 with the Trades and Labour Congress (TLC), the first of the Canadian teacher unions to formally affiliate with labour. At the time there were two competing labour centrals, the TLC and the Canadian Congress of Labour. The TLC was a part of the ICFTU when it was formed in 1949. The BCTF remained a member of the TLC until 1956. However, in a close vote at the Annual General Meeting that year, it opted not to affiliate with the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), the new organization created by a merger of the Trades and Labour Congress and the Canadian Congress of Labour.

The reports in the B.C. Teacher from the BCTF delegates who attended the conventions of the TLC dealt almost entirely with the various attempts to expel labour leaders accused of being communists and unions that were accused of being communist-dominated. Although the decision not to join the newly merged Canadian Labour Congress reflected the ongoing “profession or union” debate (Philips, 1967), the significant focus on Cold War politics did not generate much sense of a positive advantage to being affiliated to the labour movement.
Teacher Union Internationalism

This broader discussion of labour internationalism is relevant because it frames the sixty years of teacher union internationalism after World War II. Teacher unions generally did not come into their own until the last half of the 20th Century. Certainly some existed from early in the century, with, for example, the BCTF having its founding meeting in 1916, and teacher organizations in other Canadian provinces were also formed in that same era. However, it was the tremendous growth in public education throughout the Western countries in the period after World War II that helped make teacher unions a significant force. Larger and larger portions of public expenditure were put into education as the expectation of how long children would stay in school increased over the years. Many teacher organizations, like other public sector unions, gained the right to bargain and legal provisions for strikes in the 1960s and 1970s, clearly making them unions, although B.C. teachers did not gain the right to strike until 1987.

Teacher organizations have always had a conflicting self-conception. They are seen by their members as a means of improving the conditions of work, job security and pay. At the same time, they see themselves as having professional interests in the quality of educational service and in influencing the policies that define the goals of education and the practice to achieve those. Some teacher organizations try explicitly to embrace both, calling themselves a “union of professionals”—including unions as different as the BCTF, the American Federation of Teachers and the South African Democratic Teachers’ Union. This duality of self-conception between union and profession further complicates the picture of teacher union internationalism.
Division Characterized Post-war Teacher Internationalism

After the war ended in 1945, efforts were made to create international education organizations in the new context. An attempt to restart the pre-war World Federation of Education Associations did not get off the ground. Instead, the combination of Cold War politics and the differing conceptions of the nature of teacher organizations ended up producing an international teacher movement fragmented into three international organizations: the World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession (WCOTP), the International Federation of Free Teacher Unions (IFFTU), and the World Confederation of Teachers (WCT).

The World Confederation of Teacher Unions was made up of teacher organizations that had an organic relationship to a political party. In many cases, these were unions with a direct link to the Communist Party of a particular country. In the case of countries with a Communist government, the union, state and party were integrally related. In some countries without a Communist government, a union with a close relationship to the Communist Party would affiliate to the WCT.

The IFFTU unions had two particular characteristics. One was that they considered themselves to be trade unions, and most were affiliated to a national trade union central. The other was that they came down on the other side of the Cold War from the WCT. A dominant union in IFFTU was the American Federation of Teachers, led for many years by Albert Shanker. Shanker held a very strong anti-communist view and the AFT was widely believed to carry out international programs that were aimed at influencing unions to support the U.S. position in the Cold War conflicts. The IFFTU was affiliated with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), the anti-Communist international trade union organization.
The WCOTP filled a third space in the international teacher union firmament. It would not accept as members unions that were integrally a part of a political party and/or government—its requirement was for independent organizations. It did not exclude organizations that were affiliated with trade union centrals, but that affiliation was not a requirement. Its largest and most influential union was the NEA (National Education Association), which was not affiliated with the AFL-CIO in the U.S., and not a member of ICFTU. The Canadian Teachers’ Federation was closely allied with the NEA and was also not affiliated with the rest of the labour movement in Canada. On the other hand, significant participants in the WCOTP, particularly in its international development work, were the unions from northern Europe—Sweden, Finland, Norway and Denmark. These unions were part of a social democratic tradition that incorporated labour in tri-partite (business, labour, government) approaches to developing a consensus about salaries and government expenditures, in contrast to the adversarial type of labour relations of the U.S. and Canada. The WCOTP had a regulation that allowed it to recognize only one teacher union in any particular country, despite the situation that was common in many countries of multiple teacher unions. However, in general the WCOTP was probably the broadest in the range of teacher unions that could and did belong, both those with trade union and/or professional orientations.

BCTF leaders played an active role as participants in the WCOTP through the CTF, attending the international congresses. The BCTF hosted the WCOTP congress in Vancouver in 1967. It also sponsored an international seminar on Peace Education in 1986, which brought all the WCOTP delegates for this post-congress event to Vancouver from Regina, Saskatchewan, the site of the congress that year. Wes Janzen, a former
BCTF and CTF president, was on its executive in 1966-67. Another BCTF president, Jim Killeen, after serving as Canadian Teachers’ Federation president, was elected to the WCOTP executive and then as its president for 1982 to 1984.

The end of the Cold War circa 1989 assisted in reducing the ideological competition and division between international teacher organizations. The impact of globalization created a sense of urgency for unions to work together, and not compete. In 1991 the WCOTP merged with the IFFTU to form Education International. EI is now the largest of the International Trade Federations (recently renamed “Global Unions”), the umbrella groups that include most of the unions in a particular sector. With a further merger with the World Confederation of Teachers in 2004, the EI is now the single teacher union international. The EI as of 2006 has 338 affiliated unions and over 29 million members (EI, 2006).

Through the CTF, the BCTF has been an active participant in the EI. A former BCTF executive member and CTF president, Jan Eastman, served a term as a regional representative on the EI executive and as of 2006 serves as Deputy Secretary-General. The BCTF’s communications officer, Nancy Knickerbocker, was appointed in 2006 to fill that role at the Education International headquarters in Brussels. In addition, the BCTF has a close relationship with the president of Education International, Thulas Nxesi from the South African Democratic Teachers’ Union (SADTU). Thulas spent three months with the BCTF studying the operations of the union just before taking office as General Secretary of SADTU in 1994, when the previous secretary general was elected to parliament in South Africa’s first post-apartheid election.
Trade Union Imperialism

Although it would be nice to believe otherwise, not all internationalism is based on altruism. The self-interest side of internationalism showed up both in the 1930s and in the post-World War II era, in what Thompson and Larson describe as “trade-union imperialism” (Thompson and Larson, 1978) and Scipes as “labor imperialism” (Scipes, 2005). Internationalism in this context became first a protection for colonialism and then a Cold War battle for allegiances carried out through the international activities of the U.S. unions, in particular.

During the colonial period in the 1930s, British trade unionists from the textile unions of Lancashire helped colleagues in India build strong unions. At least part of their motive was a fear that low wages would mean that prices of textiles would be undercut by production in India and cost jobs in the industry in Britain—a common theme in the later era of globalization. In Africa in the 1940s, trade unionists were sent by the British state “to the colonies where they kept a close watch over the development of unionism. Their major power lay in their ability to advise the local colonial administrators on which unionists and unions were to be recognized” (Busch; 1983, p. 87 in Munck, 2002, p. 141).

This type of intervention was not limited to the British. The AFL-CIO of the U.S. played the central role in trade union imperialism in the 1950s through the 1980s. The AFL-CIO’s American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD) was accused of being a vehicle used by the CIA to funnel funds to union leaders who would be favorable to U.S. interests. Munck (2002) says “it is a matter of record that the AIFLD promoted coups in Brazil and Chile and subverted legitimate governments elsewhere. Its education and training programs often weakened Third World unions” (p. 143). Waterman claims that the U.S. labour federation was “known internationally as the AFL-CIO-CIA”
Albert Shanker and the American Federation of Teachers were active in the AIFLD, which was exposed as fronting for the CIA by Philip Agee, a former CIA agent (Furr, 1982).

In 1983, the Reagan administration created the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), particularly aimed at supporting opposition to Fidel Castro. One of the four principal recipients of funding from the NED was the American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS), which replaced the AIFLD. Albert Shanker was a member of the board of the NED and ACILS. Shanker, probably accurately, was particularly identified by left critics as playing a key role in U.S. intervention in unions in the countries of the South. His influence went well beyond what flowed from him being the president of the smaller of the two U.S. teacher unions. He played a very influential role in the broader labour movement as an officer of the AFL-CIO, the chair of the AFL-CIO International Affairs Committee, as well as president of the International Federation of Free Teacher Unions (IFFTU), the teacher union affiliate of the ICFTU. The Special Issue of the AFT magazine, the American Teacher, published after Shanker’s death in 1997, was explicit about his politics: “A staunch anti-Communist, Shanker refused to participate in exchange visits with unions in other countries that essentially were controlled by their governments” (American Teacher, 1997). The article, like Shanker, identified anti-Communism and union democracy as integrally linked, ignoring the top-down domination of the AFT as a questionable form of democracy from at least some definitions of union democracy. “Unions abroad looked to the U.S. labor movement—and frequently Al Shanker—as a model for union democracy and human rights,” the American Teacher claimed (American Teacher, 1997). Accusations that AFT programs
were funded by the CIA were denied by Shanker, who contended that the funds came through AID, the U.S. international development agency.

The CIA Funds the WCOTP

The international teacher body that the BCTF belonged to through the Canadian Teachers' Federation was the World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession (WCOTP). As mentioned earlier, the dominant organization in the WCOTP was the larger U.S. teacher union, the National Education Association (NEA). The NEA was not affiliated with the labour movement in the U.S., and the WCOTP was not affiliated with any of the international trade union centres. The office of the WCOTP for its first twenty years was in Washington, D.C., home of the NEA, and its General Secretary, William Carr, was an American.

With the development of the Cold War within the labour movement, money from the U.S. government went to support both of the two competing non-Communist teacher centrals—IFFTU and the WCOTP. Most of the members of the WCOTP were unaware of this until in 1967 it was revealed at the Assembly of the WCOTP, hosted that year in Vancouver by the BCTF. In a report to the BCTF Representative Assembly in 1968, past-president Bob Buzza told members:

The Vancouver Assembly of the world teachers' organization in August 1967 learned that it had been necessary for WCOTP "...to raise funds externally to develop and maintain the program of activities desired and authorized by successive Assemblies." (A major source of funds had been a U.S. foundation which, in turn, was supported by the CIA. The WCOTP Executive had been unaware of this secondary support and, although no attempt had been made by the foundation or the CIA at any time to influence policy or program, it recommended to the Assembly that all connections with the foundation be severed.) (Buzza, 1968, p. 1)
It turned out that 85% of the budget of the WCOTP came from the CIA-funded foundation and only 15% from the dues paid by member unions (CTF International Relations Committee, 1965, p. 8). Even a portion of that 15% covered by dues did not really come from the unions that were affiliated. Wes Janzen, the former BCTF president who had been elected to the executive of the WCOTP at its meeting in Korea in 1966, said that he discovered that he was elected because the NEA was supporting him. Most of the unions from the Third World countries, he said, did not have any money to pay even the small dues to the organization, and that they were paid for those unions by the NEA. In turn, the NEA was able to sway the votes of all these organizations (Janzen, 2005).

Janzen had made his own discovery of the CIA involvement when he arrived a day early at the hotel in Korea where the WCOTP conference was to be held. Out of curiosity, he asked to see who would be staying at the hotel and was given a list. He was very surprised to see “CIA” listed after the names of several of the people. It was soon after that the role of the CIA in financing the WCOTP became widely known (Janzen, 2005).

Sending CIA funding through a front organization was not the only form of disguise of its role in WCOTP. An appendix to CTF International Relations Committee minutes in 1973 suggests that dummy offices were set up to make WCOTP appear not to exist only in Washington:

Mr. Goble [CTF General Secretary] pointed out that there were two major reasons for the regional offices of WCOTP: (a) when the headquarters of WCOTP was in Washington, it seemed politically desirable for WCOTP to furnish operative addresses in other parts of the world and (b) the existence of designated regional offices overseas was one of the ways of getting money from the Burnham (?) Foundation....[W]hat is wanted is more effective and active regional seminar
programs in WCOTP. These cannot be organized through the kind of regional offices that at present exist because they were set up for totally different purposes and not really for functional purposes (Barker, 1973).

The degree to which the Cold War influenced the work of the WCOTP is also reflected in an Appendix to a set of minutes of the CTF Committee on International Relations for a meeting held March 17 and 18, 1961. This Appendix was a “supplement” to the official report from the WCOTP on a meeting of an “exploratory committee for the Americas” that had been held in Costa Rica in May 1960. Only five Spanish-speaking unions and one from Brazil showed up, along with the U.S., Canada and the West Indies. The Latin American groups that did attend were mostly not the major teacher unions in their country.

The CTF representative, G. Nasson, the CTF Secretary-Treasurer, gave an account of his political education at the meeting: “As the meeting progressed, I became aware that in some respects the Committee for the Americas was an attempt by WCOTP (admittedly a late attempt) to make inroads into an increasingly strong and increasingly Communist-affiliated stronghold” (Nasson, 1961). He explained this to his colleagues by talking about the “Confederacion des Educadores Americanos” (CEA), an organization that still exists with members throughout Latin America, as well as the CSQ (Centrale des syndicats du Quebec), the francophone teacher union in Quebec. Nasson said that indications from the NEA were that CEA was a “Communist-dominated and Communist-centred organization,” which he said was borne out because it was affiliated to the WCT (World Confederation of Teachers).

Nasson recounts the conspiracy theory that had been expounded at the conference on the technique they said was used by Communists to take over all the unions in Latin
America: “first, domination of the elementary teachers’ organizations which have larger and, on the whole, poorly educated memberships; and secondly, through sheer weight of numbers, out-shouting all other teachers’ organizations in the country to become the influential voice of the teachers, nationally and internationally” (Nasson, 1961, p. A3).

However, he was able to look beyond the simplistic formula to see that:

It is a tragic mistake to call “Communist” at every Latin American teacher who shows dissatisfaction with his government, suspicion of larger or more affluent countries whom he has encountered most often as exploiters, or a desperate search for help and recognition which, coupled with fear of losing his identity, may drive him away from more cosmopolitan organizations like WCOTP into an exclusively Latin American one like CEA. (Nasson, 1961, p. A3)

By the 1970s, the WCOTP did leave behind its role as a CIA-front financed organization. It moved its offices from Washington, D.C. to Switzerland and replaced its Secretary-General, although the NEA as its largest and richest affiliate continued to have a great deal of influence on the organization.

**RCMP Surveillance of the BCTF**

It is ironic and sad that the government’s secret, under-cover activities were always justified in the name of spreading freedom and democracy. Fear of communists was alive and well even within Canada throughout this period and reached into the BCTF, as I found out through Freedom of Information (FOI). In 1999 there were news stories about RCMP infiltrators in CUPW, the national postal union, a fact that had been discovered by the union when it had made a FOI request to the National Archives for the files maintained by the RCMP Security Service. The files had all gone to the National Archives after the Security Service was eliminated and replaced by CSIS (Canadian Security and Intelligence Service).
I decided to submit a request on behalf of the BCTF to see what files the RCMP Security Service had on the Federation. When the time for a response was up, I was told that more time would be required to ensure that information was not provided which should not be disclosed. When it took about a year for this to happen, I wasn't too surprised to find that they reported that the Security Service had some 1746 pages of documents on the BCTF, running from 1959 to 1984, the last year I was president of the BCTF. [I submitted a request for any files on me at the same time. They claimed that none existed.] Some 965 pages of documents were not provided—only the numbers, without an indication even of the topic of the document. The letter from the National Archives said the 965 pages “were found to contain information exempt in whole or in part under the Access to Information Act” (Gawman, 2001). Most of the material provided was newspaper clippings, both from the mainstream press and the Pacific Tribune, the Canadian Communist Party newspaper, or official documents of the BCTF that were publicly available to anyone. An amusing aspect was that the copies of the minutes of public meetings of the BCTF, such as the Annual General Meeting, had the movers and seconders of motions whited out. The documents excluded were presumably reports from agents who had attended BCTF meetings, reporting on what had been said and by whom, although one can only speculate on that, since even on appeal we were refused access to all but one of them.

The nature of the surveillance is indicated in the one document that was released from the appeal for more documents. It identifies the file as “TEACHERS’ FEDERATION OF B.C. (Communist Activities within British Columbia)” It is a report on the 1962 BCTF Annual General Meeting. The informant’s account identified “the
following topics which could be considered as of a political nature.” The topics included a proposal “that the Convention body be given ten to fifteen minutes of their time to hear speakers from the 'Peace Education Institute.'” That motion was defeated. The informant also noted a motion “that the B.C.T.F. go on record as opposing the testing of nuclear weapons” and one that called for the creation of a fund to bolster future salary negotiations. Of the latter, the notes say that “It was inferred that this fund could be used to pay teachers’ salaries in the event of a strike” (RCMP Subversive Investigations Branch, 1962).

The CTF had established an International Relations Committee at the 1958 Annual General Meeting, with the first meeting of the committee held in 1959. One of the recommendations at this initial meeting was “That the Board of Directors give favourable consideration to an exchange of visits of Canadian and Soviet teachers” (CTF International Relations Committee, 1959). The exchange did take place, with Soviet teachers coming to Canada first. The organizer of the exchange was John Prior, a past president of the BCTF. One of the early items in the Security Service files on the BCTF is a clipping from the Vancouver Sun about the visit of the Soviet teachers. The creation of the file on “Communist influence in the BCTF” seems to have coincided with the teacher exchange.

The bulk of the material was gathered in the 1960s and early 1970s, including a clipping about a demonstration by teachers against the Vietnam War. The existence of this surveillance of the BCTF reflects the degree to which unions and their internationalist aspects were seen as battlefields of the Cold War.
Cleaning Up after Cold War Divisions

The 2004 Congress of Education International symbolically marked an end of the Cold War divisions in the international teacher movement. Although Cuba has still not been admitted to the EI, the president of the Cuban teacher union (SNTECD) was an invited guest. The membership of the EI now encompasses a full range of types and affiliations of teacher unions at all levels of education and there are no viable competing global organizations.

This completes the transition to an organizational structure that fits with the new reality of globalization, bringing all the teacher organizations into one international structure. The passing of the presidency of Education International from Mary Futrell of the U.S. National Education Association to Thulas Nxesi from the South African Democratic Teachers’ Union also symbolizes a shift in the form of teacher union internationalism. In addition to the president being from a country in the South, Nxesi’s union has historical links to the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party, as well as with teacher unions internationally that reflect a broad range of political perspectives. Cold War divisions have disappeared and the new circumstances of globalization require new forms of cooperative international solidarity. These will be examined later in Chapter 6.
Leadership Aimed at Social Justice

In this chapter, I have placed the internationalism of the BCTF in the context of labour internationalism, particularly among teacher unions. BCTF leaders interested in internationalism inevitably got caught as bit players in the grand sweep of competition between West and East. Promoting peace and a more equitable world were prime motivators for their internationalism. However, both camps in the Cold War were prepared to act in covert ways to advance the interests of capital, on the one hand, and the Soviet system on the other. Working for “peaceful coexistence,” as led by BCTF leaders like John Prior, was seen as an act of subversion and justified the covert surveillance of the BCTF by the RCMP. The Cold War struggle for dominance led to secret funding of international teacher organizations by the CIA. The BCTF leaders involved at the time, Wes Janzen and Bob Buzza, both found this covert funding and activities objectionable.

The post-colonial, newly independent countries were a prime battleground for the Cold War. However, the BCTF leaders like John Young and William Long, who led the creation and implementation of programs to better train teachers in the developing countries, were motivated by idealism about the development potential of education, rather than seeing their work as a bulwark against communism.

The work of these and other leaders of the BCTF during that era contributed to the development of not just BCTF internationalism, but of an internationalism characterized by valuing social justice aims and setting the scene for an intercambio approach.
CHAPTER THREE: THREE ERAS OF BCTF INTERNATIONALISM

While internationalism has been an integral part of the BCTF, stretching back to its early days, the form of that internationalism has changed over its history as the dominant ideas and the social-political context have changed. The development of an *intercambio* philosophy was an evolution over three eras.

In the first era, during the decades of the 1920s and 1930s, the internationalism of the Federation reflected the progressivism of that era, with its strengths and contradictions in both political and educational philosophy. While it was concerned with international peace, it also had paternalistic elements that were not entirely consistent with the reciprocity implicit in the *intercambio* concept.

In the decade and a half after World War II there was a lull in internationalism. Teachers and their organization focused on rapid growth of the school system in B.C. and "professionalization," avoiding approaches seen as "political." As indicated in the previous chapter, this was also an era when the Cold War dominated politics. The threat of nuclear destruction was seen as a real possibility. However, as indicated in the RCMP report on the 1962 BCTF annual meeting, those who wanted to put this on the agenda of the union were not able to even get ten minutes on the agenda for a speaker from the Peace Education Institute.

The second era of BCTF internationalism moved toward what would become the *intercambio* concept. The possibilities of nation-building in the newly independent countries of Africa and Asia reignited an enthusiasm for internationalism in the early 1960s, taking the form of what might be called "solidarity development." That accelerated with the anti-Vietnam war protests, the civil rights movement and the
feminism of the 1960s and 1970s, shaping a new generation of activists. These activists were committed to educational and organizational approaches to social justice that linked the personal to the political and the domestic to the international.

The third era of BCTF internationalism has been characterized by the adoption of the name “international solidarity” and the concept of intercambio. This reflected the influence of the new generation of activists from the 60s and 70s and became institutionalized in structures and policies of the union.

This chapter will show that both the social-political context and the organizational culture that dominated each era encouraged and framed particular approaches to BCTF internationalism. What is common to the three eras is a belief in the socially transforming power of education and that the teachers’ organization has a role in contributing to that transformation. A part of this process of change was the development of the intercambio approach.

**First Era Internationalism: Educational Progressivism and the “International Mind”**

The formation of the BCTF occurred in the middle of the Great War (WWI), with the founding meeting taking place in 1916 and the first Annual General Meeting in 1917. The hope was to produce an organization that would provide a stronger voice for the two principal objectives that were set for the organization—one to improve public education and the other to increase the welfare and status of the teaching profession (Wotherspoon, 1989). The BCTF first became a registered society in 1919, just after the end of the war.

This was a period of great social and political changes. The war confirmed the decline of Britain and the emergence of the United States as a major global power. The aftermath of the war saw the rise of social tensions in many countries, with labour strife
and conflict between workers seeking a share of the economy and many returned veterans who were used to support the interests of the owners of factories and industry. The Bolsheviks had seized power in Russia and the establishment in Canada saw dangers of it happening here, frightened particularly by general strikes in Winnipeg and Vancouver in 1919. A teacher strike in Victoria in 1919, led by the future General Secretary of the BCTF, Harry Charlesworth, (the first teacher strike in the British Empire, according to a summary of its history in the BCTF Members’ Guide) and a week-long strike in New Westminster in 1921 fed fears that teachers would be a part of a movement to make fundamental changes in society. The chair of the New Westminster school board considered the striking teachers as pawns of “bolshevist members” of the teachers association (BCTF, 1921).

Also in 1919, Paris was the site of the formation of the capitalist democracies alternative to international socialism in the organization of the League of Nations and U.S. president Woodrow Wilson’s articulation of the idealist principle of national self-determination in contrast to imperial colonialism. A central attraction of the League of Nations was a hope that it would lead to an end to war as international disputes would be settled through talk, not arms. It was supposed to pursue disarmament and to intervene should countries take up arms to attack a neighbour. Canada soon joined the new League of Nations. While this may have been an expression of idealism and desire for peace, it was also a chance for the country to act on its own, as a part of the assertion of independence from the weakened British Empire.

A transition from the Empire to the League is demonstrated in the names of two postwar meetings of teacher organizations, the Imperial Conference of Teachers'
Organizations in 1921 and the organizing meeting of the World Federation of Education Associations in 1923, both attended by Harry Charlesworth, the General-Secretary of the BCTF.

The Imperial Conference of Teachers had held its first meeting in 1912 and the next was planned for 1916. Because of the war, it didn't happen then, but did finally occur in Toronto in 1921, with delegates from the BCTF, as well as Charlesworth, representing the CTF as its president. "The principal themes were teachers as empire builders, the interests of peace, the empire and India, foreign populations, and the interchange of teachers" (Nelles, 1995, p. 117). The "foreign populations" issue was related to the difficulty of assimilating immigrants into the dominant Anglo-Saxon form of society, a concern of progressives of the era, including pillars of the left, such as J.S. Woodsworth (Woodsworth, 1909).

Only two years later, Charlesworth took part in the 1923 World Conference on Education, the founding meeting of the World Federation of Education Associations (WFEA) held in San Francisco. The WFEA was not an organization of just teacher unions, but also incorporated parent and school board groups, including the B.C. Parent-Teachers' Association and the BC School Trustees' Association.

The initiative for forming the WFEA came primarily from the National Education Association, the organization that represented the largest number of teachers in the United States. Their initiative was part of the post-war movement that produced peace education, support for disarmament and the belief in education as a way of creating a more harmonious world—ideals related to the Woodrow Wilson concepts of a new internationalism. The hope was to use education to develop the "international mind" and
international ethic, in youth in particular (Butler, 1923, in Nelles, 1995, p. 128).

Throughout its existence the WFEA had its office in the NEA building in Washington
and received financial support from the NEA.

The existence of the WFEA was strongly supported by the BCTF. Charlesworth,
in answer to critics, said that the value of the WFEA to the CTF was reflected in it being
part of building an organization "with the object of preserving the peace and bringing
about disarmament" (Charlesworth, 1922). Of the seven Canadian delegates to the World
Conference on Education, five came from B.C., including two from the BCSTA. Over
the life of the organization, Charlesworth was an executive member, a vice-president and
served on several committees of the WFEA, including chairing a special committee on
"International Cooperation."

Representatives from other provinces evidently did not feel the same enthusiasm
for the WFEA. It was the BCTF, not the CTF, that undertook to carry out, on behalf of
the WFEA, "a survey of the question of Teachers' Tenure and allied questions as they
exist throughout the world" (Coldwell, 1927).

Charlesworth's report on the survey was made to the 1929 WFEA congress in
Geneva. On the basis of the work of the BCTF committee, the Geneva meeting
recommended:

That the formation and strengthening of associations of teachers, both local and
national, should be encouraged, to the end that they may ultimately control entry to the
profession and set up standards for professional attainment, aptitude and character
which will be recognized by appointing bodies.... (Charlesworth, 1930, p. 32)

Another indication that not everyone in the CTF felt the same enthusiasm for the
WFEA as Charlesworth and the BCTF was the consideration of a motion to withdraw
from the WFEA in 1931. This was not a reflection of an alternative approach to internationalism, but rather one of withdrawing from the international scene. The CTF had scheduled its AGM at a time that coincided with the WFEA congress. Charlesworth chose to attend the WFEA meeting, but sent a letter to CTF expressing dismay at the scheduling conflict and making the case for staying in the WFEA (Charlesworth, 1931). Those who favored the CTF remaining in the organization, including the BCTF delegates, prevailed in the decision.

The WFEA represented a broader vision of internationalism than had the Imperial organizations and meetings from the pre-War era. However, the organization was still primarily an Anglo organization, albeit with U.S. rather than British leadership. The WFEA did reflect the developing position of Canada, moving from close ties primarily with Britain and more into the orbit of the U.S. Left out of this mix were most of the countries of Europe, who had their own regional federation of teacher organizations and, of course, the many peoples who were still living in colonies of various European countries, teachers in the independent countries of Latin America, as well as the Soviet Union. Even when an attempt was made in 1939 to move one of its meetings out of the Anglo-Saxon countries, it was foiled. *The B.C. Teacher* reported “The meetings were held on shipboard, off the coast of Brazil and at Puerto Rico, the Brazilian dictator [Getulio Vargas] having at the last moment forbidden the World Federation to hold meetings in Brazil” (*The B.C. Teacher*, 1940, p. 400).

Climate in the BCTF—Social Gospel and Educational Progressivism

Harry Charlesworth was the General Secretary of the B.C. Teachers’ Federation from 1920 until his death in 1944. He was the only staff member of the organization,
other than one secretary, until close to the end of that period. A belief that organizational structures could make a difference was reflected in his role in the formation of three organizations. He was one of the founding members of the BCTF and its first vice-president, and then its first General Secretary. He also played a central role in creating the Canadian Teachers' Federation, and was its first president. And, of course, he was there at the founding of World Federation of Education Associations and claimed some credit for encouraging the National Education Association to initiate the call for its formation (Charlesworth, 1931).

With the role that Charlesworth played in the CTF as well as the BCTF, “the BCTF contributed more than the CTF in administrative time, money and editorial space to support internationalist themes and work” (Nelles, 1995, p. 103). Nelles suggests international work took up to ten percent of Charlesworth’s work, despite his being the only BCTF professional staff person at the time. It should be noted that international work was not at Charlesworth’s initiative alone, but reflected an internationalist outlook that was shared with other of the leaders of the new BCTF, and, in particular, that of the first president of the BCTF, John G. Lister. At the Special General Meeting in 1919, where the BCTF adopted the constitution that was to become the basis of its registration as a society, Lister was reported in the meeting minutes as speaking on the role that teachers should play in a “great world-wide movement” towards democratizing government, legislation and the teaching profession (BCTF, 1919).

Despite its limitations, the development of an internationalist position that characterized Charlesworth’s leadership of the BCTF built an important base for the concept that the teachers’ union was not just about looking after narrow interests of its
members, or even only the direct interests of British Columbians or Canadians. He promoted concepts and activities directed toward peace and disarmament and international understanding and cooperation. In a speech called "Can Education Do Anything for World Peace" made in the mid-1930s, he said "the teaching profession of the world can play an important part in promoting international goodwill, if truth, knowledge, understanding, and tolerance, are allowed to hold sway, instead of falsehood, prejudice, race hatred, intolerance, and mischievous propaganda" (Charlesworth, undated, p. 11).

Charlesworth's participation in international activities was complimented by educational activities in B.C. schools aimed at contributing to the development of the "international mind." One concrete example of the way that the "international mind" was to be developed was an international "Good-will day." The first meeting of the WFEA encouraged this as a way of promoting international cooperation and in B.C. the Parent-Teacher Federation took on leadership, with the support of the BCTF and the Department of Education. International Good-will Day was celebrated each May 18, with the BCTF's magazine, the *B.C. Teacher*, annually carrying suggestions for how schools might celebrate it. For the 1926 celebration, Charlesworth quoted from the WFEA's suggested program:

This programme contains suitable hymns, an account of the "Origin of Goodwill Day," special arithmetic problems, based on figures connected with the Great War, games of many lands, history of the Red Cross Society, a brief account of the League of Nations, stories for language and composition, and suggested topics for study in connection with geography and art. (Charlesworth, 1926, pp. 193-134)

Another example of bringing internationalist views into the school was the annual Peace Education Conference organized beginning in 1928 by the B.C. League of Nations
Society. Co-sponsors for the event included several of the Vancouver area teacher organizations and ranged from school trustees and parent-teacher associations to the Trades and Labour Council, the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom and Catholic and protestant church organizations.

The roots of the internationalist philosophy of Charlesworth and many others during that period were to be found in the “social gospel” as well as education progressivism. The social gospel was a strain of protestant Christianity that held that “God was at work in social change, creating moral order and social justice” (Allen, 2004). Many influenced by the social gospel ideas sought transformations of society as a response to a capitalism which seemed to have no ethical base. Many of the founders of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) in 1933—such as J.S. Woodsworth—brought the social gospel into the CCF’s political platform and electoral politics. Although Charlesworth shared these ideas, and they greatly influenced the internationalist perspective of the BCTF, he took the position that the BCTF should not enter into partisan politics as an organization. Unlike many other unions, the BCTF did not adopt electoral political action until the election of 1969, and even after that has never affiliated to a political party.

Charlesworth also drew on the ideas of the education progressives. Terry Wotherspoon, in his study of the politics of public school teaching in British Columbia (Wotherspoon, 1989), points out some of the contradictions of the progressivism of Charlesworth and others. Charlesworth “emphasized the value of using schooling for ‘social reconstruction’ of a new world where people would be capable of overcoming the ‘blind acceptance’ of ‘business and national Propaganda’” (pp. 178-179). On the other
hand, “in common with corporate capitalist interests who sought more systematic regulation of social production, Charlesworth’s vision was that school should be an ‘investment’ to create ‘improved citizens’ and few unemployed, ‘misfits,’ and ‘blind alley workers’” (p. 179). The progressives’ belief in education did not necessarily call for more than a more effective way of integrating young people into the existing economic and social reality.

**Things Fall Apart—the 1930s**

The idealism on which the League of Nations was built and the hope for a democratic, transformative internationalism without war, faltered in the 1930s. The economic depression created a challenge to the belief that capitalism could produce the kind of economy that would serve most people. In Europe, fascism dominated Italy and the Nazis came to power in Germany. The League of Nations was discredited when it was shown to be powerless to stop the Italian invasion and occupation of Ethiopia and Japanese incursions in China.

In his mid-1930s speech, “Can Education Do Anything for World Peace,” Charlesworth warned about the emerging dangers. He quoted from a speech by the director of a new German teachers’ union, the National Socialist Association of Teachers: “Adolf Hitler, we undertake to mould the German youth in order to imbue them with your ideas, your principles and your beliefs. The German teaching body solemnly promises you this!” (Charlesworth, undated, p. 12).

The depression and large-scale unemployment generated a range of political responses in B.C. and Canada. One of these was the formation of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), a new political party based on social democratic and
social gospel ideas. A Canadian version of fascism also appeared, from people envious of the efficiency of these non-democratic forms. For example, Major F. Ney, the leading figure in the “Overseas Education League,” a Canadian organization promoting teacher exchanges with Britain, moved from imperial ideas to favoring fascist and Nazi ideas (Nelles, 1995, p. 289).

Still another response was to adopt a Marxism that promised a society based on equality and satisfying the needs of those marginalized by capitalism. The Communist Party had a significant presence in B.C., with activists organizing the unemployed, as well as workers in resource industries, including forest workers in the IWA and the fishermen and allied workers. Particularly after the loss in the war in Spain, an anti-Fascist focus was adopted by the Communist Party and its members, some of whom were teachers and activists in the BCTF.

The idealistic hopes in the League of Nations in the 1920s had lost its claim to the support of many internationalists. Some who had been active in international activities, such as Ney, became Fascist and Nazi sympathizers. Internationalist opponents of Fascism were divided between supporters of Communism and other manifestations of Marxism, and those who maintained a social democratic position, influenced in many cases, as was Charlesworth, by the social gospel. The fascist perspective had no support among the leadership of the BCTF, but the anti-fascist position was split between the Marxist and the social democratic/liberal perspectives. During the years of World War II, the divisions between the anti-Fascist positions were muted. Wartime is generally a difficult time to carry out discussions seen to be divisive, particularly when both positions
were firmly against Fascism and Nazism, and the war was seen fundamentally as anti-Fascist.

The divisions in the internationalism of the labour movement as a whole and teacher unionism specifically, were outlined in the previous chapter. The split between liberal and social democratic perspectives on the one hand and Communist perspectives on the other hand, presaged in the BCTF in the years just before the war, were reflected in the creation of new international teacher union organizations, as previously detailed. The internationalism that had emerged with optimism for a League of Nations and peace education was crushed first by war and then by the Cold War divisions that consumed the international labour and teacher union movements after the war.

Charlesworth as an Internationalist Leader

The perception of Charlesworth changed over the more than two decades that he was the professional staff of the BCTF. While he became General Secretary soon after leading the first B.C. teacher strike, in his last years in office he was seen as too cautious and conservative by many of the activists, particularly in having the BCTF meet the desperate needs of teachers in the rural areas. The global climate had changed as well. From the optimism about ending war through the League of Nations, the situation had deteriorated, and another, larger, war was under way.

That should not take away recognition of Charlesworth’s role in establishing internationalism as a part of the identity of the BCTF. He allocated a significant portion of the resources of the BCTF to his international activities. He also demonstrated an ability to turn his ideas into action in the form of organizations that extended beyond borders of his province and his direct responsibilities.
Second Era Internationalism: Development Solidarity—on the Way to Intercambio

The two decades after the end of World War II was a period of rapid change in education in B.C. Economic growth led to an expansion of the education system, as did the successful efforts to keep more students in school and longer. Many of the men returning from the war entered the profession through special training programs set up at UBC—most of them to teach in the expanding secondary schools. Expansion of the system and efforts to gain a professional salary took up much of the energy of the BCTF. The ideological wars raging in the labour movement had less practical import to teachers and provided little space for whatever interest in labour internationalism there might have been among teachers.

Throughout the 1960s there was a close relationship between the BCTF and the Canadian Teachers’ Federation in this new era of internationalism. While the minutes of the CTF International Relations Committee have lots of reflections of the Cold War, something else was developing in the 1960s that also comes through in those meeting minutes and in the minutes of BCTF meetings.

Activist teachers had been overseas and were inspired by the model of CUSO of sending young people to teach in newly post-colonial developing countries which needed more qualified teachers. A B.C. teacher, John Young, had been in Sarawak in Indonesia. He brought his enthusiasm and rhetorical skills to the 1961 BCTF Annual General Meeting, making a moving speech. Despite not being a delegate to the convention, he successfully stimulated a motion to have the BCTF to set aside $1 a member for international assistance (Janzen, 2005). The motion said “That this Annual General Meeting agree to an assessment of $1.00 per year per member for the purpose of raising funds to send a B.C. teacher to some underdeveloped country in Africa or Asia” (BCTF
AGM, 1961). The concept was that a B.C. teacher would offer in-service in a newly independent, developing country and they, themselves, become a better teacher for the experience.

The concept of international assistance from the BCTF was firmly established by 1962. The A.G.M. minutes indicate “Carried unanimously” to a motion “That this Annual General Meeting continue the principle of international assistance.” However, the nature of that assistance was in question. A resolution was defeated that would have directed that “the allotted funds for assisting underdeveloped areas be used to finance the education of a student or students from underdeveloped areas at the University of British Columbia or Victoria College.” Those opposed to the motion instead supported sending B.C. teachers to an “underdeveloped” country, rather than bringing students to B.C. for studies (BCTF, 1962).

Over the next three years, the allocation of $1.00 per member for international assistance became a routine part of the motion that approved the overall fee to be charged to members. In 1963, the total BCTF fee was $44 per member, with $1 of that going to international assistance, making the allocation about 2.3% of the fees collected by the BCTF. The $1 allocation each year continued until 1974, although with the amount of the total fee going up each year, the percentage of the fee devoted to international assistance declined each year. In 1974 the amount was increased to $2.00 per member, with an increase again to $3.50 in 1981.

Although the BCTF motion passed in 1961, the CTF program of the three and four week in-service training programs for teachers in newly independent countries offered by Canadian teachers during their summer holidays began in 1962 with two
teachers from Ontario facilitating workshops in Nigeria (McConaghy, 1990). All the indications are that these really did start from the “grassroots,” and not as disguised battles in the Cold War. Requests came from teacher unions, and sometimes governments, in newly independent countries in Africa. They sought help in “upgrading” the many unqualified teachers as education systems expanded beyond the colonial systems that had been in place. Education was seen as central to post-colonial national development and this kind of assistance was sometimes called “development solidarity.”

As countries gained their independence, education became a high priority. It was considered important not just for national economic development, but also for the creation of an identity as an independent country. A sentence from a report on a joint CTF-Ghana National Association of Teachers decade-long project expresses this in describing the hopes of the first of the African countries to gain independence: “Under Nkrumah’s leadership, attempts were made to accelerate Ghana’s transformation from an essentially agricultural, tribally-oriented society into a modern, semi-industrialized state” (Manu, S. and Buzza, R., 1980).

The initiatives by the BCTF and the CTF were not more reflections of the Cold War. They were not motivated by hoping to save the children of Nigeria or Uganda from communism, or offering an American vision of democracy and freedom. Rather, they reflected idealism about helping overcome illiteracy, and improving the ability of their teachers to accomplish this. As the CTF program developed over the decade of the 1960s, it became first Project Africa, then added Project West Indies, and finally became Project Overseas, when more programs were added in Asia. This continues to be a core part of the CTF international program, now primarily funded by CIDA (Canadian
International Development Agency), but in the first years it was funded entirely by the provincial teacher unions, with the BCTF consistently providing more funding and sending more participants than other Canadian unions.

The idea of exchange comes through strongly in the documentary evidence from the CTF International Relations Committee. From the early days of Project Overseas, it was clear that the union partner with CTF was to name co-facilitators to work with the CTF team. These teachers would help the Canadians locate their work in the local reality, and ideally would be part of a cadre of teachers who would continue the programs though the union independently of further Canadian participation. The Canadian teachers were encouraged to consider what they were bringing back from the experience and how they could use this in their own teaching and in their work in their community. Things did not always work as intended, but that is always a part of the complexity both of education and of cross-cultural activities.

The leadership role of the BCTF in this program also comes through in the CTF committee minutes. William R. Long, a B.C. teacher from Kitimat, was the individual who participated the most times in the projects in the 1960s. He was team leader on several projects, and was commissioned by CTF to do a report after the first half dozen years of the program. His report helped to formalize the elements of the program, which had grown on an ad hoc basis in its first years. When Long died in 1968, the BCTF chose to memorialize his role in the BCTF and CTF programs by naming the BCTF international assistance fund after him (Canadian Teachers Federation International Relations Committee, 1968).
Through the 1960s and 1970s, most of the BCTF international funding went toward sending B.C. teachers on Project Overseas. After two Ontario teachers going to Nigeria in 1962, by 1963 the program had expanded to 17 teachers going to Liberia and Nyasaland (now Malawi), with 6 of the 17 from the BCTF, the largest number from any CTF affiliate, (CTF International Relations Committee, 1963) a pattern that continued over the next two decades. Project Overseas continues as an ongoing program that more than 40 years later still sends Canadian teachers to Africa, Asia and the Caribbean each school summer holiday to offer in-service programs to teachers. In its first years, the program was funded entirely by the contributions from the Canadian teacher unions. The budget for the program in 1963 was $25,100, with $9,600 contributed by the BCTF. By the end of the 1960s, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) jointly funded Project Overseas with the CTF and its affiliates, a situation that has continued for more than three decades.

A report on an evaluation of Project Africa in 1968 says that the governments of the newly independent countries gave high priority to in-service education for secondary and university teachers, but offered little to the primary teachers in “bush schools” whose own education was only a primary education and who made up about 80% of teachers in Africa. Project Africa provided in-service for three to five weeks for some 3,400 primary teachers in the first five years of the program. It was described in the evaluation as “essentially a partnership between CTF and African teachers’ organizations” aimed at improving teacher qualifications, strengthening professional organizations, and promoting “understanding and good will between African and Canadian teachers” (Aitchison, 1968). A World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession
(WCOTP) staff person at the evaluation meeting said that Project Africa was “the first time a national teachers’ organization directly assisted another national teachers’ organization” and that the Canadian initiative led to similar initiatives by Swiss and French teachers (Aitchison, 1968, p. 2).

By the late 1960s, the CTF responded to requests from some of the teacher unions in Africa for assistance beyond in-service, particularly in the development of the union organization and in setting up credit unions for teachers. The CTF sent union officers from Canadian affiliates to work with their counterpart unions. One of the early projects of this type had Bob Buzza from the BCTF work with the Ghana National Union of Teachers (GNAT), a project that continued in various components for a decade and that assisted GNAT to become a model for teacher unions in Africa (Manu and Buzza, 1978).

As Project Overseas developed in the 1960s, one of the intended outcomes became strengthening of the host teacher organization. Increasingly the planning of the projects involved the host union and the projects themselves were seen as giving a professional profile to the unions, with both their potential members and the government. The joint responsibility of the national union in the developing country and the CTF participants, rather than just outsider design, was firmly established at least by 1968 when the CTF program with the Ghana National Association of Teachers was initiated.

In these development solidarity programs, real efforts have been made to be respectful of the opinions and needs of teacher unions in the South. By intention, if not always in practice, these have not been just soft versions of trade union imperialism. Development solidarity is a significant step on the road to relationships that are really
built on the exchange and interchange of *intercambio* internationalism, rather than union imperialism, and reflects values of social justice.

Project Overseas was based on an assumption that Canadian teachers could work with unqualified or under-qualified teachers in less developed countries to share skills that they had themselves developed through both teacher education and teaching experience. By insisting on sending qualified and experienced teachers, it differed, for example, from the approach of CUSO, which sent university graduates with no teacher education background to work for extended periods as teachers in less developed countries.

**Project Overseas and “Apolitical” Assistance**

As Project Overseas grew and policies were formulated, one of those said the program was not to be “political.” In some senses, it was naïve to believe that whatever one does, especially on an international basis is not in some way “political.” But it did have the advantage of saying, in effect, that these programs were not part of the Cold War, nor would Canadian teachers interfere in the politics of the countries where they were working or the unions that were the partners in these programs.

At the time, this was described as “development assistance,” and not as a more political sounding pursuit of “social justice.” This narrower perspective was consistent with the ideas dominant at time in the BCTF and the CTF, that improving the situation for teachers was best achieved through professionalism rather than political or labour action. These assumptions are captured well in a description from a 1980 CTF report on the rationale for its International Development Assistance Program, including Project Overseas:
1. education as an organized undertaking is the most powerful instrument yet devised for the betterment of the human condition;

2. the crucial element in education is the quality of teaching, because the essential element is the encounter between teacher and learner;

3. it is the responsibility of the teaching profession to seek always to improve the quality of education. Improvement in the status of the teacher is inseparably linked to this goal, and effective professional organization is a prerequisite;

4. the long-term goal of international aid should be to help people to develop their own competence and to define priorities and respond to problems. (Manu and Buzza, 1980)

This CTF view of internationalism was quite apolitical and expresses a belief that improvements can take place just by increasing professionalism. It avoided a significant focus on how the conditions for teaching or societal conditions affect the quality that is possible. The fourth statement speaks to the idea of interchange and mutuality, although it is interesting that it is framed as a "should," while the other statements use "is." The extent to which CTF tried be apolitical is indicated by its response to a request that CTF congratulate the teachers of Malawi, where CTF Project Africa had worked for two years, on their country’s independence. The minutes of the International Relations Committee (1964) indicate that "As this was not consistent with general CTF policy of avoiding politics, a compromise was made" (p. 14). The compromise was to "greet" the Malawi teachers, rather than congratulate them, on the independence of their country. As petty as this may seem, the CTF apolitical philosophy is probably better than that of some others, such as the very political approach of the American Federation of Teachers, which continues to call its international committee the "Democracy Committee," with a mandate to teach the rest of the world how to do democracy, American-style (Gorman, 2004).
Beyond Project Overseas: Internationalism with a Political Edge

The major share of the BCTF International Assistance Fund went to Project Overseas through the 1960s and 1970s. However, in the 1970s, two additional standing allocations were made annually: one to the Overseas Book Centre (later to become an NGO called CODE—Canadian Organization of Development through Education), to cover the cost of shipping used textbooks to developing countries; the other to the CTF International Aid Fund to deal with disasters. Grants covered the cost of medical insurance premiums for exchange teachers coming to B.C. on the B.C. government run teacher exchange program with Australia and the United Kingdom. Small grants were provided as well for material support for activities such as equipment for teacher union offices in developing countries, workshops in several African countries and Latin America, a response to natural disasters affecting teachers and schools, the development of curriculum resources for B.C. schools on international topics and even air fare for a teacher to flee Chile to avoid execution for political activities opposing the Pinochet regime. All of these small grants were a response to ad hoc requests that would come from members or through the CTF (Aitchison, 1982).

While the allocations to the international fund were approved every year by the Annual General Meeting, opposition was sometimes expressed, with arguments that the BCTF should stick to issues at home. However, the support for an internationalist role was always sufficient for the funding to be approved, usually by substantial majorities. The total funding for international programs from 1961 to 1984 was $1,123,090—beginning with the first allocation in 1961-62 of $13,250, rising to $193,548 in 1983-84 (Aitchison, 1984).
Third Era Internationalism: International Solidarity and *Intercambio*

A change in direction of the BCTF international program came in 1980 with a late resolution brought to the A.G.M. by the Burnaby local. It called for the BCTF to “contribute $1 per member to assist the literacy crusade initiated by the Nicaraguan Ministry of Education.” The Sandinista rebels had succeeded in gaining control of the country the previous July and one of their first programs had been a literacy crusade, inspired by Paulo Freire and modeled on that carried out by the Cubans after their revolution. This effort to end illiteracy had captured the imagination of B.C. teachers who were interested in developing solidarity with Latin America, an area CTF programs consciously avoided. The BCTF was able to get the $30,000 it contributed matched by CIDA on a 3 to 1 basis, making a total of $120,000 for the Nicaraguan literacy crusade, noted in the files of the International Solidarity Program as the “largest single donation in the campaign” (BCTF, 1980).

The literacy crusade sent 95,000 *Alfabetizadores*—literacy teachers—into the countryside where they worked with 400,000 peasants during the day and taught them after work. The objectives of the campaign were not only to teach literacy, but also to carry out consciousness development. According to a report of the UNESCO Institute for Education, “within five months illiteracy rate dropped from 50.35% to 12.96%” (UNESCO, 2004). The momentum of the campaign was lost over the years and resources were not available for follow-up programs as the Sandinistas were distracted by the attacks from Contra rebels. Its long-term impact was probably greatest on the young, untrained literacy teachers as they developed an understanding of peasant life and, again according to UNESCO, “Most described their term as an essential and personality
changing experience after which many decided to become teachers by profession” (UNESCO, 2004).

For the BCTF, support of this project marked a shift from development assistance to what came to be called a “social justice” approach to internationalism. For the CTF programs, development assistance meant primarily the in-service programs taught by Canadian teachers. The solidarity or social justice approach was characterized by a belief that political and labour action, and not just professional development, were appropriate ways for a teacher union to try to influence the conditions in education and in the society. The professional in-service offered by Canadian teachers, such as through Project Overseas, would not be excluded, but it would not be the only, or even the main way that the BCTF carried out its internationalism.

This shift in the approach to internationalism was consistent with changes that had taken place in the BCTF over the previous decade. The initial change had been the adoption of explicitly political action as a way of changing government policy toward education, first unsuccessfully by campaigning in the 1969 provincial election, and then with success with the defeat of Social Credit and the election of the NDP in 1972. This shift from an exclusively “professionalism” strategy to a political action strategy had been opposed by the General Secretary of the day, Charlie Ovans. One of the BCTF staff, J.A. Spragge, resigned because of the change, seeing “so many who prefer the easy course of noisy protest to the hard alternatives of quiet persuasion” (Wotherspoon, 1989, p. 312).

This change in direction toward political action and a social justice emphasis was carried further through the creation of a Task Force on the Status of Women in 1970 and
the creation of a program and staff position in 1973. The direction was taken further through the appointment of a Task Force on Racism in 1973 and the creation of an anti-racism program and staff position in 1975 and through the Northwest Sector Project in Vancouver, aimed at addressing issues of poverty. Also on the activist agenda was democratizing the schools, with the objective of creating elected staff committees that would have a say in the school policies. A BCTF Task Force on Rights and Responsibilities that I co-chaired, argued for more opportunity for students and parents to be a part of school decision-making. These ideas of social and democratic transformation carried over to the international arena and shaped the new direction for the BCTF’s international work. This new direction was to support teacher unions in Latin America that were clearly engaged in struggle for democratic reforms in their society. This new face to BCTF internationalism fit with the values and the strategies of these BCTF social justice programs in the 1970s. It was also consistent with a focus on the BCTF objectives being pursued simultaneously of gaining trade union status and the right to strike as means of improving the conditions for teachers in B.C.

The Latin American content of this new internationalism theme was carried in the next annual meeting, in 1981, as well. The meeting heard from a speaker from ANDES 24 Julio, a teachers’ union in El Salvador, about the plight of teachers in the civil war going on in that country. Immediately following her speech, the BCTF president and vice-president (Blakey/Kuehn) moved a motion “That $1.00 per BCTF member be donated to the El Salvador Teachers’ Association to provide food, clothing, housing and transportation to teachers and their families, such funds to come from the W.R. Long International Assistance Fund” (BCTF, 1981). Two other executive members then
moved to increase the amount to $2.00 per member, and the motion passed with the higher amount. Later in the meeting the funding for the international program was increased to $3.50 per member, to include the $60,000 cost of the El Salvador motion (BCTF, 1981).

Following from the new directions taken at the 1980 and 1981 in solidarity support for education and teachers in Latin America, the policy and organizational framework for the next two decades of the BCTF international program was created at the 1982 A.G.M. Rather than adopting a dollar amount as a part of the fee each year, it approved a policy to set a percentage that produced a fund that rises automatically with the changes in the overall fee amount. The motion brought by the Langley local said “That an amount equal to 1.86 per cent of the BCTF fee exclusive of special allocations, and local association fees, be allocated to the W.R. Long Memorial International Assistance Fund to assist in improving education in developing countries” (BCTF, 1982, p. 20).

Putting the international program on a firm base of funding allowed for long-term commitments. This is one of the keys to developing ongoing relationships and plans jointly with other teacher unions, making an intercambio approach work. A sharing in defining the work requires continuity, not ad hoc decisions. To assist with the development of the program, the executive committee created an International Solidarity Committee, initially with three members and later with four. This committee provides advice to the executive committee on budget and policies and was initially given authority to make decisions about the funding of projects up to $10,000, later reduced to
$5000. This reduction was aimed at ensuring that the executive committee was aware of and supported projects and the program.

When the committee was created, the executive adopted policies and procedures to guide the work of the program. It also recommended a change in name of the fund at the 1983 AGM, proposing that it be the “International Solidarity Fund,” rather than the “International Assistance Fund,” a change in name that I initiated as president at the time. The clear intent was to think about the international work in a different way, as work among equals, rather than as charity from the relatively rich. The proposal to change the name faced some opposition at the AGM. Two delegates who thought “solidarity” sounded too radical moved to delete the word. However, that amendment was defeated and the change in name to “international solidarity” was adopted (BCTF, 1983, p. 18).

Development of the International Solidarity Committee and Program

The new BCTF International Solidarity Committee had a challenge. The program had been put on an ongoing basis, and with significant resources. Also, it was clear that the intention was not just to add more participants in CTF’s Project Overseas, but to go beyond what CTF had been prepared to do in its program. In particular, Latin America was an area of interest, one that was outside of CTF’s choices of areas to work.

Much of the enthusiasm for an expanded BCTF international program had come from teachers who were actively involved in community-based solidarity movements, particularly with Central America. Tools for Peace, a Nicaraguan solidarity group, had local committees in communities around the province, in addition to a warehouse and active program in the Lower Mainland. Many teachers were personally involved in these
community organizations. Groups supporting the struggles in El Salvador and Guatemala were also working actively.

A different dynamic was at work, as well, in putting Honduras on the list of areas of focus. Although solidarity groups for Honduras did not exist in B.C., the WCOTP was supporting the elected leaders of COLPROSUMAH, a union of elementary teachers in Honduras. These elected leaders had been evicted from the union office by government troops, and the government appointed its own supporters as union officials. The elected group called itself the "authentic COLPROSUMAH" and was recognized by teachers as the real union. My first direct involvement in the BCTF program was a trip through Central America in October of 1985. By that time my term as president of the BCTF had ended and I had been appointed by the executive as a member of the International Solidarity Committee. I personally carried $10,000 as a grant for COLPROSUMAH to keep the union alive. Because it did not have a legal status, it was impossible to get funds to them through banks, the usual way that funds are transferred. With international support, the authentic leadership survived that period, and were reinstated and regained their office building when their lawyer was elected president of Honduras several years later. COMPROSUMAH and the BCTF have been partners in a number of projects on an ongoing basis since that time.

As mentioned earlier, while many BCTF activists were particularly interested in solidarity with unions in Latin America, CTF seemed to be reluctant to engage in Latin America. This seemed to come from a number of sources—language was one of them. The CTF already operated in two languages—English and French—and its programs were carried out in countries that used one or the other of these languages as the language
of instruction. Working in a Spanish environment would present a problem, particularly for the Project Overseas-type projects that sent Canadian teachers to other countries to offer in-service training, and these made up a large part of the CTF program at the time. Beyond that was the question of ideology.

The CTF tended to follow the lead of the NEA in international political direction, while many of the teacher unions in Latin America had left-wing ideological positions and challenged the perceived domination by the U.S. and particularly its support for military dictatorships. Teachers were part of the ongoing struggle against Pinochet in Chile and many had to go into exile. Many teacher union leaders also were imprisoned, were “disappeared” (killed, but with their bodies never found) or forced into exile by the military-dominated governments in Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Bolivia and Guatemala, as well as Chile. Teachers are often the largest group of employees in the state sector in less developed countries, and many come from the lower social classes and still have links in those communities, yet have significant organizational skills that they develop because of the nature of their work. Because of these factors, teachers are often an oppositional and problematic group to governments, particularly to right-wing military dictatorships and this was certainly the case in Latin America. The role of Latin American teachers in these struggles was an important part of the attraction of working there for activist teachers in B.C. Those same factors seemed to be barriers for the CTF.

CTF had not always avoided Latin America. The report of the CTF International Relations Committee of 1961 devoted a significant section to a plan to connect with teachers in Latin America. This proposal included exchanging material, exchanges of officials between Latin America and Canada, sending experts on short-term loan, and
exchanges of teachers to "gain first-hand knowledge of each other's country" (CTF International Relations Committee, 1961, p. 3). The appendix to the committee report had an extensive report on a meeting in Costa Rica, discussed in the previous chapter, complete with its conspiracy theory of domination by communists through poorly educated elementary teachers. The author of the appendix, Gerald Nason, did however end his report by saying "In the past we've given a lot of attention to our relatives; perhaps it's high time we at least met our neighbours!" and he called for "immediate steps to declare and demonstrate our active interest in Latin American teachers and in their organizations" (CTF International Relations Committee, 1961, p. A - 3).

Over the next decade, the minutes of the International Relations Committee indicate that Latin America was periodically on the agenda of the CTF. It did prepare a newsletter in Spanish and published a few hundred copies. Several proposals were made for teacher and union officer exchanges, but one visit by a teacher from Argentina was the most that seemed to have been achieved. A proposal was made in 1966 for a joint project with the NEA to translate selected educational writings from Latin America. The committee minutes say that the project was discussed with NEA officials in Washington, but "the outcome was disappointing." That was followed by a motion to abandon the proposal (CTF International Relations Committee, 1966, p. 10).

Except for some projects in the 1980s where the BCTF designated matching funds from CTF to be directed to projects in Latin America, CTF attempts to work in Latin America came to an end. Bob Barker, the Director of International Programs at the CTF in a letter to the BCTF in 1994 explained his view of why the CTF was not engaged in Latin America: "It has always been very difficult for me, however, to reconcile what we
could do with what teacher unions in Latin America wanted...either the LA unions were beyond what we were prepared to do to help them or they were unwilling to put up with the stringencies of our bureaucratic requirements” (Barker, 1994). The BCTF, working in partnership with CoDevelopment Canada, had no difficulty finding Latin American teacher unions very interested in working with Canadian teacher unions, despite the fact that projects had to meet the CIDA reporting requirements that applied to CTF projects.

The underlying issue in the CTF view of work in Latin America is that it mostly is not “development assistance.” Unlike many unions in Africa and Asia, unions are very well-developed and effective organizations. What they do lack in many cases is resources to do what they are very capable of doing—carrying out research, developing policy, and organizing to try to influence their governments to stand up to the international monetary institutions that are pushing governments to make cuts to public funding and encouraging the privatization of education. As Barbara MacDonald, the current Director of International Programs at the CTF told me at the CTF international programs consultation in June 2004, the BCTF programs in Latin America are advocacy programs, not development assistance. That is probably a correct assessment, and the difference between the BCTF and CTF in that regard is that the BCTF wants to do advocacy work in conjunction with our colleagues in Latin America and the CTF has not.

In addition to Latin America, another arena of social struggle with a significant element related to education was Southern Africa. By the 1980s when the BCTF international program was being expanded, the challenge to the apartheid system was having an impact primarily in three countries. In South Africa itself, the schools were the site of many oppositional actions and a number of new teacher organizations had been
formed as a part of the struggle. South Africa's neighbour, Mozambique, had been an inspiration to young South Africans when it achieved independence in 1975. However, by the 1980s, it had been forced by South Africa to expel the African National Congress activists who had been operating from the country. It also faced ongoing attacks from a rebel group, RENAMO, that was financed by South Africa and whose strategy included destroying the education infrastructure that had been built in the rural communities in the immediate aftermath of liberation. Namibia was the third area engaged in struggle. Namibia was in effect a colony of South Africa, with an apartheid education system and an active anti-South African guerilla movement (SWAPO) that was operating both externally and in the country. These struggles were all about equity and social justice, and all had a relationship to education.

The conjunction of events happening internationally with the social-educational transformation focus of the BCTF provided answers to the question of where the expanded international work should take place--Latin America and Southern Africa. But how could intention be turned into action?

Finding the How: Leadership in Defining an Intercambio Approach

The International Solidarity Committee began by developing criteria for grants for the work of the program. The first of the principles articulated could have been taken directly from a definition of intercambio. It said “The operation of the W. R. Long Memorial International Solidarity program is based on a concept of respect which implies an exchange of ideas, of values, and of practical ways of doing things.” The other criteria included “a commitment to human rights for all people, in particular the right to education;” a focus in particular regions to allow for a depth of involvement “essential to
increasing international understanding among British Columbia teachers” and work
“primarily through indigenous organizations of educators which interpret for themselves
their needs” (Davis, 1985).

The criteria for projects, revised at the 1992 AGM, specified that they promote
partnership with teacher organizations in developing countries and that expenditures
could be made for “projects in such areas as teacher union organizing, involvement of
women and professional development” (BCTF, 1992).

The BCTF faced a number of challenges in carrying out the international work. A
big one was infrastructure. Working together on an intercambio basis can only happen if
time and resources are devoted to active communication. Developing a relationship of
mutuality requires much more than just writing a cheque. Efforts must be made to find
areas of commonality through talking about what is important to all the parties involved.
Specific projects need to be developed, with plans for how they will be carried out. Some
approach to accountability must be specified and agreed to. While some of this can be
carried out by communicating in writing, knowing the people involved and being familiar
with the organization is important to understanding what is behind the words that are
written on the page. At the time the initial programs were being developed, most people,
even in the most technologically developed countries, did not have access to either of the
communication vehicles most commonly used in international work now—fax and email.
Long-distance telephone was also much more expensive and less accessible than it has
become two decades later. Further, while the approach adopted gave an expanded
mandate and resources to the program, that did not extend to a significant increase in the
staffing assigned to the international work.
The BCTF also shared one of the problems that discouraged CTF work in the region—lack of bilingual staff with the facility to operate in Spanish. The BCTF also could not directly access matching funds from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). In addition to funding CTF programs, CIDA provides matching funds for many projects which are supported by funds raised by Canadian non-government organizations (NGOs) such as Oxfam, the Red Cross, the YMCA, and the like. By partnering with one of these groups, the YMCA, the BCTF had been able to have its contribution of $30,000 to the Nicaragua literacy campaign in 1980 matched on a 3 to 1 basis, creating a substantial contribution for that project. However, CIDA funds designated for teacher organizations were already committed to the CTF. The BCTF was not in a position to have its funds matched directly by CIDA. A match required working with another NGO that had access to CIDA funds.

However, with the exception of Oxfam, other NGOs that the BCTF might have worked with would see the BCTF primarily as a source of funding for their projects—projects they had initiated, designed and gotten approval for from CIDA. To further complicate the situation, most NGOs had their Canadian offices in Ottawa or Toronto, geographically nearly as far from the BCTF as Central America.

Oxfam-Canada was an exception during that period. Some of its programs had been developed on a philosophy of linking organizations in less developed countries with Canadian organizations. Oxfam saw international work not just raising funds for grants, but also educating Canadians and engaging them with groups that had similar interests and concerns in other countries. It was this linking relationship, an exchange with other
teacher unions, facilitated by an NGO, that the new committee and program was interested in developing.

**A New NGO Facilitates Intercambio—CoDevelopment Canada.**

Several activists in the Central America solidarity networks saw an opportunity to build on their work and create a structure that could serve the needs of the BCTF. In 1985 these folks created an NGO they called CoDevelopment Canada (CoDev). One of the founders, Rick Craig, was bilingual, was active as a solidarity activist in Vancouver and had contacts with teacher groups in Central America. Another was Julia Goulden, a feminist teacher who had been a member of the BCTF Task Force on the Status of Women, and who had worked on women’s rights with the B.C. NDP government in the 1970s. She had then been elected to the BCTF executive committee, and had been a member of the CTF Trust Fund Board (the CTF committee charged with responsibility for the CTF international program; it replaced the CTF International Relations Committee in the early 1970s) and was among the initial appointees to the BCTF International Solidarity Committee. The name these activists chose for their NGO captured the philosophy that they wanted to characterize their work—one of mutuality in developing and carrying out of programs between organizations and people in Canada and other countries—“CoDevelopment.”

This NGO filled a number of needs for the BCTF international program. It provided people to work on developing the links between organizations, creating projects, seeking CIDA matching funds and doing the administration work of monitoring and evaluating, as required by CIDA—and to do this in Spanish and English. It also was located in B.C., allowing for easy direct contact with the BCTF in working out issues and
programs. It provided a vehicle, as well, for the federal government to direct some funds through the B.C. region, which is very under-represented in the allocation of funds from most every federal department, including CIDA. In addition to providing the link between organizations in the North and the South, CoDev produced development education projects in the form of teaching resources tied to the B.C. curriculum that complement the organization to organization solidarity projects between teachers in Latin America and B.C.

While CoDev started with activists doing work on a volunteer basis, it was soon able to hire a small staff to work on the BCTF projects. Over the intervening two decades, CoDev has expanded substantially. By its twentieth anniversary in 2005, it had five staff to develop and manage linking projects with other teacher unions, including the Alberta Teachers’ Association and the CTF, as well as unions in health care and provincial and municipal employment, and with community solidarity groups. It also had a fair trade coffee business that provides returns directly to the cooperatives that produce its coffee in Nicaragua and Cuba.

CoDev’s description of its work on its web site sets out its goals and scope:

CoDevelopment Canada works to form partnerships between groups in BC in order to build alliances for social change. We have partnerships with more than 16 unions and groups in BC and with 23 community groups, women’s organisations and unions in Latin America and Cuba.

The partnership model links a northern organisation/union/community group with a like-minded southern group. The southern partner determines what work they need support for and presents it to CoDev and the northern partner. The northern partner agrees to support the partner and project for a period of three years, with a view towards a ten year long term relationship. Funds from the northern partner are then matched through CoDev by funding provided by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) of the Canadian government. This approach assures the southern partner of long term funding enabling them to focus on sustainable projects. It also involves Canadians more intentionally in the issues
of international development. In 1997, CoDev won a national award for its innovative "Partnership Model" in international development work.
(CoDevelopment Canada, 2004)

The development of the BCTF international solidarity program in Latin America and its *intercambio* approach is integrally tied to the programs of CoDevelopment Canada.

**Oxfam and Intercambio in Namibia**

As noted previously, the other NGO interested in developing linking relationships between Canadian organizations and those in the South was Oxfam-Canada. Some of the first funding from the expanded BCTF international program went to Oxfam projects in Latin America, particularly support for the union in Chile at the point when the movement to return to democracy was gaining ground in the mid-1980s.

The independence of Namibia from South Africa in 1990 was an early step in the process of ending apartheid. Oxfam-Canada had already been working in Namibia, carrying out programs which expanded after independence. The project officers Oxfam-Canada sent to Namibia were John Graham and Gillian Brewin, who had been activists in Vancouver and worked with the BCTF on anti-apartheid projects during the 1980s. When they arrived in Namibia, one of their first projects was a program to assist Namibian teachers develop their skills in English. Teachers had come through an education system based on the Afrikaans language, and English would have been the third language for many, after their indigenous language and Afrikaans. However, at independence, the new country opted to make English the medium of instruction. Afrikaans was seen as the language of the oppressors, and also was not a world language, but one isolated to a minority even in South Africa. If teachers were to adequately teach using English, they needed to enhance their fluency.
Like the situation in South Africa, the apartheid education system had been one with separate schools for different racial groups, and teacher unions had been racially based as well. With independence, a new non-racial union was created, the Namibian National Teachers’ Union (NANTU). Because the new union was focused on getting organized, it was not able to carry out programs with international assistance initially. For those first years, the BCTF funded through Oxfam an English language enhancement program for teachers, run by the Namibian Council of Churches, an NGO with a pre-independence history and effective organization. The BCTF did make it clear to Oxfam that it was interested in working with NANTU, if and when the union was in a position that it wanted to. The Oxfam staff in Namibia did develop a relationship with NANTU and worked as a partner with NANTU and the BCTF in creating a school representative training program. This NANTU/Oxfam/BCTF program is one of the cases examined in more detail in a later chapter.

Intercambio Relationships with Canadian Unions

An important element the BCTF international program has been links between the BCTF and unions in the South, facilitated by NGOs interested in linking strategies. This has allowed the BCTF to undertake much more extensive programming than would have otherwise been possible, both because of additional funds available through CIDA matching and the on-the-ground support that NGOs provide both to the BCTF and its partner organizations.

This partnership approach expanded in the 1990s to a consortium with two other teacher organizations—the Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation and the CEQ
(now with a name change to CSQ), the union that represents francophone teachers in Quebec and which does not belong to the Canadian Teachers’ Federation. These three unions agreed to work jointly on projects with teacher unions in Latin America, a number of which both the CEQ and the BCTF had worked with previously. Each of the three unions agreed to contribute to a fund, and the CEQ also included funding that it was able to get from CIDA as the Quebec equivalent to the programs funded by CIDA with the CTF.

Each of the organizations saw this as an opportunity that was an expression of their philosophy. The CEQ was isolated from most of the international teacher organizations. It had left the International Federation of Free Teacher Unions over a disagreement on Middle East policy, and was not able to join the WCOTP because of a rule that there could be only one union from a country. The CEQ would have had to affiliate with the CTF to enter the WCOTP, something which did not fit with the idea of Quebec as a nation, held by the union. The OSSTF was interested in work that had more of a progressive political edge than the CTF was prepared to undertake, and, in particular, to work in Latin America. The BCTF was interested in expanding its work through the additional funding that would be available by pooling resources, and also saw an affinity in values related to international work with both of the other unions. It particularly valued the opportunity to work with the CEQ, building a Quebec-B.C. relationship not possible at the time through the CTF.

The administration of the projects developed by the consortium was handled by the CEQ, and a BCTF member who was on leave, Carmen Kuczma, was contracted to handle the communications between the consortium and the Latin American unions.
Carmen had the experience for this, having worked on projects in Nicaragua in the mid-1980s. She had been one of the early staff of CoDev, as well, doing this kind of work on the BCTF projects. She had also been a member of the BCTF International Solidarity Committee in its early days. She was fluent in Spanish and French, as well as English, and had traveled widely in Latin America. These projects funded by the CSQ/OSSTF/BCTF consortium allowed the BCTF to develop much broader contacts with teacher unions throughout Latin America. These contacts provided a foundation for the IDEA Network (Initiative for Democratic Education in the Americas), explored in more detail later in Chapter 6.

**Challenges to the BCTF International Role**

Certainly some members have not approved of the active role of the BCTF in international programs. One executive member in the late 1970s, Doug Steinson, frequently contended that the BCTF was trying to take over the role of the United Nations in solving the world's problems. Some members have at various times over the decades said that the role of the union should be limited to looking after the direct interest of teachers in B.C. At the 1992 AGM, a delegate from Invermere, Lynne Terlinden, spoke out against the BCTF's international work, citing support to Bolivian teachers and opposition to the Gulf War. According to the *Vancouver Sun*, she said “There are a large number of people that really believe the BCTF shouldn’t be saving the world. As an individual, I’m out to save the world too. But I don’t believe we should bear the cost of funding the world with BCTF members’ money” (Horn, 1992).

Opposition to the BCTF international role has come not just from some members. Despite the fact that the funds for BCTF internationalism come directly from the fees of
teachers, not from public funds, the Premier of the province in 1985 took exception to BCTF actions. A “Report from the Legislature by Premier W. (Bill) Bennett,” published in some of the community papers around the province, challenged how the BCTF spent its funds, not just in the province, but internationally. Quoting from the financial statement that the BCTF annually makes to its members, Bennett questions “Why did the B.C. Teachers Union send $31,500 in 1983 to the Federation of Central American Teachers Organization? Why did the B.C. Teachers Union send $4,000 to “Teacher Leaders in Exile? Why did the B.C. Teachers Union send $37,599 to El Salvador Teachers’ Assistance Fund?” (Bennett, 1985).

If he had really wanted to know the answers to the questions, he would have asked for information from the BCTF and might also have gotten the name of the organization right. He would have found that the funds for the teacher leaders in exile went to the WCOTP as part of an international campaign of support for teacher union leaders in Latin America who had to flee from government repression of their union. He would also have found out that the El Salvador contribution had been approved by the delegates to the annual meeting after listening to a teacher from El Salvador talking about the disruption to education and the society because of the civil war.

After asking these questions rhetorically, Bennett then went on to threaten the BCTF. He said “What would be equally interesting is to find out how many teachers currently being forced to make these payments, would opt out of the Federation if they were given that option. I believe that over 50 per cent would refuse to pay these union dues, which are among the highest in the nation. Now is the time to offer that alternative option” (Bennett, 1985).
When the next premier, Bill Vander Zalm, gave teachers that option in 1987 by eliminating the legal provisions for membership in the BCTF, all but a handful signed up with the BCTF again, a BCTF that still had an International Solidarity Program as an integral part of the social justice commitment of the union.

The reality has been that the international program has had strong support among most activists throughout its life, indicated both with policy motions and putting money behind expressions of solidarity. Those who have attended meetings where international guests have spoken have always responded favorably. Locals have enthusiastically welcomed visits from international guests and responded to requests for funding to assist other unions in direct ways. Over the years hundreds of teachers have taken part in Project Overseas and in the BCTF programs in Namibia, South Africa and Cuba.

Those teachers who have opposed the BCTF’s international involvement have often, like Bill Bennett, claimed that it is only an activist minority who share this enthusiasm. However, in the fall of 2003, the BCTF carried out a random survey of members on whether social justice should be one area of focus of the BCTF. Member support was indicated for the many aspects of social justice programs, including the international program. One of the statements on the survey was “A role of the BCTF in addressing social justice issues should be providing support to teachers in less-developed countries.” The response was 57% in agreement, 22% in disagreement and 20% either indicating neutral or no response (BCTF, 2003). Certainly a minority disagree with the BCTF’s international commitment, but many more agree with the BCTF doing this kind of work.
The BCTF program has also received notice from others. On its 30th Anniversary in 1991, CUSO made an award to the BCTF for its “exceptional dedication to the cause of international development, particularly in southern Africa” (BCTF, 1991). The major role that the BCTF plays in working with unions in Latin America was also recognized with an international solidarity award from CoDevelopment Canada.

**Solidarity and Intercambio in Practice**

We have explored some of the history and concepts of the BCTF International Solidarity Program. We will now look at the program in practice. Three types of projects are examined in the next three chapters: 1) Gender equity programs in Latin America; 2) Programs where BCTF members engage directly in training and professional development in other countries—with a specific focus on Namibia, South Africa and Cuba; and 3) Programs that relate to the impact of globalization and trade agreements, particularly in the Americas. Each of these chapters will include a description of the program, some discussion of how it fits and illustrates the principles on which the program is built, the role that is played by NGOs in developing and supporting the program, some indication of its impact in the country or countries involved, and some comments on the impact on the BCTF.

**Leadership in BCTF Internationalism**

The world of the 1980s and the creation of the current form of the BCTF International Solidarity Program was very different from that of the 1920s and the beginnings of BCTF internationalism. Yet there are common themes that link the actions of the BCTF in these periods.
One of these is the consistent support of the leadership of the union and the organization itself for an activist, internationalist position. Charlesworth played a key role in an international organization, the World Federation of Education Associations, and in bringing not just the BCTF, but also the CTF into the international arena. The more radical leaders like John Sutherland in the late 30s brought not just an anti-Fascist position to the organization, but also an organizing tradition that was crucial to the survival and health of the organization when it was under attack from governments in later decades. The leaders who promoted internationalism in the post-colonial period of the 1960s and 1970s aimed at sharing their skills as teachers with teachers challenged with the role of developing their own societies through education.

The commitment of the organization was also shown by a continuing willingness to put significant resources of the teachers of B.C. to support this internationalism. This is demonstrated from Charlesworth as the staff person for the BCTF spending as much as ten percent of his time on international work. It was shown again when the 1982 Annual General Meeting made the commitment of 1.86% of fee revenue to international solidarity. This level of commitment is well above the target of .7% of a developed country's GDP that has been adopted as the guideline that more developed nations should be committing to international development. It is even further above the less than .3% of GDP that the Canadian government currently provides in its development programs.

A common theme for the BCTF, as well, has been an internationalism based on social transformation, rather than an internationalism based on economic benefit. Human rights and social justice, particularly through education, as well as the labour rights of teachers, have been the aims of its programs, along with the promotion of peace and
opposition to war. Specific individuals have played lead roles in defining the internationalism of the BCTF over nearly eight decades. They have included Harry Charlsworth; Charlie Ovans, through his work on the UNESCO declaration on the rights of teachers; John Young and William R. Long in Project Overseas; Bob Buzza through work in Africa; Julia Goulden and Carmen Kuczma with the programs in Latin America; Kit Krieger and the Cuba project; and myself, particularly in the projects related to globalization, along with many more activists. However, all of us have worked in the context of the links between the nature of what the BCTF does internationally and what it does in its programs in B.C.

Hundreds of BCTF members have played a role—from Project Overseas volunteers and International Solidarity Committee members to Annual General Meeting delegates who buy raffle tickets to provide teaching resources for Cuban teachers. Many of these activist members are listed in the appendices. We have all worked in an organization that has evolved to where social justice internationalism has significant resources from the members and strong support from leaders at all levels of the organization.

These themes of social justice aims and intercambio as a way of working will reoccur as we examine the BCTF International Solidarity program in its expanded version and look in some detail at particular third era projects as examples: gender equity programs in Latin America, union capacity-building in Southern Africa, teacher education in Cuba and alternatives to neo-liberal globalization in the Americas. Many of the second era programs, like Project Overseas, and the third era programs in Latin
America and Southern Africa move *intercambio* from influence in the meeting room to impact in the classroom.
CHAPTER FOUR: “EQUALITY IS NOT A QUESTION OF LUCK”—GENDER PROGRAMS IN LATIN AMERICA

The largest area of work of the BCTF International Solidarity Program over the period after 1985 has been in the support of women’s programs in Central America and the Andean region of South America. In the development and evolution to an intercambio approach to internationalism, feminism and the women’s movement have played a key role. Without trying to define a particular version of feminism, it generally includes grass-roots working together as an approach, seeking equality as an objective, and developing personal and institutional supports for women so that they can effectively participate in all aspects of society. The earliest and most long-lasting programs of the third era of BCTF internationalism have been the women’s programs. It should not be surprising then that the mutuality and reciprocity that characterize intercambio as we have defined it are characteristics of feminism as well. Indeed, it is from one of the women’s projects, a South-South-North conference, that the term intercambio as a descriptor of the BCTF international work is drawn. This chapter will explore the origins of these programs, as well as difficult issues that arise when one is engaged in social change, especially when this engagement is outside one’s own society.

This chapter will begin with the BCTF—how women’s programs have changed the BCTF and why they developed as a key part of the international work in Latin America. I will look at an element of the current situation in Central America, the economic and social conditions within which women teachers are working and how these relate to the situation of women in Canada. Then I will go to the heart of the programs—the strategies for change, how BCTF programs are a part of these strategies, and how they are playing out in practice. A key element of the change strategy is institutional—
the creation and maintenance of formal structures. From these institutions have
developed training and support approaches, and then a “pedagogy of gender.” Finally, I
will explore the contradiction of an *intercambio* approach that is not enthusiastically
welcomed by many in the leadership of the unions who host these programs. Much of
the content of this chapter is based on program reports and evaluations, both from
CoDevelopment Canada staff and by the participants in the programs, themselves.

**The Status of Women Program Brings Change to the BCTF**

If you were to look at a group photo of the hundreds of delegates to the BCTF
Annual General Meeting in 1973, you would see an overwhelming preponderance of
males. If you were to check the list of BCTF executive members in the first sixty years
of the BCTF’s existence, you would find very few women on the list. If you go back to
its earliest years, according to social historian Terry Wotherspoon, “the federation was
dominated from its inception by senior male career educators” (Wotherspoon, 1995, p
34). Yet, women have always made up at least half the teaching force in B.C., with the
percentage increasing to the current 70 percent. With the increased participation of
women in the most recent two decades, at many times the majority of members of the
executive have been women. However, of the ten BCTF presidents who have served
since 1973, only three have been women, although finally in the elections of 2004, 2005
and 2006, all candidates for president and two vice-presidents have been women.

Crude jokes and laughter greeted members of the BCTF Task Force on the Status
of Women made up of Julia Goulden, Gale Neuberger, Linda Shuto and Dorothy Glass
when they made their report to the 1973 AGM (Task Force on the Status of Women,
1973). However, with the support of the executive of the day, motions were passed that
adopted policies that would encourage women to become active members of their union. The strategy adopted had three key components: raising the level of awareness of changes in the roles of men and women, the creation of an institutional structure to ensure a space for women in the organization and removing impediments to participation, through skill development, building networks of mutual support and making provisions for no-cost day care.

The institutional changes produced the conditions for ongoing awareness-raising and preparation for women moving into all aspects of the work of the BCTF, not just the Status of Women program. An ongoing provincial committee was created, a full-time staff person was employed, the staff position was limited to a term of two years so that more women would have a chance to do the work, a network of local contacts was established, workshops on issues and practices were delivered and annual conferences and regional meetings provided training and encouraged networking for mutual support. For the next twenty-five years, a distinct Status of Women structure within the BCTF worked not just to engage women more in their union, but also to address issues of gender equity within the curriculum and the school and to work with feminist groups in the community, such as the National Action Committee on the Status of Women. It also successfully brought forward issues of importance to all women, such as a woman’s right to choose whether or not she would have a child.

The extensive participation of women changed the BCTF in a number of ways, including shifting the focus of bargaining objectives. When a large number of men came into the teacher force through the special programs for veterans after World War II, the focus in bargaining was on achieving a professional salary. Salaries had been very low as
school boards in the 1930s responded to the depression by cutting salaries to the point that the provincial minimum salary also became the maximum. In 1939 this minimum salary for teachers was $780, while in 1869, before B.C. became a province of Canada, the minimum salary was $800 (Hayward, 1939, p 81). While the aim of improving salaries was necessary, by the time that the Task Force on the Status of Women was formed, B.C. teachers had achieved the highest salaries in Canada, but also had the largest classes, except for Newfoundland.

By the time B.C. teachers gained full collective bargaining rights in 1987, because of the Status of Women program many women were involved in all aspects of the work of the Federation. The last area of resistance had been in Economic Welfare Division and committee. When it was abolished and replaced by a Bargaining Division and Committee, women were a significant presence. To ensure that women would have a role at the bargaining table, despite lack of bargaining experience, a program was adopted to bring additional women to bargaining training programs. Many of the gains in collective bargaining were conditions that were of particular significance to women. Preparation time for elementary teachers, most of whom were women, brought a working conditions improvement that had long before been achieved by secondary teachers, a great majority of whom were male. Limits on class size and provisions for extra resources for classes with students with special needs were achieved, often at the cost of a tradeoff on salary increases. Maternity leave unemployment insurance top up ensured that women would maintain their full salary while off on maternity leave—a provision that later applied to paternity leave as well, accommodating a change in expectations of how fathers could relate to their children.
Much less would have been achieved in collective bargaining had women not been engaged in the leadership of their union, participating in the setting of objectives, taking part at the bargaining table, and playing a key role in the strikes that were required to make the gains in working conditions.

Taking the Status of Women Approach to Latin America

It is no surprise then to find that the major programs in the BCTF partnership with CoDevelopment Canada in the first years of the BCTF International Solidarity Program were women's programs with teacher unions in Central America and the Andean region of South America. As mentioned in Chapter 3, one of the founders of CoDevelopment Canada, Julia Goulden, had been a member of the BCTF Task Force on the Status of Women and she had worked for the province on the status of women in the NDP government in the 1970s. She also chaired the BCTF International Solidarity Committee and was a member of the CTF Trust Fund Committee, the group with the authority to direct the international programs of the CTF.

In 1985, Julia visited Peru, having flown there after seeing a photograph in the Vancouver Sun showing striking women teachers in Peru facing a line of riot police, she told Carole Pearson, the author of an article on the 20th Anniversary of CoDevelopment Canada. Julia said that she was amazed to find out that women had no role in decision-making in the union. “They were put in the front lines because it was less likely the riot police would beat them up.” She was told that women got the worst teaching positions in dangerous neighbourhoods and were not given any support for their own projects (Pearson, 2006, p. 19).
There she met a woman, Leyla del Aguilar, a teacher who was offering workshops for women on an ad hoc basis, not as a union project. The focus was on how to deal with machismo and other problems facing women in the union. From that meeting came a proposal for a women’s program and it became the first joint project of the BCTF and CoDev, with funding for the women’s committee (Kuczma, 2004).

This project established the three-way partnership that has characterized much of the BCTF international work since the formation of CoDevelopment Canada in 1985. In CIDA’s institutional evaluation of CoDev in 1994, it identified that “CoDev’s major impact is in the area of building long-term, sustainable North-South partnerships” (Copping, 1996, p. 1). CoDev’s work has been essential to most of the BCTF programs with teacher unions in Latin America and much of this chapter is based on CoDev reports to the BCTF on gender projects over nearly twenty years. CoDev brought to the BCTF projects matching funding from CIDA that made it possible to carry out more projects with partners in Latin America. In addition, CoDev program staff travel to the countries on a regular basis to meet with the partner unions. CoDev staff are fluent in Spanish and often act as translators for BCTF staff and officers who have participated in meetings and workshops in Latin America.

The interest of the BCTF and CoDevelopment Canada in gender programs has been shared by CIDA. The full participation of women has been one of the criteria for CIDA projects and a theme of gender equity is supposed to cut across all programs. Thus, the conjunction of BCTF and CoDev interests with CIDA criteria helped to push programming towards gender equality.
Are the Americas Similar to British Columbia?

Certainly the scene described of the 1973 BCTF Annual General Meeting, with very few women participants at any level of leadership applied throughout the Americas. Women teachers in B.C. faced a difficult struggle to change the nature of their union. A number of conditions, though, provided supportive features not available to teachers in the Latin American countries where the women’s projects were initiated.

In a report to the BCTF and CoDev, Clara Murgualday points out some of the conditions that make gender work difficult in Central America. The ending of wars and military dictatorships in the various countries provided an opening for democratic participation in the political system, which should have included openings for women. However, this took place at the same time that governments were adopting, with great external pressure from the IMF and World Bank, neo-liberal policies. These reduced the role of the state in providing public services, including education. It also pushed more of the population into poverty—both teachers and the families of many of their students, a third of which are headed by females (Murgualday, 1997).

The BCTF Status of Women program built on an existing movement that was making change in the society as a whole, as indicated in the many references to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women that had provided an official platform on which to build. In Central America and the Andean region there were few models to identify. Women were absent from the leadership in political parties, and labour, campesino and community organizations, not just from the school and the teachers’ union. In B.C., the growth in the participation of women in the BCTF took place in a context of a strong feminist movement that was influential in many aspects of the life of the society.
However reluctantly on the part of some, the atmosphere changed considerably both within the teaching force and in the society generally. The macho element has had less resilience, certainly within the culture of teaching and the activities of the union in B.C., than seemed to be the case in Latin America.

The Codev staff person working on the BCTF projects in the early 1990s had this assessment of the situation: “Teacher organizations in the south have historically been led by men, although their membership is largely women. Women’s concerns about health, daycare, sexist textbooks, and sexual harassment had largely been ignored, because the women were not in positions of power, and issues important to them were not being addressed” (Kuczma, 1998, p. 59).

Despite these difficulties and more to be discussed later, many union gender programs have been carried out and provide evidence of some openings and change. This has justified the efforts and resources that have gone into these projects, and their continuation into the future.

“La Igualdad No es Cuestion de Suerte”

This phrase—translated as “equality is not a question of luck”—appears on the photograph of a poster from Quito, Ecuador, published in the 1998 BCTF Status of Women Journal (Kuczma, 1998, p. 59). It nicely captures a strategic assessment that changes in power relationships, in this case gendered power relationships, do not change unless action is taken by someone to make the change. Three key strategies have evolved over the nearly twenty years of the women’s programs: 1) opening an institutional space for women in the union, 2) training through workshops that build confidence as well as skills, and 3) what Murguialday characterizes as a “pedagogy of gender.”
The Gender Projects—Building Institutional Structures

The initial projects of CoDev and the BCTF focused on engaging women in their union. Two elements were consistent among the programs: build an institutional structure within the union and offer workshops for women at the local as well as the national level, and then at a regional level.

The projects have all required a structure within the union. CoDevelopment Canada signs agreements with the specific union or regional structure that outlines the nature of the program and the amount of funding. In each case, the union must have a women’s structure that is recognized by the union and is specifically responsible for carrying out the project. These arrangements have varied from union to union. Some have created a committee, with the members elected by a conference of women. Others have a secretariat, someone who has time released from their teaching duties to carry out the work of the project. Some have an elected member of the executive committee, elected by the union delegates as a whole. By 1998, all the unions with BCTF/CoDev projects had created a women’s commission or secretariat, and in many cases had local or regional structures as well (Kuczma, 1998).

One of the requirements of the contract with CoDev is that “the book-keeping of the project’s funds remain separate from the general income of the union” (CoDev, 2003, p. 3). In a number of cases, the women’s structure has a separate account from the union. In others, the funds are in the general account, but there is a system of approval and accounting that ensures that the funds are expended on the women’s programs. In the case of some unions, these projects are the only international funds that are received by the union, and specifying their use is seen as an imposition on the union. The existence
of this separate funding can be a double-edged sword. As a CoDev project proposal indicated, "International support for these efforts lends it an important legitimacy in the eyes of the male-dominated leadership" (CoDev, 1996, p. 2). However, if other programs that the leadership thinks are crucial cannot gain funding, this can be a source of resentment.

The autonomy of the women’s structures is important. The ideal is to reach a point where they don’t need the protection of these provisions because women’s concerns are an integral part of the union’s concerns and the leadership, whether male or female, acts in ways that support the full participation of women. That point has not been reached.

In a 2003 evaluation of the programs, representatives of each of the projects were asked “Have you noticed any kind of change in the Executive Committee since you started the Women’s Secretary Project?” The answers from all were “yes”—but most have to be read as a qualified yes. ANDEN (Nicaragua) said the number of women on the executive had increased from 1 to 7. STEG (Guatemala) said “the Executive is more aware of women’s need to express and organize themselves.” COLPRSUMAH (Honduras) said “financially the support has been increasing.” FOMCA (the regional coordinating organization) said “The support has been increasing.” FREP (Panama) had probably the most optimistic report that “The executive now participates in gender-related issues and there is a better understanding of issues related to women.” SUTEP (Peru) indicated “the National Executive committee is now willing to facilitate the secretary’s work.” And SEC (Costa Rica) said “There is currently a higher political-
syndicalism participation of our women members. The contribution and capacities of women are more valuable now” (CoDev, 2003, p. 4).

However, the next questions asked for a comparison of the percentage of women who are members of the union, the percentage on the National Executive and the local and departmental executives. While the percentage of women members ranged from 63% to 76%, the percentage on the executive was above 50% for only two unions, ANDEN and SEC, and those two unions had about 10% fewer women on their executives than the percentage in their membership. Most of the unions did better at the local level than at the national level in the percentage of women in executive positions. In fact, Murguialday reported that “It is becoming quite common for regional, provincial or zonal executives to be made up almost entirely of women” (1997, p 14).

This should not come as a surprise. In the absence of support from the union in looking after children, the pressures to balance home responsibilities with union work are easier to work out if the union activity is close to home, rather than in another city. In addition, in most unions—and other aspects of work and participation in society—people gain experience at a more grass roots level before they develop as leaders at a more general level. In fact, ensuring that there is an opportunity for women to gain organizational experience is an important part of the strategy.

Gender Workshops—a Wide Range of Content Reflecting Competing Conceptions

In addition to an institutional structure, another key element of all the programs has been workshops for women teachers at the local level. A base of aware and active women has to be created if there is to be transformational change. The workshops are the key strategy for building that base. Workshops have focused on a gender analysis and the
legal position of women in home, workplace and society, as well as encouraging leadership participation in their union.

Workshops listed in CoDev monitoring reports demonstrate a very wide range of topics. From Andes in El Salvador: self-esteem, the human rights of women, violence against women, the social construction of gender, non-sexist games (CoDev, 1995). From ANDEN in Nicaragua, a new model of leadership for women, including desired characteristics in a woman leader, motivation of women leaders, principal problems faced by women leaders, what actions can women take to promote women leaders, (CoDev, 1995) and gender stereotyping in the curriculum (Rader, 1995). From SEC in Costa Rica, regional workshops on self-esteem, gender analysis and the legal position of women in the workplace, home and society (CoDev, 1995). From COLPROSUMAH in Honduras, self-esteem, labour laws, gender and development, women’s human rights, the law against family violence, participative methodology, power relations and community leadership (Smith and Rader, 1998). From FREP in Panama, historical precedents and the Panamanian woman yesterday and today, the role of women in light of the most recent challenges, legal tools for dealing with harassment, and motivation (Mellon, 1999). From SUTEP in Peru, national reality and international situation, the SUTEP proposal for national education, the principle of non-discrimination and the rights of women (CoDev, 1995), gender and leadership issues, redefining Peruvian history from a women’s perspective by rescuing historic women leaders from Colonial to modern times (Rader, 1997).

An attempt to balance the competing conceptions of what programs should look like is demonstrated in the three-year project (2003-2006) that has been adopted by
SUTEP. It calls for provincial workshops that will involve a total of 800 female teachers over the three years. In each year, non-sexist pedagogy and women’s leadership remain constants in the program. In addition, year one had a focus on the impact of neoliberalism on women and education. Year two looks at the impact of the external debt on development in Latin America. Year three focuses on “Children and women’s rights in a globalised world” (CoDevelopment Canada, 2003). The value placed on the workshops was demonstrated to CoDev staff member Steve Stewart when he was an observer at one of the workshops organized by SUTEP in the Peruvian Amazon. The women traveled as long as two days each way on the Amazon to take part in the sessions.

This list of topics of the workshops provides a sense of the some of the problems faced by women teachers in Latin America in playing a full role in their union and their society. These include inter-related issues like the traditional role expectations of women and men, the double or triple job of women, poverty, lack of day care and most of all, the macho culture and the social construction of identity and power.

**Latin American Women Develop a “Pedagogy of Gender”**

The third element of the women’s programming as it has developed was not a part of the plans when the programs were proposed by CoDev and the BCTF. It has been characterized as a “pedagogy of gender,” and has really developed by women working in these programs from their own experience. As described by Murguialday, it is a combination of offering alternative gender models and developing explicitly non-sexist materials and approaches to teaching.

If the right to gender equality is taken seriously, the need for female teachers to be full participants in their society and community, as well as their union, is crucial. In
many communities, especially in rural areas, the female teacher is a key role model for young women particularly. The degree to which she is respected and confident in participation in society and school will affect the motivation for her female students to imagine that they can play a full role in society and for her male students to learn that it is OK for women to be independent leaders. Recognition of this was set out in one of the objectives of an evaluation of the BCTF-CoDevelopment program in Central America: “Make recommendations as to how to change the role of women teachers in their capacity as socializers of the existing social order and traditional gender roles” (CoDevelopment Canada, 1996).

Murguialday describes the contradictions in the role of women teachers:

As a teacher and as a woman, her work and her mission is to create people with the values and the discipline of the world in which they live. Given that her daily duty is to preserve the culture and implant it in the next generation, teachers are conservative intellectuals....

In the hierarchical structure of the education system, the placement and power of female teachers does not reflect their majority presence within it. Their opportunities for professional advancement are slim, they have limited access to administrative posts and, as a result, are likely to permanently receive orders from men....Thus, the combination of the objective conditions of their work and the feminine-maternal attributes assigned to the position result in an image of the teacher as a subordinate feminine figure, altruistic and with little social status.

Nevertheless...[she] is also an important gender reference, and can serve as an identifying role model for the girls. As well...she is an important agent for the modification of conceptions and behavioral norms, which can provide an accumulative consciousness-raising effect...an invaluable resource for transforming their own lives and those of others. (Murguialday, 1997, p. 9)

This consciousness-raising effect is achieved through the pedagogy of gender.

Some elements of this can be seen in the list of workshops already described, such as the human rights of women, the social construction of gender, power relations and community development. A study of “The World Bank and women’s movements”
(O’Brien, et al, 2000) describes strategies of the women’s movement that seem to fit this pedagogy of gender: “women’s movements employ complex, subtle, and sometimes very low-profile tactics which aim to reshape gender identities, methods of socializing children and cultural expectations in male-female interactions” (p. 33).

A more recent development is the creation of programs that complement the previous projects, but go further by seeking ways of changing teaching practice. The workshops and materials are called “non-sexist pedagogy” and they focus on analyzing textbooks for gender stereotypes and developing alternative materials for use in class. The resources and approach to non-sexist pedagogy was developed by teachers in Costa Rica as part of the women’s program workshops. One of those teachers, Maria Trejos, the facilitator for the non-sexist pedagogy workshops as they have moved from country to country, was one of the participants in the Intercambio ’94 conference that had been held at the BCTF and has identified that experience as important to her own development.

In writing about the theory that frames this work, Maria Trejos identifies both neo-liberalism and patriarchy. Neo-liberalism she describes as “dominant sectors within the capitalist social system...launching asphyxiating policies against our Latin American peoples in order to squeeze them dry while they stay afloat.” She characterizes patriarchy “as an ideological dimension where attitudes, feelings, experiences, perceptions flow together that, independently of a specific ideology, are the product of imposed forms of doing, thinking and feeling against human dignity and integrity” (Trejos, 2005, p. 1, translated from Spanish).
This kind of analysis often stays at the rhetorical level, with only an abstract connection to the lives of those one hopes to engage. However, Maria Trejos and her colleagues attempt to move beyond this by an individual process of reflection that allows us to visualize the impact that the development of each theme has on us. These autobiographies or life stories are a starting point to be able to identify variables that allow for the development of more qualitative rather than quantitative research. As such, importance was given to indicators and variables that allow us to approach human actions and perceptions through an understanding of the world from the perspective of working women and women teachers. (Trejos, 2005)

Maria Trejos and her colleagues are clearly drawing from the Latin American experience of popular education in creating union-based education of women and developing their own pedagogy of gender. The classroom resources they have created to engage students in this process have been approved for use in the schools in Costa Rica, but without the government putting any resources into printing and distribution of the materials.

Interestingly, the Canadian Teachers’ Federation is now providing funding through CoDevelopment Canada for the non-sexist pedagogy workshops being carried throughout the Central American region. The director of international programs at CTF, Barbara MacDonald, has indicated to CoDevelopment Canada that she anticipates that through its Social Development funding from CIDA’s Education for All program, that the CTF will fund these programs on an ongoing basis to cover a number of countries in Latin America. This has evidently been seen as a “international development” program, unlike the rest of the BCTF Latin American programming that she sees as “advocacy,” and thus not something that the CTF international programs can finance.

Women Gain Access to Their Union

The power of the traditional role definition of women in their union is nicely illustrated in a project proposal sent to the BCTF in 1986 from the World Confederation
of Organizations of the Teaching Profession (WCOTP) through the CTF. It is a project with COLPROSUMAH (Honduras) on the “Training of Women as Teacher Organization Leaders.” This was one of the early women’s projects funded by the BCTF (with funds contributed as well from two other provincial unions).

The project gives the background on COLPROSUMAH, some of which was covered in an earlier chapter. In 1982 the government set up a phantom organization, which it then recognized as the union. The authentic leaders, who had been replaced by government, continued their work as a union. They spoke in the name of COLPROSUMAH, but with none of the resources of the union except a small amount members could contribute, in addition to fees the government was taking from their pay and giving to the phantom union. The International Labour Organization had ruled that the government had contravened the ILO conventions by interfering with a workers’ organization. The BCTF had been supporting the organization and this was the case when I had personally carried $10,000 to Honduras in 1985 for the authentic union. The project proposal from the WCOTP focused on the role of women in the struggle:

Within COLPROSUMAH, the women are always ready to fight, although they are confined to the grass roots membership. We have observed their courage and their determination since June 1982, the beginning of the conflict between the Cordoba government and COLPROSUMAH. In street demonstrations, they have not hesitated to carry placards. Recently, it was the women who opposed the forces trying to arrest their former leader, Ambrosio Sabio, charged with usurpation of trade union responsibilities.

However, this courage gives way to inhibition when it comes to expressing themselves in public, asking questions and participating in a discussion. This was proven at the seminar last October. Here it is the man, even if he is in the minority, who takes the lead. Among the militant women, there exists a potential for extremely capable leaders and with the training envisaged it would permit these women to take their place in the leadership of the organization. (WCOTP, 1986, p. 1-2)
The somewhat paternalistic tone of this is also reflected in the design of the proposed workshops. They focus on being informed—about legislation, the structure of the ministry of education, ILO conventions, the UNESCO policy definition, the role of the WCOTP in interventions. It is as if the problem is that the women just don’t know enough and if they had more knowledge they would no longer always be led by men.

While the women who designed the workshops in the BCTF/CoDev projects might be offended by the paternalism of the language, they do agree, as seen in project reports, that becoming more confident in working in the union is an important step. However, it is one that comes not from knowledge of structures so much as from analysis of power and building mutual support.

Carmen Kuczma, who was involved with these programs while working for CoDev, as well as on the BCTF International Solidarity Committee for a time, identified issues that have kept women from full participation in their union:

Their minimal participation in union activities was due to a number of factors: viewing executive and leaders’ positions as men’s work; traditional values that encouraged women to stay at home and do women’s work; the double working days as wage earners and housewives; and their own lack of self-esteem in not believing they had the capacity to do union work. Some were also fearful of becoming involved, upsetting the status quo, and causing divisions between men and women (Kuczma, 1998, p. 59).

The double working day for women is difficult enough, but for many women it goes another step beyond. Often, because of low pay as teachers, they have to have to have a second paid job, as well as looking after home and family, for a triple working day. As an example of how one union tries to make this easier, the FREP in Panama assists its members to an extra income with a micro-credit system run by the union to

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finance the small income-generating projects that women teachers create. The economic situation in the region is such that improving the pay of teachers seems out of reach.

Fathers looking after children is unusual and day care is not generally available to Central American teacher activists. One of the first projects of the BCTF Status of Women program in the 1970s was to get the union to pay the cost of daycare for parents to take part in BCTF meetings. Those of us with families and active in the BCTF have children who grew up with BCTF day care at meetings and conferences. In the CoDev evaluation of the women’s programs, a question asking whether the participants’ unions paid for day care came up with a universal “no” (CoDevelopment Canada, 2003). Lack of alternatives for looking after their children is clearly an ongoing impediment to the full participation of women in their union.

Conflicts in the Union between Men and Women Teacher Activists

The Education International Fourth Report on the Situation of Women (EI, 2004) provides comparisons by EI region on a number of questions. All the EI member unions were asked to fill out a questionnaire. One question asks whether men attend the women’s caucuses or assemblies of the organization. The situation in Latin America is different from other areas. The report says that “The majority [of women’s assemblies] are also open to male participation (87%), but in general, men attend in an observer (77%) rather than a participant (23%) capacity, except in Latin America” (EI, 2004, p. 9).

This indication of an active participant role of men in the women’s programs is consistent with the reports from the many Codev monitoring reports. The impact of having men in the workshops has sometimes been reported to limit the participation of women. For example, “it was obvious in the one Sectional Assembly attended by a male
delegate, he tended to dominate the discussion: an understandable expression of the historical subordination of Guatemalan women” (Rader, 1995, p. 2).

The impact of raised consciousness and confidence has been identified in some CoDev reports as a source of conflict within the family. In the evaluation of the longest running program in 1995, that with SUTEP:

The majority of the interviewees state that their own consciousness-raising regarding their rights was accompanied by family conflicts. The Program has allowed them to gain self-confidence, to understand the nature of the conflicts and to be able to ease the tensions through strategic dialogue, by developing their capacity to convince and use other management skills exchanged among participants. (CoDevelopment Canada, 1995, p. 10)

A monitoring report four years later indicates the ongoing nature of the problem. The report says “Another problem (especially in the rural areas) is that many women also have trouble getting permission from their spouses to participate in the workshops” (Bensted, 1999, p. 9). The FREP women in Panama “allow men to attend the workshops; otherwise, there is resistance on the part of husbands to allow their wives to attend the workshops” (Smith and Rader, 1998, p. 8).

The CoDev program staff who visited COLPROSUMAH in 1998 said “I was told that the men were originally quite nervous about the whole leadership training program for women, fearing that they would be ‘kicked out on the street’ or that the women would become ‘too feminist’” (Smith and Rader, 1998, p. 11). A year later Cindy Mellon from CoDev reported that at a meeting with the COLPROSUMAH (Honduras) executive “It became obvious at the meeting that the women’s workshops are a thorn in the side for the men of the Executive” (Mellon, 1999, p. 15). The women who organized the workshops said there was a backlash taking place and the number of women on the executive had actually dropped after the workshops had begun.
In one country, conflict over control of funds became quite significant:

Most of the men on the executive want all the resources to be channeled through the executive; the Women’s Secretariat insists that they have the right to receive and manage their own money. The conflict is exacerbated by the fact that the women refuse to even inform the Executive what the activities of the project are....This control gives the women access to a certain level of organizational capacity and the men seem to see this as a competing organizational locus, especially given the hard times which the union is going through presently. (Rader, 1996, p. 7)

This is the most serious conflict reported from the projects, but to a lesser degree is repeated with many. The unions generally in Latin America have a high organizational capacity, but lack the funds to utilize that capacity. When the limited international financial support is designated for use for women’s programs, already existing gender conflicts over reallocation of power can be exacerbated. While the conflicts in this particular report became too great to continue programming, other changes in the BCTF/CoDev programs have provided some rebalancing. The IDEA Network and the regional programs of research related to neo-liberal education policies (detailed in Chapter 6) provide some resources for many of the unions to carry out work in addition to that supported through the women’s programs.

Some of the conflict may be reduced by strategies that defuse the negativity of men. The women leaders in the SEC (Costa Rica), with a majority of women on the executive, still asked for “additional training on how to manage leadership positions in a mixed organization where traditional attitudes still reign” (Rader, 1997, p. 7). However, resolving or even reducing these gender conflicts requires changes in the culture. ANDEN in Nicaragua has approached this as a social issue. At the concluding workshop for their project in 1994-95, a half day was set aside for a discussion with the male leaders of the union on gender relations and the social construction of personality (Rader,
ANDEN produced a booklet for the regional FOMCA women’s organization on “Masculinidad y Socialización” [“Masculinity and Socialization”] (ANDEN, 1998) that focused on gender characteristics being a result of social construction and not some natural state, and thus something that can be changed.

**Intercambio as a Source of Strength**

One of the lessons learned in the BCTF status of women program was that an essential part of making change has to be providing models and mutual support. Being the point person for cultural change can be a lonely role and seeing the approach and success of others can provide motivation for carrying on the work. An important aspect of the BCTF/CoDev programs with unions in Central America has been the creation of an annual workshop that brings together leaders of the projects throughout the region and provides models and mutual support and validation in difficult work. This opportunity for exchange—*intercambio*—is a source of strength of the regional program in Central America.

In discussions with leaders of ANDEN (Nicaragua) in 1990, Carmen Kuczma, then a member of the BCTF International Solidarity Committee, suggested a conference that would bring together women from the Central American countries. With leadership from ANDEN and financing from the BCTF, the first Central American conference was held in 1992. This was, Kuczma says, the first time that the women were able as an international group “to analyse from their point of view the reality of their problems and the way in which they could deal with them” (Kuczma, 2004, p. 1).

That conference developed into an annual event. In 1994, the executive of FOMCA (the Central American Teacher Union Organization) agreed to create a
Women's Secretariat, which has become the institutional base for the ongoing regional program. The conference moves from one country to another each year, with a representative from one of the unions in the host country acting as the executive member on the FOMCA executive. The effect of this has been "an enormous boost to national organizing efforts, as local women teachers come into contact with the most dynamic women leaders across Central America" (Rader, 1995, p. 2). However, the level of support from the mostly male executive of FOMCA for the women's secretariat has been an ongoing issue, with the women's secretary indicating in the 2003 evaluation of programs that the greatest challenge to the work has been "the lack of conviction by male teachers on the Federal Executive of FOMCA" (CoDev, 2003, p. 2).

One of the lessons from the FOMCA regional women's conferences was the value of what came to be called "South-South" exchanges. These are opportunities for groups to meet not with counterparts from the North, but others who faced situations and experiences that had more in common. Carmen Kuczma argued successfully that a variety of experiences could be provided within a "South-South-North" conference. It would include more countries than FOMCA's Central American conferences and would provide a venue for exchanges with Canadian women activists, as well as among those from Latin America. The BCTF sponsored this event during the summer of 1994. It was conceived as an exchange, and was called "Intercambio '94," from which this work has taken its name.

Eleven women who played key roles in the women's programs in ten unions traveled to Vancouver. Each of their unions worked either with a CoDev/BCTF project or with an OSSTF/CEQ/BCTF project. Part of the time the women discussed the impact
of the global economy on education and social services (Sreenivasan, 1997). Some of the sessions brought together women who had been active in the BCTF Status of Women program as well as women from other CTF affiliates with the delegates from the South. Other sessions were women from the South only meeting together, sharing their experiences and the successes and challenges of being women participating in their union. The positive feedback from this event helped to set the scene for later projects described in Chapter 6, involving the regional teacher research projects in Central America and the Southern Cone of South America.

**Impact of the Latin American Women’s Programs**

Despite all the difficulties described already, Carmen Kuczma was upbeat in reporting to the BCTF Status of Women program in 1998 on changes taking place in the countries where the projects have been in place. She found greater sensitivity to gender issues and more acceptance by men of the right of women to participate, although experiences detailed earlier showed that men’s attitudes were still a significant barrier for women. Perhaps most importantly, women are “beginning to build their own spaces within teacher organizations” (Kuczma, 1998, p. 60). She particularly found it encouraging that by 1998 in Nicaragua the national executive was 50% women and in Costa Rica 50% of the executive were women and a woman had been elected secretary general.

A more mixed view came through from the major evaluation of the women’s programs in Central America carried out by Clara Murguialday, a Spanish feminist who had been working in Central America. She identified a number of achievements, but also limitations and serious challenges (Murguialday, 1996).
Creation of Spaces for Women in Unions

A key achievement Murguialday found was the very existence of "spaces for women in the union environment" (Murguialday, 1996, p. 3). She heard from women of the difficulty in getting the union to accept that these spaces are of importance. She placed these in the context of the nature of the union movement's emphasis on class interests and consequent consideration of other factors like gender or ethnicity to be secondary. In addition, the nature of the struggles in the region meant that a very high priority was placed on unity, with spaces for women seen as possibly divisive. Counter pressures pushing for the creation of spaces for women have come from a range of sources: international solidarity, such as that from the CoDev/BCTF program; the UN World Summits on Women; requirements for loans from the World Bank, which have a "women in development" element; the women's movement within countries and, in some cases, the national governments.

A key to long term success, she contended, requires creating institutional legitimacy of the structures and the commitment of union resources, not just those from CoDev and the BCTF. She reported "the women members of these structures feel under permanent suspicion, afraid their leaders will criticize or question their work. They need to be careful to gain their leaders' approval in order to feel secure for the path they have chosen" (Murguialday, 1996, p. 4).

This dilemma was highlighted when Murguialday made a presentation to the participants at one of the FOMCA regional women's conferences. She insisted that men not be included in the meeting to facilitate an open discussion among the women. Some of the male executive members of FOMCA were very upset about this being a space for
women closed to them. Some of the women then would not participate in the session.

While Murguialday saw a women-only space to be essential, some of the FOMCA women had a different concern. They felt that if the men did not attend meetings that talked about gender issues, then women's issues and women would continue to be marginalized in the union. They said that Murguialday brought a European-feminist perspective (she is Spanish) that did not fit the context of Central America.

Questions of Female Identity and Rights

Murguialday brought to the task of evaluating the programs a hope to see several things that she thought would most contribute to "an education that may help eliminate the subordination of women" (Murguialday, 1996, p. 15). One area she proposed was growth beyond a focus on the participation in their unions to more difficult questions of female identity, sexual and reproductive rights, family structures, the double work day and the relationship of gender values to culture. Her proposed strategy for getting into these issues involved reaching out to feminists from outside the union and to develop an analysis and a program that would incorporate these issues into the union. A second strategy was identification of the structural factors that limited women's participation in the union and a program to change the union to overcome these. For example, since two thirds of members of the union are women, union training on issues other than gender should still have women as two thirds of the participants. Overall, Murguialday was positive about achievement of increased involvement in the union by women, but felt that it was the qualities of the women that produced these, rather than "systematic action
directed at overcoming the obstacles that block women’s participation” (Murguialday, 1996, p. 11).

Tensions Around Use of Outside Resources

While taking the programs in a more feminist direction was outlined as a possibility, some of the male union leaders were pushing for other directions. Some insisted that men should be participants in the gender workshops and many of the activities have included males. Concerns were also raised that the outside resources were only supporting gender programs and that other important aspects of the union’s work did not have resources, particularly in opposing the neo-liberal policies that have an ongoing negative impact on public education as well as teachers’ labour rights.

After the Murguialday evaluation, the CoDev/BCTF program continued to work with most of the same unions and tried to deepen the gender analysis as a part of the process. In 2003 an evaluation meeting was held in Panama, bringing together women from each of the unions in FOMCA, as well as from Peru. Then BCTF First Vice-president, Jinny Sims, attended the meeting and wrote a report for the BCTF. Participants shared examples of successes, she reported, with the inclusion of more women in executive leadership positions in their union. The training workshops were described as invaluable in developing skills and confidence. However, there is still a long way to go. Many of the women “still often feel marginalized in their union and often do not get information until after their male colleagues.” The challenges they face are not just in the union. “Many husbands oppose their spouses taking part in the union leadership—sometimes responding with violence. Even other women teachers
sometimes see them as 'crazy' because they challenge the traditional role of women in their society” (Sims, 2003).

When participants in the evaluation responded to a question about the major success of their project, all identified more participation of women—in their union, in leadership positions and in a strengthened membership.

**Contradictions of Intercambio?**

The principles on which the BCTF International Solidarity Program claims to operate talk about mutuality. Programs are supposed to reflect the aims and needs of the union that is a partner with the BCTF, not have BCTF interests from the North imposed on the union, as a form of NGO or union imperialism. How is it then, that many of the BCTF projects since the program expanded in the early 1980s have not been based on the priorities of the existing leaders of the unions?

**Reluctance of Men in the Unions to Support Gender Initiatives**

A common theme in the monitoring reports from CoDev on the women’s projects is one of reluctance on the part of the men in leadership positions to have these programs operate in their unions. It is easy to conclude that this is a matter of self-interest. If men make up 20% of the teaching force, but close to 100% of the leadership of the union, then empowering women will clearly reduce the opportunities for men to hold leadership positions. In the absence of other reward systems, like earning a salary that is adequate to support a family, the recognition and status of being a union leader is a particularly valued reward. The fact that it may mean being engaged in ongoing conflict with government and even prison on occasion, does not diminish the reward of being a union leader.
However, it would be too glib to just leave the issue as one of recognition and status. A serious political position is put forward by a union leader in Bolivia, as reported by Lee Bensted, the CoDevelopment Canada program officer, from a monitoring report in 1999:

[He] also said he believes there is a vision from the North that women in Latin America are totally oppressed, discriminated against, and that therefore training should focus exclusively on their needs. However, in doing so the projects are discriminating against men. Women who emerge as leaders need to be leaders in all aspects, and not just on women’s issues. For example, it is important that workshops also focus on issues such as globalization. According to [him], “it is the system that is oppressive, not men!” (Bensted, 1999, p. 6)

Justifications for Women’s Programs: Stronger Unions and Human Rights

Bensted responded to this by making one of the two central arguments for the women’s programs. She told the Bolivian union leader that engaging women would “inevitably strengthen the union as a whole if it is carried out effectively” (Bensted, 1999, p. 7). Concrete examples that support this contention can be found in the experience of other Latin American unions. For example, in Costa Rica, with open shop labour laws that permit individual teachers to choose whether to belong to a union or not, when the union SEC began its gender project, the membership was about 50-50 in gender makeup. By 2000, women made up about 80% of the union membership and a strong majority on the executive, reflecting the makeup of the teaching force. CoDev program officer, Steve Stewart, reported that “The activists I met with felt that this change is due to more women opting to join the union as they saw it more closely reflecting their needs and interests” (Stewart, 2000, p. 5).

The other central reason for supporting women’s empowerment programs is a matter of rights. In its “Fourth Report on the Situation of Women in Member
Organizations, in Education and in Society,” the Education International committee on the status of women quotes the fundamental objectives set out in the EI Constitution. Article 2, Section h) states EI opposition to all forms of discrimination and Section j) directs the EI “to give particular attention to developing the leadership role and involvement of women in society, in the teaching profession and in organisations of teachers and education employees” (EI, 2004). The BCTF/CoDev projects certainly fit within these objectives, which in turn fit within the claim to universality of rights that has become a standard since the Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the UN in 1948.

Education International in an editorial in its bulletin, Development Cooperation, highlighted the contradictions. It argues strongly for the necessity for long-term, mutually beneficial relationships between partner organizations. It points out that “it is unfortunately still the case, that in some instances, the donor organization determines the priority.” It then goes on to point out that in the case of gender programs there is a counter argument:

In some instances, a male dominated union leadership accepted a gender programme that they considered a ‘donor project.’ It was only after the women in the union gained strength through these projects that the union as a whole made changes. This is something the male leadership would not have initiated if they had anticipated the result. (Education International, 2002)

Social change that interrupts deeply imbedded cultural and social patterns requires a long-lasting, sustained effort, and will produce pain for some. Moving toward gender equity at home and internationally has been an important element of the values, policies and programs of the BCTF. The BCTF international solidarity projects in Latin America have particularly had this focus—and continue to do so. It is not surprising that one of
the initial members of the BCTF Task Force on the Status of Women, Julia Goulden, played a key role as well in the creation of CoDevelopment Canada and as a board member contributed to its continued focus on gender issues in partnership with the BCTF.

Delegates from the union women’s programs in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and Costa Rica came together for another evaluation meeting in 2004. A summary report notes that looking back to the time before the programs, “While 80% of the makeup of teachers nationwide was female, there was a pyramid scheme visible in the decision making process, where women’s participation dropped off at higher levels of power.” In contrast, today we “use collective strength within our countries to construct a scene where we women are active participants in our organizations. Women take on leadership roles at national level not just in gender related fields, but other fields as well. There is increased awareness and empowerment among women and more sensitivity among men regarding the importance of women’s politico-social participation” (CoDevelopment Canada, 2004).

One story told by Maria Trejos from Costa Rica gives a wonderful assessment of the impact of the women’s programs. She told of this experience when she participated as a facilitator of a training program at the BCTF in the fall of 2005. She and another teacher are doing non-sexist pedagogy workshops for men and women teachers in rural areas of Costa Rica, sponsored by the Costa Rican government—an outgrowth of the non-sexist pedagogy work supported by the CTF, BCTF and CoDevelopment Canada. She described a male teacher who came to the workshop reluctantly. However, by the end of the workshop, he was convinced that his classroom practices had to change to
reflect a non-sexist pedagogy. But he also said that if a change had to take place in his classroom that it also had to happen at home. He would now sweep outside where others could see him sharing the work of the household, rather than helping out only in chores that would not be visible to others in his community.

**Women's Programs and the Development of Intercambio**

Changes in the social-political context in Canada—increasing the status and participation of women in society, education and union—reshaped and defined the concrete form of BCTF internationalism as well. Internationalism moved beyond meetings and beyond professional development into programs aimed at social change through the empowerment of women teachers in their union and their society. It also gave a name, *intercambio*, to the mutuality and reciprocity aimed at within the programs and between those in the North and in the South.
CHAPTER FIVE: *INTERCAMBIO*: TEACHER-TO-TEACHER, UNION-TO-UNION

The exchange and interchange of the *intercambio* approach as described to this point has been primarily linkages on an organization-to-organization basis or, in the case of Project Overseas, a teacher-to-teacher basis. The focus in this chapter is on the development of international programs that incorporate both links, those between individual teachers and between their unions. These projects have created the conditions for individual members, representing the union, to develop personal commitments that link the social justice commitments of the BCTF with the *intercambio* form of internationalism.

Further, these are programs with a political edge, advocacy or social change focus in contrast to the more conservative approaches generally taken by CTF programs—although the CTF has had a role in portions of the work described here in South Africa and Namibia. The BCTF international program wanted its internationalist work to engage activists directly in areas that had a political edge that would contribute to changes in the direction of social justice. Southern Africa was an obvious place to work at the time the program had its new resources and mandate. The campaign against the apartheid system was a major international social justice struggle that engaged people in many countries, including Canada.

Working with Cuba obviously also has a political edge. Cuba is a poor country, yet also well developed, particularly in education. Its ability to withstand the U.S. embargo for more than forty years, albeit at great cost, makes it a country of interest to many Canadians. In fact, Canada is the third largest trading partner with Cuba, with
much of that trade coming in the form of tourism. Many B.C. teachers have been a part of the Cuban holiday experience, and were interested in more than tourism, as demonstrated by a project for retired teachers who chose to go to work in schools rather than just for a holiday. When the Canadian government encouraged programs that built links with civil society in Cuba, this seemed consistent with the *intercambio* philosophy.

Rich solidarity experiences of B.C. teachers from the exchange and interchange with teachers from South Africa, Namibia, and Cuba in turn strengthen the commitment of the BCTF as an organization to internationalism.

**Project Overseas and Shifts in Conception of International Work**

As detailed in Chapter Three, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the BCTF did its international work almost entirely through the Canadian Teachers' Federation program which was initially called Project Africa, and then later expanded and renamed as Project Overseas. For the first two decades of Project Overseas, the BCTF sent a larger number of teachers on this project than any other CTF affiliated union.

The BCTF was still contributing about a third of participants in Project Overseas, with 15 going each year at the time, when the International Solidarity Committee was created in 1983. With the expanded resources and the new International Solidarity Program and Committee in place, Project Overseas came under serious examination by the BCTF committee. A number of elements were identified in a BCTF critique: lack of adequate links between the Canadian provincial unions and the unions in the developing country; lack of adequate linking of the individual teachers going overseas to their provincial union in Canada; lack of follow-up and building of an ongoing link among the teachers and the unions. Certainly there were elements of Project Overseas that had the
*intercambio* qualities. In particular, from its early years Project Overseas was structured to have the host union identify teachers from among its members who would be co-facilitators of the in-service programs. The ideal was expressed in an Appendix to the International Relations Committee Minutes in 1970, where “ideas from discussions” included a proposal, which said:

The receiving country should be able to conduct courses themselves after CTF has assisted them with a two-or-three-year plan. They could be trained in how to use the resources developed while CTF has been helping them. (CTF International Relations Committee, 1970)

This was an idea that was seldom carried out successfully. In explaining a reduction in the number of Project Overseas participants to four annually, in a 1994 memo to the BCTF Representative Assembly, I said “projects must be evaluated on whether they contribute to sustainable institutional development. In other words, it is no longer good enough to support projects in countries in the South that provide a rich experience for people from the North, but contribute little to development in the South” (Kuehn, 1994). However, I should note that, a decade later, my critique of this aspect of the program is tempered by our own experience with how difficult sustainability is to achieve, whatever the intentions.

The BCTF critique of the approach of Project Overseas was not to say that the program was seen as without merit. In a debriefing the BCTF did with its Project Overseas participants in 1990, comments about positive aspects of their participation included: “Meeting teachers, warm feelings, connecting, sense of accomplishment, helps to focus personal growth.” In identifying impact on them as individuals, one said it had led to “questioning materialist excessiveness” (Kuehn, 1991). Again, I pointed out in the 1994 memo that the experience provided participants with “a much wider perspective on
global issues, as well as a clearer understanding of both the differences and similarities in the situations and problems faced by teachers” (Kuehn, 1994).

Although no one has conducted research on the impact of Project Overseas, Canadian participants in Project Overseas from B.C. and elsewhere continue to describe it as a powerful experience for themselves and believe it is positive for the teachers who are co-facilitators and those who are participants in the in-service. One BCTF local activist, Steve Fairbairn, who participated in St.Vincent/Grenadines in 2001, said:

We taught about Canada. We joked with one another. We left a flag in the union hall. We made laughter. We shared knowledge. We listened. We didn’t judge. We didn’t criticize. We asked for nothing, and we gave as much as we could. I returned with a better understanding of cultural differences, of the effects of cultural genocide at the hands of the old world powers, and a greater fear of globalization and how it will affect developing countries. The experience has shown me how hard we must work to maintain what we have, how hard others are working to get a fraction of what we have. I began the summer being proud of who and what I am. I ended up being even prouder; I am proud to be a Canadian and proud to be a teacher. (Fairbairn, 2001)

However, Project Overseas had not really evolved much conceptually beyond its initial approach. There was a direct link between the CTF and the host union—the CTF provides a block of funding to the host, which is often very important to the ongoing operation of the union. The Canadian facilitators work with facilitators identified by the host union. The individual teachers in the host country are provided what is generally a high quality of in-service training that otherwise would not be available to them. The individual Canadian teachers who go on Project Overseas are often profoundly affected, giving them an experience that leads to changes in their lives and their teaching. They often incorporate aspects of their experience into their teaching practice. However, the impact seems to be largely on individuals, both those from Canada who facilitate the in-service training and the co-facilitators and teachers who participate in this training. The
International Solidarity Committee and staff felt that more union-to-union exchange was important, more of the concept of *intercambio* as an interchange that involved the unions as institutions, as well as the individual members.

The BCTF International Program committee and staff took actions to make improvements in the Project Overseas experience in areas that the BCTF could influence. In addition to communicating concerns and suggestions to CTF, the program created some activities to address the perceived shortcomings. The CTF holds an orientation for all the facilitators in Ottawa before they go overseas, an element present in the program since the mid-1960s. Understandably the orientation is focused on preparing for intercultural work and forming the teams that would work in each country. The BCTF experience was, at least by the 1980s, that many of its members who were selected were not activists in the BCTF and didn’t have a very deep knowledge of the union and its programs. They were often asked by the teachers in the host country about their union, with questions that they were unable to answer. To deal with that, a BCTF orientation was organized to ensure that Federation members participating would be knowledgeable about the union. The orientation also included encouragement and suggestions for how teachers might incorporate their experience when they returned in their teaching and in working with colleagues. Often Project Overseas participants write about their experience for publication, as a way of sharing the perspective they gained. They were encouraged in the orientation to also think about creating a global education project to use with students and to offer to colleagues. A follow-up session was held in the fall, after the participants had returned to B.C., where participants spoke about their Project Overseas experience and exchanged whatever materials or units they had developed.
These were thought to be positive additions, but still did not integrate with the BCTF work as it was developing. Most of the new BCTF projects were focused in Latin America, and because few Canadian teachers speak Spanish, Project Overseas programs would not be possible with the unions with which we were working. The BCTF philosophy was evolving to one of looking at union capacity building as potentially making a greater impact for the long term than teacher in-service. This was based on a strategic assessment that a teacher union could have an impact on improving both the quality of education and the conditions under which its members worked if it could be effective in pressuring government to provide more resources for education. An improved organizational capacity could allow it to train its activists to be effective advocates at the school and with government. As well, access to in-service education on an ongoing basis could be improved without it being dependent on international project funding. The ideal would to achieve what CIDA has called “sustainability,” meaning that the union itself is able to continue the program after the end of the international project.

Capacity building seemed to require long-term commitments to work if it was to be successful. It couldn’t depend on a single shot of training or funding for a single project for a year. Unions were, after all, political organizations and leaders often change with new elections or when an individual decides it is time to move on and do something else. Institutional relationships that extend beyond individual participation require formal links, such as those that were to develop in the women’s programs in Latin America, described in the previous chapter.

CTF had since the late 1960s provided some organizational support or training to unions, separately from Project Overseas. That was expanded in the 1980s into a second
program that often drew on staff from the affiliated provincial unions to work with unions in some countries in Asia and Africa. It also included a program called the John Thompson Fellowship, a training program for union leaders in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean that brought them to Canada for a combination of workshops in Ottawa and placement with provincial teacher unions for a one or two week period, with the objective of examining how the union carries out collective bargaining, professional development or other programs.

The Thompson Fellowship now provides training in the regions of Africa, Asia and the Caribbean so that more union officers are able to take part than is possible if they are brought to Canada. While the larger numbers participating is positive, the aspect of personal connections between union leaders in Canada and developing countries is lost. Only the Caribbean unions are close enough to make it possible for some of the Thompson Fellowship participants to also spend some time with provincial unions in Canada. Three Caribbean participants have had an attachment to the BCTF, including Cobin Hinds from Barbados who had this to say about his experience:

There is no doubt that this attachment is worth having for it exposes persons from so-called Third World countries to new methods, new trends and we discover as well these are matters of mutual interests, mutual concerns and issues are the same regardless of a country’s size, population or ethnicity. Teachers’ problems are similar. Place may be different, situations may change but the goals of the organizations are similar. (Hinds, 2003, p. 11)

Despite the positive response to the program, it still does not meet the objective of combining organizational development to teacher-to-teacher links. The Thompson Fellowship is not integrated with Project Overseas and the lack of an integrated structure of these programs did not achieve what those of us in the leadership of the BCTF international program thought would be most satisfactory—programs that link the
organizations, and, where possible, provide an opportunity for activists in the unions to work together, sharing experiences that are relevant to the development of our unions and through our unions, improve the conditions for education. We hoped that the *intercambio* experience could be achieved by concentrating on a limited number of unions that we would work with, and incorporating the organizational and teacher linking aspects to create deeper and longer lasting experiences.

The remainder of this chapter examines three cases where those goals have succeeded to a fair degree—in South Africa, Namibia and Cuba.

**Southern Africa Becomes a Focus of the BCTF International Program**

Southern Africa joined Latin America as an area of BCTF focus because of several factors. One was certainly that it was an area of my political work in the period before I was hired on the staff of the BCTF, and thus an interest that I brought to the program. However, it was also an area of interest to others in the organization, as indicated by BCTF participation in the Vancouver Anti-apartheid Network. I was the BCTF representative to the Network and was its chair. Another factor was opportunity. The capacity to expand the BCTF program coincided with a period of rapid change in the Southern Africa region. New teacher unions had been created that would likely play an important role in the restructuring of society and education in a post-apartheid era, and the possibility of making even a small contribution to that process was exciting. Further, the European language used in the region was primarily English, making it easier to find ways to engage some of our members directly in the work.

The struggle against apartheid, particularly in the 1980s, had probably the largest international base of any social struggle since the campaign against slavery in the 1800s.
This extended to British Columbia, and was how I got linked to Southern Africa. In 1976 I was the president of the BCTF local in Kamloops, and one of the executive members, Gamien Harris, was a South African exile. That was the year that the children's crusade against apartheid began, when students in Soweto demonstrated against the education policies that were going to require them to be educated in Afrikaans, rather than English. It would take another 20 years for apartheid to end, but this was really the beginning of the phase of struggle that would eventually succeed. Most of Gamien's family still lived in South Africa in the Cape area, and some of his nieces and nephews took part in the protests that had spread well beyond Soweto. On several occasions, Gamien came to my office before meetings and read me sections of letters from his family about what was happening, letters that were very moving, particularly because they involved such young people who were prepared to challenge the incredible force of a militarized state with really nothing more than their anger and defiance.

Over the next few years, the level of protests in South Africa declined and my attention was focused on the work that I was doing for the local, and then as a BCTF executive member and eventually president of the BCTF from 1981 to 1984. Defiance in South Africa exploded again in 1986, and it engaged a broader range of groups prepared to challenge the system, including unions which had developed significantly during the previous decade, church leaders like Archbishop Desmond Tutu and civil society groups that went under the general name of the Mass Democratic Movement. These events in South Africa also re-energized the solidarity movement in Vancouver and Canada, and, having completed my service as an elected BCTF officer, led me to commit much of my political focus to solidarity work.
One aspect was working with several other activists to put together a Vancouver-based umbrella group, the Anti-apartheid Network. The network included international development NGOs (Non-governmental Organizations), such as Oxfam, a number of unions, and several activist solidarity groups, as well as a group of South African exiles who acted as a branch of the African National Congress (ANC) in Vancouver.

Another aspect of my anti-apartheid work was as a board member of IDAFSA-Canada. This was the Canadian branch of International Defense and Aid for South Africa (IDAFLSA), an organization with headquarters in the United Kingdom, linked to branches in a number of countries. IDAFSA played a central role in the global opposition to apartheid through a range of activities, including some that were very illegal in South Africa. It had been formed in the 1950s to provide a legal defense for activists who were challenging the new apartheid laws. The organization had been banned by the South African government, which meant that it could not operate legally and anyone who had anything to do with it was breaking the law. At that point, it was reconstituted in London, employing a number of activists who had gone into exile (New Internationalist, 1983).

The most public part of the mandate of the organization was “to keep the conscience of the world alive to the issues at stake” (New Internationalist, 1983). It did this by publishing books, producing movies and then videos, designing powerful posters, organizing speaking tours of exiles and working the media in any way possible. It also had a huge clandestine network that got money into South Africa to pay for the legal defense of anti-apartheid activists and to support the families of those who had been imprisoned for their opposition to apartheid.
As a board member from B.C., I was responsible for organizing activities that would keep the conscience alive. I arranged engagements for speakers that included the first of the Rivonia trial defendants imprisoned with Nelson Mandela to be released, a white South African named Denis Goldberg; Walter Sisulu, another of the Rivonia trialists released before Mandela and a revered leader of the ANC; Donald Woods, the journalist author of *Cry Freedom*, a book about Steven Biko and how Woods was forced into exile because of his link to Biko; and Al Cook, the head of the publishing arm of IDAFSA in London.

The other aspect of the work was as a part of the clandestine network that got money into South Africa. The Mulroney Progressive Conservative government took very good positions in support of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. The Canadian government went so far as to challenge Margaret Thatcher's support for the South African government in very public ways. Much less known is that it also provided significant funding to apartheid opponents. Some of it was distributed within South Africa to non-governmental groups, particularly those involved in education, such as the National Education Crisis Committee. Some of the Canadian funds went to IDAFSA-Canada—more than a million dollars a year in the late 1980s on a 9 to 1 matching to the funds we raised from Canadians. The most amazing aspect of this is that the money could not be accounted for in the traditional ways because it had to be transferred to South Africa secretly.

The system involved networks where neither the sender nor the receiver could know that the money was coming through IDAFSA. The receiver couldn't know because it was illegal to have any communication with a banned organization, and a person could...
be imprisoned simply for receiving the money. Nor could the people sending the money know who was providing the funds they were sending. If they knew, they might inadvertently tell the person they were sending it what the source was. Also, South Africa was believed to have extensive security networks operating in countries where anti-apartheid movements were active and it was likely that they had infiltrated the anti-apartheid networks outside South Africa as well as inside.

The IDAFSA funds aimed at paying for the legal defense of those in court went through lawyers. IDAFSA provided funding to law firms which, in turn, sent the money to law firms in South Africa to cover legal costs. This was relatively easy compared to getting the money to the families of people imprisoned.

The money for families was transferred by a network of people three steps away from IDAFSA. IDAFSA transferred the money to a person who had no formal connection to the organization. This person maintained the accounts and distributed the money. She would send the money to a contact, such as my wife, along with the addresses of individuals the money was to go to and an indication of how much was to be sent. My wife had recruited a number of friends to be the contacts, none of whom were told where the money was coming from. Each of these people would buy postal money orders for the amount to be transferred, usually around $100 at a time for a family, depending on how many dependants there were. They would write letters to the person, telling them that a friend had told them about the family and that they would be sending money on a regular basis, about quarterly. They would not make mention even of the family member who was imprisoned, but would ask the person to write back saying that the money had been received and how the family was doing. The receipts for the postal
money orders and the letters of reply would be given by the person who had transferred the money to the contact, who in turn would send them to the person who distributed the money and the contact addresses.

This system had been in place for about 20 years in some other countries before an IDAFSA chapter had been created in Canada. Much of the money had come from governments in Europe, particularly from the Nordic countries. I had been on the IDAFSA-Canada board for some time before I was told about the system and asked to set up a network of people in Vancouver to send funds. The system was never discussed at board meetings and people were brought in only after ensuring that they could be trusted.

Although much of this work on my part was not directly on behalf of the BCTF, my links with the Federation were useful. Many BCTF activists would respond to fundraising appeals and come out to events. Motions were passed at BCTF meetings in support of activities. When Nelson Mandela was released from prison in February 1990, we were able to use the auditorium in the BCTF to hold an impromptu celebration. Hundreds of people showed up with notice only through a phone tree the night before—before the days of email. During much of the time of these activities in the late 1980s, I was neither an elected officer nor a member of the staff of the BCTF. For a part of the time I worked for the CUSO Vancouver office and at IDERA, another international development NGO that specialized in distributing films from countries in the South.

When I was appointed to the staff of the BCTF in 1988 as Director of the Organizational Support Division (a combination of governance and communications), the International Solidarity Program was one piece of the work that I picked up. At that point I had been the executive member who had written much of the policy that was a
mandate for the program, I had for a short time been a member of the International Solidarity Committee, and now had the staff responsibility for directing the program. While the women's programs, not surprisingly, had been framed largely by colleagues who had come out of the feminist movement and the Status of Women program, there was space now for me to develop BCTF programs that focused on Southern Africa.

**CTF Opens the Way for BCTF Work in South Africa**

Given the critique of CTF international programs that has been described earlier, it is perhaps ironic that the BCTF work directly in South Africa was initiated by CTF. Bob Buzza, the BCTF Executive Director, had worked on a project in the 1980s with the African Teachers' Association of South Africa (ATASA). There had been some controversy within the BCTF over whether it was appropriate to work with ATASA, since it was a segregated union, as were all the officially recognized unions. However, the WCOTP had recognized ATASA as the South African teacher union that could be a member in that international organization, so Bob did go as a facilitator of a project.

The apartheid system created separate education systems according to its legal definitions of different racial groups and its creation of different "homelands" for African groups—18 separate education departments in all. The unions that represented teachers were also based on the racially-defined school systems. ATASA represented most of the teachers in the black school systems, both in the provinces and homelands. Other unions represented Indian, "coloured," Afrikaner and English white teachers. In addition, a number of new unions were created, mostly by teachers who were committed to the struggle against apartheid through the education system, and who felt that the established
unions were either supporters of the system of apartheid or not challenging the system adequately.

By the end of the 1980s, change was taking place quite rapidly both in South Africa in general and in the teacher unions, in particular. The WCOTP had taken the initiative to bring together representatives of all the teacher unions in South Africa. The full range of unions were included, both those with official government recognition, like ATASA and equivalent unions in the "coloured," "Indian" and white schools, and the smaller unions that did not have recognition, but were active in challenging the apartheid education system. The teacher unity meeting had to take place outside the country, and the representatives traveled to Zimbabwe to meet. Out of these meetings came an agreement by most of the leadership to take part in the launch of a new, non-racial teacher union. As a part of the agreement, the organizations would turn over their resources to the new union and urge their members to join it.

During this period, the CTF had initiated a two-year communications project with ATASA. It was aimed at providing training for the officers responsible for producing the publications of each of the provincial and homeland union publications. In 1989, the first year of the project, about 25 South Africans were selected to take part in the three-week workshop. The facilitator was to be Tim Johnston, the communications officer for the Alberta Teachers' Association and the editor of their magazine. However, the South African government would not give Tim a visa, so the workshop had to be moved at the last minute to Swaziland, next door to South Africa. With the move, several participants from SNAT (Swaziland National Association of Teachers) were added to the workshop.
The second year of the program was set for three weeks in June and July of 1990 and I was asked by CTF to be the facilitator. The focus for this phase of the program was on the use of computers for the publication process. The situation in South Africa had changed dramatically during that time, best symbolized by the release from prison of Nelson Mandela in February. I had assumed that if Tim had been refused a visa, and he had not been active in the anti-apartheid movement, that as someone who had been on the board of a banned organization (IDAFSA), I would be turned down as well. Such was not the case. The visa was processed and confirmed very quickly.

I arrived at the hotel in downtown Johannesburg to find that I had about a dozen computers in boxes that had to be set up in what was the former hotel disco, complete with mirrors to reflect a flashing globe. I hadn't exactly anticipated being the technician, but I learned, by trial and error, a lot in a couple of days. As a part of the teacher unity agreement, these computers, purchased by CTF, would go to the new organization after it was launched in October.

Twenty-nine people took part in the workshop, coming from the ATASA affiliated unions, from the SNAT in Swaziland, and the staff of the national ATASA office in Soweto. Only a handful of the group had even used a typewriter before, so much of the workshop focused on the basics of using a computer, learning to type, as well as writing stories which could be printed and the layout of the printed text into a newsletter. For the three weeks we worked ten hours a day, six days a week. It was the most exhausting teaching that I had ever done, but also the most rewarding.

It was a fascinating time to be in South Africa. Every day brought signs of change taking place. One of the ATASA staff recalled only a few years before being
refused entry to the disco where we were working on the computers. The white hotel staff did everything they could to assure the participants that they were happy to have the group there and to suggest that they hadn’t really been in favour of the old regime that was crumbling.

We did take one day off to tour around Johannesburg and have a braai (South African BBQ) at the home of one of the ATASA staff in Soweto. We had an experience on the tour that captured nicely the change that was taking place. One of the places we visited was the headquarters of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). It was a modern building with various studios and huge antennas of top of the building, high enough to be seen from much of Johannesburg.

One of the Swazis, Memory, had his camera with him and started taking pictures in the atrium of the SABC. Almost immediately, two security guards came over and grabbed him, taking him through a door into some unknown part of the building. We were not sure what to do, or what might happen to him. We all certainly knew enough of stories of what happened to people in custody. After a few minutes, Memory came out the door with a smile on his face. We asked him what had happened. He said that they did not even question him. Several security officers were there arguing among themselves whether it was OK to take photographs at the SABC in the “new South Africa.” Almost daily small incidents like this were symptomatic of this transition—seeing ANC t-shirts sold by informal traders on the street, and going places with little sense that it was breaking a taboo for me to be with black folks. This particularly struck me, knowing that just a year earlier Tim had not even been able to get into the country.
In October of 1990, this new union, the South African Democratic Teachers’ Union (SADTU), held its “launch” Congress. The ATASA unions that had been represented in the training I had facilitated were a part of that conference, although one of them later opted to join a competing federation that included the white unions. One BCTF member, Kitty O’Callaghan, represented the Canadian Teachers’ Federation at the launch as the president of CTF.

The direct BCTF connection with SADTU was made just a few weeks later, when CTF sponsored a cross-Canada tour of the president, Shepherd Mdladlana, and general secretary, Randall Van Den Heever, of SADTU. Shepherd had come to SADTU from one of the activist unions and Randall from the union that represented the “coloured” teachers in the Cape province. The tour had a double purpose. One was to give a quick orientation to the range of activities of Canadian teacher unions. The BCTF experience seemed relevant to organizing a new union because only two years earlier the BCTF had to sign up all its members again because its membership provisions had been nullified by legislation. During that time, it had achieved full bargaining rights and had negotiated first contracts. Much of the time Shepherd and Randall were at the BCTF was spent in talking about the strategies the BCTF had used and providing them with various handbooks and member resources we had developed. The other purpose for their tour across Canada from the CTF perspective was to encourage the various Canadian unions to become part of a project to financially support SADTU during its organizing phase. The BCTF agreed to match the CTF budget of $50,000 a year for three years to assist SADTU in its organizing and in signing up members.
In 1991, the WCOTP organized a consultation in South Africa with SADTU. Part of its purpose was to plan with the national executive the future direction of international support for SADTU. One aspect of that session stands out for me still. In the midst of trying to organize a new union in circumstances that were still quite fluid and might change in the negative very quickly, the executive was already talking about their responsibility to return the international assistance they were receiving by playing a similar role with other teacher unions in Africa. They have kept this commitment to provide support to teacher unions in Mozambique, Swaziland and Rwanda, that I am aware of, and probably a lot more.

Another reason for the 1991 meetings was to demonstrate to South African teachers that SADTU had the support of the international organizations. Although it was still a fledgling union, it needed to show that in the new South Africa that was emerging, it was the organization that would end up being the major teacher union. Some of the apartheid-era organizations, including the ATASA affiliate in KwaZulu-Natal, had formed a competing organization that was structured as a federation of the existing segregated unions. In contrast, SADTU was open to members of any race and each member affiliated directly to SADTU, rather than through an affiliated union. An element of sending the message that it was SADTU, and not the alternative federation, that would have the international support was sending the international representatives to several public meetings around the country and inviting teachers to attend. I took part in three of these meetings as a representative of the BCTF and CTF. Others who participated were Tom Bediako, the staff person for the WCOTP Africa office and representatives from the Swedish and Norwegian teachers, the other unions that along
with CTF/BCTF were providing the bulk of the funds to support SADTU during its period of organizing members.

SADTU was able to consolidate support and it was clear that after the election of a new government, that it had a good chance of becoming the major teacher organization. As the first elections in 1994 for a post-apartheid government approached, the SADTU leadership decided that Shepherd and Randall could run for Parliament as a part of the ANC/COSATU/SACP (African National Congress/Congress of South African Trade Unions/South African Communist Party) Alliance slate. Both were elected, and Shepherd (now using his African name, Membathisi) Mdladlane, later became the Minister of Labour in the ANC government, a post he still holds in 2006.

The expectation was that after these two leaders were elected to Parliament, that the Deputy General Secretary, Thulas Nxesi (the current president of Education International) would become General Secretary. A concern of SADTU was that most of its leaders had been very effective activists in opposing apartheid, but that running an organization required different skills. Few of them had any opportunity for any administrative experience, such as that required to effectively run a formal organization on a day to day basis. Based on their experience with various international organizations, the two leaders who had toured Canada in 1990 felt that it would be useful for Thulas to come to BC for a period of several months to study the BCTF approaches to union administration and training of its local officers. Thus, in the summer of 1993, Thulas came to Vancouver for a work/study attachment to the BCTF for a three-month period.

Towards the end of his time working at the BCTF, Thulas identified the school union representative training program as an activity carried out by the BCTF that could
be of immediate and significant use to SADTU. Few activists had training in the specific role of union representative. Those with experience were being pulled out of the union into other roles in government, either as elected officials in municipal, provincial and national offices or filling new positions in the government bureaucracy that had previously been reserved for whites only. It was clear to him that this type of training would be an ongoing need.

**BCTF and SADTU—*Intercambio* in Training Programs**

The *intercambio* concept has been very much a part of the relationship of the BCTF with SADTU. The recommendations of Thulas were developed into a training program which BCTF and SADTU activists co-developed and facilitated. This program ran for three weeks in 1994 and 1995, developing the workshops that SADTU facilitators would continue using in training activists. Among the BCTF participants were David Chudnovsky, later elected as BCTF president, and two activists who later joined the staff of the BCTF, Christina Schut and Carrole Whitwell. This program was, along with a parallel program in Namibia discussed later, the first of the teacher-to-teacher BCTF programs that were envisioned when the decision was made to reduce the participation in CTF’s Project Overseas and to find direct ways for B.C. teachers to work with union colleagues in other countries, with a focus on building institutional capacity in unions.

Although the union activist training program was only a two-year program, with SADTU taking full responsibility for carrying it further, other exchanges maintained the link between SADTU and the BCTF. A group of eleven communications officers from the SADTU and its provincial branches came to B.C. in 1998 and visited locals around the province, talking about developments in South Africa and sharing ideas about union
communications (Chudnovsky, 1998). A group of B.C. teachers went to South Africa in 1999 in a return exchange, organized by David Chudnovsky. The SADTU president, Willy Madisha, spoke at the BCTF AGM in March of 2000 and David Chudnovsky as president of the BCTF spoke at the SADTU Congress on its tenth anniversary in August 2000. When he returned home, David proposed a project for holding membership meetings around the B.C. based on a model used by SADTU that he had heard about at the SADTU Congress, demonstrating again the mutuality of the intercambio approach to internationalism.

When the CTF wanted to sponsor a training program for unions in Southern Africa in 2001 and 2002, the BCTF agreed to fund the project and provide a facilitator to work with a SADTU member and a Norwegian to design and carry out the program. BCTF member Christina Schut, who had been one of the facilitators for the program with SADTU in the mid-1990s, worked as part of the facilitator team.

The exchanges continued when SADTU sent three of its administrative staff to the BCTF and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation (OSSTF) in 2003 to study union administrative practices. This was jointly funded by SADTU, the BCTF and OSSTF. The OSSTF and BCTF agreed to work with SADTU in developing a Branch Stewards’ training program over a month long period in 2005, with the program jointly designed, funded and carried out by the three unions and two BCTF members being co-facilitators with SADTU people.

Willy Madisha, the president of SADTU as well as president of the trade union central COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions), speaking at the BCTF AGM in 2000 told the delegates:
You were there and you were one of the few who tied our umbilical cord when we were finally born in October 1990. You were there as a babysitter and you taught us our first steps through numerous leaderships, organizational capacity building, negotiation skills, as well as recruitment skills. Today we stand up, we negotiate benefits for teachers of South Africa and service the membership we represent. Today we have the capacity to assist our own neighbours and repeat with them what the BCTF did with us. (Madisha, 2000, p. 2)

The BCTF Partners with OXFAM and NANTU in Namibia

A number of elements came together in leading to the development of the BCTF program with NANTU (Namibian National Teachers Union): anti-apartheid work, the CTF program, South Africa, and Oxfam.

Although few in the general public had heard of Namibia, it was clearly a part of the story for those who were active in the late 1980s in anti-apartheid work. Most of the 20th Century history of Namibia is linked to South Africa. Namibia had been a colony of Germany early in the century and had suffered a dress rehearsal for the Holocaust when one of the tribal groups, the Herero, was nearly wiped out because of the resistance they put up to German colonialism (Sapa-AFP, 2003). An explicit link can be seen in that the first German imperial commissioner for Namibia (then called South-West Africa) had been Ernst Goering, father of Nazi leader Hermann Goering (MacMillan, 2003). After World War I, Namibia was given to South Africa as a mandate of the League of Nations. The mandate was supposed to be a temporary measure, as a stage to Namibia moving to self-determination and independence. However, South Africa absorbed Namibia as a colony and as the apartheid system was created in South Africa, it was extended to Namibia as well. A legacy of the apartheid system is that both countries are among the most unequal in the world on the Gini index, a measure of the equality in income and consumption in a society (CCPA, 2004).
Education was a foundation of the apartheid system, aimed at protecting the Afrikaner identity. An element of this minority maintaining power over the majority was to keep the majority separated into different groups. In Namibia, ethnic groups were separated into 11 educational authorities. Miriam Hamutenya, the current General Secretary of NANTU, has pointed out that "many black teachers were treated as a colonized elite and they were used to betray other blacks, even though most of them resisted this role" (Hamutenya-Katonyala, 2001, p 20). Bantu education was aimed at turning out better workers who would accept the system and teachers were expected to assist in maintaining social control of the African population.

The struggle against apartheid occurred in Namibia, as well as in South Africa, particularly in the 1980s. An equivalent to the African National Congress in South Africa was called SWAPO (Southwest African Peoples Organization). It was the largest of the opposition groups and had many combatants in exile as well as carried out resistance within the country. Namibia now has a multi-party political system, but SWAPO has dominated in every post-independence election, much as the ANC has in South Africa.

The BCTF link to Namibia came through an Oxfam connection. The Oxfam staff person who had been active in the Anti-apartheid Network in Vancouver during the 1980s, John Graham, along with his wife, Gillian Brewin, had moved to being program officers for Oxfam in Namibia. They brought a project to the BCTF to support English language training for Namibian teachers, run by the National Education Forum of the Council of Churches of Namibia. When the project was approved, the BCTF made it
clear that future projects should be linked directly to the new non-racial teacher union, NANTU (Hansen, 1995).

As part of Oxfam’s commitment to building the relationship between the unions, it funded the first NANTU president, Tjekero Tweya, for a month-long work-study attachment with the BCTF in October 1991. Two years later, when told about the program with Thulas at the BCTF in 1993, Oxfam was able to arrange for a NANTU staff person, Marius Kudumo, to also come to Vancouver and take part in the program with Thulas from SADTU. Marius, like Thulas, identified the school union representative training program as being a model that could be of value to NANTU. The initial training program with SADTU lasted for two years, but the program with NANTU became a more than decade-long joint program, the longest running teacher-to-teacher program of the BCTF International Solidarity Program.

The NANTU/BCTF/Oxfam School Union Representative Training Program

A number of elements contributed to the continuity of the NANTU project over this long a time. One was the cooperation among the unions and an international NGO as a project partner. Another key was the personal engagement of some key activists from both of the unions. The project—and its long duration—is also illustrative of some of the difficulties of international solidarity work.

Two very experienced BCTF facilitators from its training program for school union representatives—Don Reader and Susan Lambert (currently the BCTF Second Vice-president)—were chosen to work with NANTU for a three-week period in July and August 1994. The program that first year was based on a combination of the materials and experience brought by the trainers from the BCTF and what they could learn from
three days of initial meetings with NANTU leaders about the context of Namibia. The intention was to develop a program that included advocacy, grievance handling, gender equity and the legal framework for union work. Some opportunity to practice facilitation of workshops was also incorporated, although the facilitators felt that the program had been heavy on information giving and that a follow-up program to develop specific workshops would be important (Hansen, 1995). The one area that generated some controversy that first year was gender, with a challenge from some of the men to it being a focus of the union's work. It is indicative, though, of the degree that gender equity has operated in practice as well as in principle within NANTU that in the relatively short time that NANTU has been in existence, it has elected three women to the highest office in the union, that of General Secretary, a better record than the BCTF in the comparable time period. All three of the women had also been participants in aspects of the BCTF program with NANTU.

July 1995 saw the return to Namibia of the BCTF team, this time with an additional trainer, Jan Walsh. The focus of the second year was on jointly developing a core set of workshops which could be given by NANTU trainers to teachers in the regions around the country. The structure of the program was to spend a week of workshop development, a week of going out and conducting the workshops in some of the regions with the Canadians and Namibians working together, and then in a final week to evaluate and revise the materials.

The central objective was to develop a cadre of NANTU trainers who would do workshops for school union representatives in all regions of the country and to have workshop materials for them to use. It was intended, as well, for this to be an ongoing
program of NANTU, with it picking up the coordination, funding and operation as a part of the work of the union. This is the ideal of sustainability that the Education International encourages in all development cooperation programs (EI, 2002). While a similar program with SADTU finished the stage of workshop development and training of facilitators after two years, it seemed obvious to the people from NANTU, the BCTF, and Oxfam that it could be of value to NANTU to continue the program, both to develop additional Namibian teachers as facilitators and to further develop the design and facilitation skills of those who had been involved in the initial two years.

The program continued on similar lines for the following three years. Don and Susan returned in 1996, along with Jean Chan. The next two years it was Don who went back alone to continue the program. He had retired from his teaching job in Vancouver, and in 1997 spent three months in Namibia. During this time he organized another three-week train the trainers session, then spent the remainder of the time traveling around the country giving workshops in the regions. Where possible, he worked with one of the NANTU trainers in a co-facilitating and mentoring basis. After a one year gap, Don and a retired BCTF staff member, Sheila Pither, returned in 2000 and 2001 to train more facilitators for the program (Reader, 2003).

During the three month period that Don spent in Namibia in 1997, about 2,000 Namibian teachers took part in workshops he facilitated, training for their role as advocates and union activists. In addition, in the years after 1995, Namibian facilitators offered workshops, with the number varying up to a high of about thirty a year. About 200 union members experienced at least one of the facilitator training aspects of the program (Reader, 2003).
A second stream of the BCTF/NANTU/Oxfam program developed in 1998 with NANTU leaders coming to British Columbia. As detailed earlier, several NANTU members had been in B.C.—the first president, Tjekero; the project co-ordinator, Marius, who had developed the first project proposal, as well as the vice-president, Doufi Namalambo—all sponsored by Oxfam-Canada. CTF had also brought Christina Gontes, the first woman to hold the position of Secretary General. However, none of these were part of the train the trainers program. The concept of the new program was to bring a few of the most accomplished facilitators for more in-depth training, through both participation in the BCTF’s training programs for local officers and the conflict resolution training program of the Justice Institute of B.C. Rather than sending BCTF trainers to further develop and consolidate the program in Namibia, this in-depth training we hoped would enable some NANTU members to develop skills and experience to do it themselves. Again, Oxfam provided financing that matched the BCTF funds and offered logistical and communication assistance. In the days before NANTU used email, direct communication was often difficult, and the Oxfam office could be reached more easily.

One of the reasons that Don Reader gave for the importance of bringing NANTU leaders to B.C. to work with BCTF members and the Justice Institute was to overcome some of the legacy of the apartheid “Bantu education.” This legacy was described by the current NANTU General Secretary, Miriam Hamutenya: “The system did enormous damage to most black Namibian’s minds, one consequence of which is that even 11 [years] after independence there has been little change in how most citizens think” (Hamutenya-Katonyala, 2001, p. 20). Working with people other than Africans in a
collegial relationship—an *intercambio* experience—was a situation that even the leaders in the union were unlikely to experience in Namibia.

This program of bringing NANTU activists to B.C. began in 1998 with two participants, and expanded after that to three to five people each year through 2003. In total, 14 people participated at least once and four completed enough courses to receive the Justice Institute’s Certificate in Conflict Resolution, including the current NANTU President and past Secretary General, Ndapewa Ngipandulwa (Reader, 2003). With this core of Namibians having earned a certificate, the Justice Institute is exploring the possibilities of offering its Conflict Resolution program in Namibia, with a combination of instructors from the Justice Institute and Namibia.

A common comment from the NANTU participants has been that skills learned in the program helped in developing a style of teaching less based on talking at students, as well as improved leadership skills. One of the participants, Quito Mulunga, commented in a letter that “it makes me to be somebody to lead six schools as Cluster Center Head” (Mulunga, 2003).

**Sustainability and Achievement: Some Problems and Some Successes**

The BCTF/NANTU/Oxfam program has been in place for almost as long as NANTU has existed. It fits in many ways what the Education International says should be the aim of development cooperation—long-term mutually beneficial relationships. The EI suggests “this type of co-operation promotes trust between partners, with benefits accruing to the host organization and the co-operating partner” (EI, 2002). This is very consistent with what we have been calling the *intercambio* approach.
The extent of the links between the BCTF and NANTU could not have developed without a significant commitment on the part of some BCTF members who have made the work of NANTU a part of their own lives. In particular, it was Don Reader who made this commitment of his own time and interest over a decade. During that time he has worked in Namibia eight times, including a month in 2006, for a total of nearly a year. When the Namibians came to Vancouver for the training programs, it was Don who took primary responsibility not just for organizing the BCTF portions of their training, but also the links with the Justice Institute, and for ensuring that they had an opportunity to enjoy the experience of being in B.C. The degree to which Don has been a part of NANTU is reflected in his appearing in one of the annual agendas (planning calendars) the union publishes.

Some of the reward of this kind of work is personal. Colleagues become friends. Weddings and births and deaths and the other important milestones in life are communicated and have a place in one’s own life, from across distances and cultures as we become personally globalized. But the personal is also political. Not just Don, but also the several others who have had small or large parts in the link between the BCTF and NANTU are involved because they have a commitment to solidarity, to some form of a vision that values equity and sees collective action as a means of moving towards that equity. They become involved in the international program because of an internationalism that is about social transformation, not about business and profits. Consistently, the experience strengthens that commitment and gives direction to the work as it evolves.
It is both the personal and the political links that help to get over the difficult places, and there have been some in the case of NANTU. In particular, newly elected NANTU officers in 2000 found that financial resources that should have been there were not. In fact, the new office building that the union had purchased was repossessed—the payments had not been made because some of the previous officers and staff had taken the funds. The amounts were tiny compared to Enron, Parmalat and Hollinger, but perhaps even more disturbing because of the collective good to which the resources of the union were supposed to be dedicated. The BCTF faced a decision about whether to continue to work with NANTU. It was the depth of the work with all of the officers involved—those from the past and the current leadership—that allowed for an assessment that the work should continue, that the officers who brought the problem to light would be committed and successful in overcoming the problems that had been created.

Back to the Beginning in Namibia

The first BCTF project with teachers in Namibia was support for improving their English. The decision to use English as the medium of instruction, despite teachers having themselves been educated in another language, still presented problems a decade later. Many teachers still had not had the opportunity to take courses that would improve their grasp of the language, and this would have a continuing impact on the ability of the schools to adequately educate Namibian students. Indeed, facility with English had to be one of the requirements for NANTU trainers who came to B.C. for training. They could really only take advantage of the Justice Institute and BCTF programs if their English was reasonably strong.
English provides an economic advantage in the context of globalization and technology. That raises issues for those concerned about equity and respect for diverse cultures. However, in the case of Namibia, the choice of English over Afrikaans as a medium of instruction had an immediate and local purpose—one of leaving behind a colonial language from a colonial past. Improving the command of English by teachers has continued to be an objective of the Namibian Ministry of Education, as well as of the teachers.

The Canadian government and the Canadian Teachers’ Federation provided an opportunity for the BCTF to return to support for Namibian teachers learning English. Most countries, including Canada, took part in a United Nations conference in Dakar and signed on to a commitment called “Education for All”—that by 2015 all the world’s children would have access to at least basic education (EI, 2004d). One response by the Canadian International Development Agency to this commitment was to provide more funding to the international program of the CTF through a Social Development Program (SODEP) (CTF, 2003). One of the countries that the CTF proposed to work with was Namibia, and both NANTU and the Namibian government identified improving English facility as a top priority.

Because of the extensive links that the BCTF has with NANTU, the BCTF was asked to provide the facilitators for a train-the-trainers program that would offer English workshops for elementary teachers. Two active and two retired BCTF members, along with a teacher from the Yukon, carried out two aspects of the program. The first was designing the training, working with a number of Namibian teachers. The Namibian teachers then carried out pilot projects to test the program that had been developed. The
Canadians returned a few months later to work with the Namibians to review and revise based on that experience (CTF, 2003).

A significant buzzword in development work is “sustainable.” What is left when the funded project is completed? How would a small program with a dozen Namibian teachers involved as facilitators bring about a national improvement in the ability of teachers to teach in English? By itself, of course, it could not have a large impact. However, the Namibian government was seeking significant funding from the European Union so that it could run programs like this around the country, and the CTF project was a pilot as a part of developing a much larger program.

What’s Next with the BCTF/NANTU Relationship?

After 15 years of work and exchange with the teachers of Namibia, what’s next? Is there more? The training of school representatives has been identified as an ongoing program of NANTU, with some BCTF funding to assist in its delivery, testing NANTU’s ability to carry it on their own. Expanding involvement in the English program might be possible, although it is not clear whether there will be a role beyond the initial pilot project. The Justice Institute may succeed in getting funding for a program that would use the skills of the NANTU folks for a program in Namibia for teachers and others who desire that training.

Or this may be the end for now—and the resources and attention devoted to Namibia could return to South Africa, where SADTU wants to expand its training program for its 22,000 school union representatives. It could move across to the other side of Africa, to provide support for the ONP (the National Organization of Teachers, Mozambique’s teacher union) in Mozambique. There teachers are in among the most
precarious situations anywhere on the globe—they were targets for the rebel group funded by South Africa through 15 years of guerilla warfare and their government now faces pressure from the IMF to limit expenditures, but improve access to education at the same time.

The English Second Language Pedagogy Program in Cuba

The largest teacher-to-teacher project carried out by the BCTF has been the English in-service program for Cuban teachers. More than 25 teachers have spent two to three weeks in Cuba, offering language enhancement and communicative pedagogy programs at pedagogical institutes. Every December and July teams of seven or eight BCTF members have gone to Cuba to offer these programs.

The Cuba Brigade—those who have been to Cuba on the project in the past as well as those preparing to go—has evolved as a planning and support group. It has developed its own structure, including electing a steering committee, and undertaken ongoing fundraising projects to cover the costs of resources to take to Cuba with the teams. This fundraising is carried out at the major meetings of the BCTF in the form of raffles of boxes of cigars from Cuba, Che t-shirts, and other materials brought back from Cuba, organized by Kit Krieger, BCTF past president and Cuba-phile. As much as raising funds—some $40,000 by 2005—the purpose is to provide a profile for the Cuba Project among the delegates at Representative Assembly meetings and the Annual General Meeting, as well as to offer material support to Cuban teachers.

The Origins of the Cuba Project

For much of the 45 plus years Fidel Castro has been president of Cuba, relations between Canada and Cuba have provided a symbolic point of independence of Canadian
foreign policy from that of the United States. Pierre Trudeau angered the right-wing in the U.S. over the personal relationship that he built with Castro on trips to Cuba. Castro returned his respect for Trudeau, even attending his funeral. Canadian tourists escaping the northern winter have flocked to Cuba in large numbers, providing a major source of foreign exchange for the Cuban economy. Some Canadian companies have even stood up to the threats to their business from the U.S.'s Helms law that prohibits companies doing business in Cuba.

When Lloyd Axworthy became Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1995 in the Chretien government, he initiated a new opening to Cuba. Axworthy was very taken with the idea that the development of civil society is a positive strategy leading to the democratization of countries that do not have a democratic system. In *Navigating a New World*, he says “engagement emphasizes building from within, establishing dialogue with the government in order to pressure and persuade” (Axworthy, 2003, p. 72). Government policy encouraged Canadian non-governmental organizations to develop projects and relationships with groups in Cuba. This provided an opening that the BCTF was prepared to take up.

CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) indicated that funding would be available for projects in Cuba that contributed to the building of civil society. This was attractive for both CoDevelopment Canada and the BCTF International Program. It would provide opportunities to build relationships with Cuban teachers and their organizations, and the funds from CIDA were in addition to the regular funding for projects. This aspect was particularly important to CoDev because it was already at the maximum amount of programming that CIDA would fund for its regular programs.
Jim Rader from the CoDev staff went to Cuba and met with the officers of the SNTECD, the union that represents teachers, others who work in education right up to the minister, as well as people who work in recreation and sports—including the baseball players and Olympic athletes. Unions in Cuba have a somewhat different role than the adversarial representation and independence from government that characterizes their role in capitalist countries. In Cuba, the union, the Communist Party and the government all have an integral relationship. The function of the union is not just to carry the decisions made by the government and Party to the workers, although that is a part of their role. Union leaders, for example, would have carried the message of the sacrifices that had to be made in the “special period,” the name given to the crisis precipitated by the end of the Soviet Union and of its subsidies of the Cuban economy. On the other hand, the union would also carry to the Party and government concerns about the conditions of work of its members, but it would do this within the structure of which it is a part, rather than in an adversarial collective bargaining or political role, as a Canadian or U.S. union would. Implicit in the Canadian government’s strategy of supporting projects between Canadian NGOs and Cuban organizations was one of demonstrating another way of groups relating to government—one that is compatible with the concepts of liberal democracy rather than the form of socialist democracy practiced in Cuba.

When Jim Rader talked with SNTECD officials, including Luis Abreu, the president, and Margarita Rodriguez, the international relations officer, they were interested in working with CoDev and the BCTF, but did not see capacity building of civil society as what they needed. Capacity in organizing is something that Cuba has in abundance, particularly in relationship to education. According to UNESCO, “Cuba -
although one of the poorest countries in Latin America - shows the best results in basic education. And by a long shot” (Casassus, 2004). Cuba stands well above any other country in Latin America in educational development and levels of literacy. Its ability to adapt to decades of economic blockade by the U.S. and the loss of the support from the Soviet Union, as painful as the adaptation has been, has shown an incredible organizational capacity. What they did not have though, was resources, particularly for any activity that required imports and consequently hard currency (U.S. dollars, rather than Cuban pesos). Some hard currency was, initially, what CoDev and the BCTF could offer.

A first project was drafted that included funds to publish the results of the union congress and a union magazine—all of which required the import of paper that could not be paid for with pesos. The project also provided funding for facilities for a union education research centre, as well as technology—computers and modems, and fax machines for the union offices in each of the provinces. The priority for the union was communications technology, which again required hard currency. In fact, Castro and Cuba are highly focused on technology for education, including video programs. More on this later, because it has had an increasing impact on the BCTF programs with the Cubans.

Resources are by no means all that the Cubans were interested in. They also wanted to develop people to people and organization to organization relationships. The vision in Cuba after the Revolution has always been one of solidarity and influence beyond the shores of the island. For example, Cuba provides free medical education to people from less developed countries if the students are prepared to return to serve those
in their home communities without access to health care. This could be seen as well when the doctors interviewed on TV in the midst of the collapse of the government in Haiti were Cuban doctors. As white South African doctors have abandoned the post-apartheid country, many have been replaced by Cuban doctors, and they can be found in many African countries. In the education field, major conferences, attracting as many as 5000 educators from around the Americas, are held every year in Havana.

However, the Cubans, including the teachers, are isolated from many institutions outside of Latin America. The Cubans are not allowed to be members of the Education International. An effort led by some Canadians at the EI Congress in 2001 to accept the SNTECD as a member was successfully opposed by the unions from the U.S., in particular. The organizational relationships with unions from Europe and North America have been limited to a few countries. Their isolation may be changing, though, since as mentioned earlier, Luis Abreu, the SNTECD president, was invited and did attend the 2004 EI Congress in Porto Alegre as an observer.

The Cubans had reasons for being interested in working with the BCTF. The BCTF also had an interest in Cuba. While the BCTF had worked with colleagues in teacher unions throughout Latin America, Cuba was an obviously missing piece. This was particularly strange since it was the country in Latin America, other than Mexico, that probably had the most visits by B.C. teachers as tourists. In fact, one of the first projects suggested by the Cubans was “union tourism,” the idea being that the SNTECD would organize visits to Cuban schools for B.C. teachers who were on holiday in Cuba.

The initial activities of the CoDev/BCTF project with the SNTECD included bringing union leaders together through exchanges. Margarita Rodriguez, the
international officer of the SNTECD, came to B.C. in August of 1997. She spoke at the BCTF summer training conference that brings together several hundred leaders from locals around the province. Margarita’s stories of the effects of the economic problems on Cuban students and teachers moved many people who heard her. She told of students at the end of the school year having to erase all the work they had done in notebooks because they had to be used again. While she put this in the context of the U.S. blockade that had caused much grief over the decades, for the B.C. teachers it was the contrast between what they knew was the relative affluence of their students and the situation of the Cubans that gave power to the story.

Out of Margarita’s talk grew a “pencils for Cuba” project. The image of students erasing notebooks was recounted in the Teacher newsmagazine, along with information about how teachers and students could send pencils and other school supplies to the BCTF, which then sent them on to Cuba for students. This was the beginning of a relationship between B.C. and Cuban teachers that has produced direct and deep personal connections.

From Pencils to English In-service for Cuban Teachers

Exchanges at the level of union leaders continued over the next three years. Two BCTF presidents, Alice McQuade and Kit Krieger, were guests on Cuban Teachers’ Day, Alice on December 21 in 1996 and Kit in 1997. Teachers’ Day is a holiday set aside to celebrate teachers and to commemorate the literacy crusade that, soon after the victory of Castro’s forces, sent those who were literate, particularly students, out into the countryside and the mountains to teach everyone who couldn’t how to read. Kit identified an area where the BCTF could be of immediate assistance to the operation of
the union by providing fax machines and computers for each of the provincial offices and
the national office (Krieger, 1998). Over the next couple of years, BCTF members going
to work on the projects took this equipment, providing communication links among all
the union offices.

In conjunction with CoDevelopment Canada and matching funds from CIDA, the
BCTF project has provided ongoing funding to SNTECD since 1997 to publish its
magazine and to develop a research and documentation centre in a building with training
facilities and equipped with computers. That has been important in providing organizing
resources, but has turned out to be only a small part of the Cuba project.

One of the BCTF staff, Guillermo Bustos, a Spanish-speaking Canadian originally
from Chile, in February 1999 attended the pedagogical conference in Havana. As a
representative of the BCTF, he was treated as an honoured guest and was on the stage
with Dr. Angel Abascal from the Cuban Ministry of Education and other dignitaries. The
minister suggested to Guillermo that the BCTF work with the Cubans to improve the
pedagogical practice of the teaching of English. Russian had been an important second
language learned by Cuban students, but with the fundamental changes in Cuba’s
relationships, English was replacing Russian. From this conversation grew the BCTF
Cuba Brigade.

The SNTECD president, Luis Abreu, reciprocated the visit from the BCTF
presidents and spoke to the 700 plus delegates to the 1999 BCTF Annual General
Meeting. While he was in Vancouver, the two unions signed an agreement that outlined
a number of areas of cooperation. A key one was the sending of a group of BCTF
members to Cuba to offer pedagogical workshops to practicing Cuban teachers through
the pedagogical institutes, the structure in Cuba that provides both pre-service and in-service education for teachers (BCTF/SNTECD Agreement in Principle, 1999).

An *Intercambio Agreement is Negotiated*

The first team headed off for Cuba in July, ready to begin the project. They soon came up against some of the complexities of Cuba. The BCTF was used to working with teacher unions on an organization to organization basis, but the situation in Cuba could not be that simple. The work of this first team turned out to be negotiation, under the leadership of Guillermo. The union wanted the program. The minister had suggested it. It had to be run through the pedagogical institute, since that is the structure that could offer credits to the teachers, an important motivator for the teachers to take part. All of the groups—the ministry, the union and the pedagogical institutes--had to agree to the nature and details of the program. No previous projects could be used as a model, because the Cubans were not big on people from outside Cuba bringing expertise to Cuban education. It usually went the other way, with Cubans sharing their expertise. By the time the BCTF team left Cuba to return home, an agreement was in place, creating the basis for the program that has deeply engaged BCTF members.

The agreement had four key areas:

*Professional Development in the areas of language and methodology for the teachers of English from the College [Enrique Jose Varona Teachers’ College] and from both Havana provinces.*

*Advice in the development of the new English curriculum, for junior secondary especially.*

*Co-operation in the production of printed materials resulting from the joint work of Cuban and BCTF teachers.*
Support the work of the College and of Cuban schools by promoting the donation of teaching resources and other material resources. (Agreement/Convenio, 1999)

One aspect of the agreement called for joint funding of the project by the Cubans and the BCTF. The BCTF was to pay the costs of travel by B.C. teachers to Cuba for the professional development programs, with the Cubans to cover ground transportation, lodging, food and medical attention. The Cuban contribution would not require hard currency, but this has meant that the only housing available was what would be available to Cubans, considerably less than even the least expensive housing for tourists. The union and pedagogical institutes have made efforts to find housing that was suitable, but that has not always been possible, and has been the main area where some of the B.C. teachers have not been satisfied. Altogether, though, the Cuba project has been an example of an intercambio approach, where each party brings to the project the resources and the expertise that it has, on a shared basis.

The curriculum development part of the project has been quite significant. Two teachers at the Varona pedagogical institute have spent several weeks in B.C. on two occasions, developing the English curriculum for Cuban schools. They worked with several B.C. teachers, as well as staff from the B.C. Ministry of Education and a consultant who has done many projects for the B.C. ministry. The BCTF also provided support to the consultant to spend time in Cuba to work with the team there. By 2003, the Cuban curriculum developers had created the English curriculum for Grades 7-9, with outlines for Grades K-6 and 10-12 (MacRae and Enriquez, 2003).

In addition to developing the Cuban English curriculum, the Varona institute was given the responsibility by the Cuban government for creating a daily educational
television show on “English for all.” Fidel Castro decided that educational television should be a part of the education of all students in English. The government has provided television to every school in Cuba, even those in areas without electricity, where they have put up solar panels to generate power for TV (panels that are taken down whenever there is a hurricane warning—typical of the discipline that means that few Cuban lives are lost in the most extreme of bad weather). Many of the materials and resources that have been used by the BCTF members in the professional development programs have been incorporated into the TV programs. Some of the visiting B.C. teachers have appeared on the programs (MacRae and Enriquez, 2003). In 2004, the Cubans wanted video clips of Canadian students talking about Canada that could be used as part of the programs and one of the Cuba project teachers working with students in Burnaby produced the video material for them.

At the conclusion of the initial three-year period in 2002, there was general agreement that both the BCTF and the Cubans were interested in continuing the project. However, the Cubans were feeling pressure from the directive from Fidel to offer education via television. They indicated that they would like television production to become the focus of the project. That was not of interest to the B.C. teachers who had worked in the project. They questioned the value of making television the centre of the teaching of English, rather than the communicative approaches that they were using in the professional development programs for teachers. In addition, the BCTF did not have many members with expertise in producing quality educational television.

Again, the intercambio approach was taken, with both parties accommodating to the needs of the other. The BCTF project team agreed to provide what assistance it
could, such as the student produced video material to be used in the TV program. The Cubans agreed to continue the professional development programs, but to move them to various centres around the country so that teachers from outside of Havana would have an opportunity "to increase the English proficiency through exposure to native speakers of English" (MacRae and Enriquez, 2003, p. 1).

**Multiplying the Experience for Both Cubans and Canadians**

One of the BCTF Cuba Project participants, Julia MacRae, along with Isora Enriquez, the director of the English program at the Varona Pedagogical Institute made a presentation at Pedagogia 2003 about the program. Pedagogia is the biennial education conference that attracts thousands from around Latin America. They provided background on the development of the project and a description of the program as it was carried out in the first three years, with some 24 Canadians and 350 Cuban teachers.

One of the points made in their report was that an important element was "multiplying the experience." The Cuban participants were expected to share what they had learned with colleagues, and many of them had some special responsibility in working with teachers in the community where they teach. The Canadian teachers also reported that they were multiplying the experience back home "by bringing real information about Cuba into their classes and their social situations." They concluded that "an effective international project should have a long-term vision, and not be a 'one-shot deal'. Continuing dialogue should form part of the union leadership" (MacRae and Enriquez, 2003, p. 6).

One of the pedagogical practices that developed was compare-and-contrast discussions where conversation was focused on the Canadian and Cuban teachers talking...
about their situations and cultures. This turned out to be a highlight of the program for many of the participants—both Canadian and Cuban—as each learned about their colleagues in the course of the practice. One of the Cubans suggested that the Canadians should bring video of their teaching situations as a way of facilitating useful discussion.

**Cuba Brigade Survey: “Why can’t we dance in the halls?”**

Julia McRae in 2002 surveyed the original Cuba Brigade of 20 plus B.C. teachers involved in the first three years of the project. She asked both about the experience in Cuba and how it had influenced their teaching, as well as whether it had affected the degree to which they were involved in their union, the BCTF. This is a sample of their primarily positive comments:

*The level of theoretical training that our Cuban colleagues had was impressive.*

*...it is possible to teach and learn without all the “stuff.”*

*I applied the concepts I taught in Cuba to my own students at home to great success. For example, I was more overt in explaining the concept of the communicative approach to my students. It made us better able to focus.*

*My trips to Cuba brought joy back into my life...it helped me take risks in my life that dramatically changed how I approach decisions for my future.*

*Affirmed by my Cuba experience were my pedagogical values, why I teach, what is fundamentally important in language teaching methodology.*

*The project was an ongoing collaborative planning of ProD activities. It helped me reflect on teaching practice and on ways to keep the passion alive. (MacRae and Enriquez, 2003)*

Julia’s survey also found that many of the teachers had developed a new respect for their union and the leadership role that it can play in teacher professionalism. As one teacher said in a memo to the BCTF Executive Committee, “I have returned with the utmost respect for the teachers we met and with new found pride in being a BCTF
member” (Lewis, 1999). Like all successful union activity, this project was really about giving opportunities and responsibility to teachers to bring their ideals to collective activity. The project has been primarily self-managing, with an elected steering committee that organizes the group meetings, designs the program, creates opportunities for those with experience in the project to mentor those new to the project. Those who have experience contribute to a continuously updated “Cuba Guide for the BCTF Cuba Team,” complete with advice on what to bring and what to expect (Birchall, undated).

The limited, but significant, negative comments mostly focused on accommodation, transportation and food. Shared rooms of a standard common in less affluent countries can be a challenge to those used to the comfort of Canada. Cuba traditionally imported a great deal of its food until the combination of the U.S. blockade and collapse of the Soviet Union cut off that option. Although food is generally available now, it is not of the quality and variety that one can find easily in Vancouver. If the BCTF took responsibility for accommodation and food, the B.C. teachers could live in the relative luxury of the tourist in Cuba, but that would undermine the shared responsibility for the project, with the Cubans providing what they can and the Canadians learning the realities of Cuban living.

Perhaps the best response to this situation is the comment from one of the teachers in the survey: “Why can’t we dance in the hallways at breaks instead of bitching about our lives in the staffroom? I have tried to be more purposeful and joyous in my love of teaching.”
Cuban Views of the Project with the BCTF

As the second three-year project reached its conclusion, the SNTECD asked for a joint meeting to evaluate the program. The BCTF president, Jinny Sims, traveled to Havana, along with one of the Cuba Brigade, Julia MacRae, for a meeting held on December 21, 2004. The importance of the project to the Cubans was indicated by the presence of 18 Cubans, representing the union, the Ministry of Education, the central labour federation, the education department of the Communist Party and several of the pedagogical institutes that have hosted programs.

Logistical issues were discussed, including the inadequacies of the lodging and teaching venues. Several proposals were developed for expanding the project in its next phase and creating teaching teams made up of a combination of Canadians and Cubans. There was also agreement that the Canadians needed to have a clear idea of where they would be in Cuba well in advance to help prepare adequately.

A written report was presented by the SNTECD that represented its evaluation of the project. It pointed out that more than 800 Cuban teachers had taken part over the first five years of the project. The report identified tangible results that included “participants’ methodological updating, the enrichment of knowledge based on new forms of evaluation, participative techniques and activities for the development of linguistic skills.” It described the impact as bringing a teaching-learning conception that includes “group interaction, class exercises to promote and develop oral production based on real situations, which demand unpredictable answers and alternative search in order to achieve that practice can be a meaningful element.” They described the work as having an impact on the Ministry of Education, making “an important contribution to redesign
and improve the curriculum of English in the Cuban secondary schools.” The Canadians also contributed “eighty video films to provide cultural information, as well as tales or stories” that are used in the TV English programs shown throughout Cuba. At the same time, they said, the Canadians are “better identified with the Cuban culture. It has allowed a higher intercultural sensitivity” (Abreu and Rodriguez, 2004). Ironically, the B.C. teachers in the Cuba Brigade have probably had more impact on the Cuban English curriculum and pedagogy than any classroom teachers are able to have on the official curriculum in British Columbia.

Finally, let two of the Cuban teachers who participated in the December 2004 program give their views, taken from letters written by them to BCTF members:

This unique chance to exchange with Canadian professors, all of them with a high degree of professionalism and dedication, will help us being more aware of the possibilities we have in our classes and our students, will help us improve our own methods and procedures in order to make the process of learning more accurate and more precise. (Juan Luis Hdez Pino, Head of the English Department at the Language School of Matanzas, Cuba)

I have experienced by means of the Canadian professors’ workshops new strategies for language learning, language enhancement activities and also about evaluation techniques. They have given us the possibility to share our own experiences with them. It has been very nice and instructive for both countries and we hope to keep these links of friendship. (Ana Ibis Estivez Gonzalez, Matanzas, Cuba)

**Teacher-to-Teacher, Union-to-Union, as *Intercambio***

Each of the BCTF projects described in this chapter is based on rich relationships built through international exchange involving teachers working with colleagues. However, all of the individual relationships are built through the union links. Those links provide an institutional base that allows for the depth of understanding and caring that
can only be achieved over time. These relationships—between individual teachers and their unions—are the essence of *intercambio*—exchange and interchange.
CHAPTER SIX: BUILDING COUNTER-GLOBALIZATION NETWORKS

Globalization, and its neo-liberal nature, has become central in discussions of international relations over the last two decades. The neo-liberal program, characterized on a global basis as the "Washington consensus," promotes privatization, a reduced role for state and a central role for the market in making social decisions. Each of these elements is contrary to the essence of public education, which is premised on action by the state to provide education on a free and universal basis. Over the last two decades, even international trade agreements have been created on this neo-liberal base and thus have the potential to affect public education when rules require competition in the delivery of services.

Researching the implications for education of trade agreements added a new dimension to BCTF international programs in the 1990s. The strategy adopted in responding to globalization has been based on participating in networks. Much of the work became building networks of teacher unions working in opposition to trade agreements because of their potential negative impact on public education. Networks are inherently about exchange and interchange—intercambio. This evolution of the program brings intercambio into being not only a strategy, but also a structure for the work.

This chapter examines the two counter-globalization networks that the BCTF has played a significant role in founding and supporting. One is the Tri-national Coalition in Defense of Public Education. The other is the IDEA Network (Initiative for Democratic Education in the Americas), including the IDEA Research Network and the IDEA Women's Network. Before examining these two concrete action groups, I explore the role of networks in counter-globalization strategies. I conclude the chapter with an
assessment of the counter-globalization network strategy based on the experience of more than a decade of this work since it began with a response to NAFTA.

**Ronald McDonald as Symbol and Agent of Globalization**

My consciousness of the extent of globalization, at least its commercial culture element, was raised in Guatemala when I visited there in 1985 on a CoDevelopment Canada tour where we met with teacher union activists in Central America. One of the people we talked to in Guatemala City was an indigenous man who worked as an aide in the school system. He was not a fully recognized teacher, but worked with students in their indigenous language, which most of the teachers did not speak. A brother of his, who had also worked in the schools, was one of the “disappeared.” He agreed to take us to a rural area in the highlands of Guatemala to visit the family of the disappeared teacher. His sister-in-law lived there with her children.

Their home was a small two-room, concrete walled building. It had been constructed by Swiss aid workers after one of the many earthquakes that had destroyed most of the homes in the area. It was reinforced on the inside in a way that would much more likely withstand any future earthquake. The main room was very dark without electricity, but as we entered, I could see a small item hanging in the centre of the room that I assumed was a religious icon of some kind. When I had a chance to get close enough to take a good look at it, I was shocked. It was a little, plastic version of Ronald MacDonald. It turned out that the children had at one time gone to Guatemala City with the uncle who had brought us to their home. The highlight of their visit had been going to the one MacDonalds in the country.
This incident sensitized me to the extent that the most potent symbols of the commercial culture from North America in general, and the U.S., in particular, were invading cultural spaces everywhere. Even this tiny community, isolated in so many ways—no electricity, no television, and an expensive bus ride away from these things—was infused with this iconic figure.

This experience with globalization helped make me conscious of the extensive possible social impact of what on the surface is primarily about the economy. The negotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was the catalyst for looking at the possible impact of trade agreements on public education, not just domestically, but also internationally, first as a topic for research and then developing into a theme for organizing international networks of supporters of public education.

Networks for Globalization and Counter-Globalization

Manuel Castells contends in *The Rise of the Network Society* (1996) that networks are the form that contemporary capitalism has taken. He describes the capitalist system currently as having “undergone a process of profound restructuring, characterized by greater flexibility in management; decentralization and networking of firms both internally and in their relationships to other firms....” One of the impacts of this change in capitalism, he says, is “considerable empowering of capital vis-à-vis labor, with the concomitant decline of influence of the labor movement” (p. 1).

This shift in the international environment calls for different forms of international cooperation and new organizational structures to contest the neo-liberal forms of globalization. In a sense, globalization has evened the playing field somewhat—although not in the way claimed by globalization proponents—in that
workers in the rich and the poor countries now face similar challenges to improving or even maintaining the economic and social aspects of their lives. Proponents of globalization claim that it will have an economic equalizing impact eventually. The metaphor used is that “a rising tide lifts all boats” (Au and Apple, 2004, p 785). However, the common experience within and between countries is that existing inequalities are being exacerbated, rather than decreased. Many are excluded because they have no boat in which to rise with the tide.

One way of responding to the challenge of globalization is to build counter-networks with fluid organization and strategic approaches, characteristics that Castells says are key to the success of networks. The Tri-national Coalition and the IDEA Network are efforts at using these forms to challenge neo-liberalism. In their very nature, networks of activity adopt an exchange and interchange or intercambio form. The increasing commonality of policies in relationship to education through policy borrowing and policy imposition puts this interchange on a more equal basis than at a time when internationalist programs were based only on donor assistance from organizations in the most developed countries to those in less developed countries. The fact that public school teachers in countries rich and poor face similar challenges actually opens up new opportunities (or necessities) for working together. The paradox of the situation is that “it is in the name of, and for the sake of, preserving viable local and national communities that we have to engage in international action” (Mishra, 1997).

One of the elements of neo-liberal globalization as it has been practiced is attacks on all forms of public services, with pressure to privatize and make them fit into the market economy. Pressure to reduce the role of the state inevitably means pressure to
reduce public expenditures on education. This has not only produced more inequality in access to services, but has also been negative to public education in countries rich and poor. The ideal that "Everyone has the right to education" of Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and thus an equalizing force, is being replaced by a conception of education as a factor of international competitiveness and a service commodity that is tradable. Further, the union rights of teachers have been attacked by the World Bank, (Education International, 2003; World Bank, 2004) as well as by national and sub-national governments (states or provinces), because teacher unions are the strongest opponents of these new directions in education. According to an EI consultant, Bob Harris, "trade unions are often regarded by the World Bank economists as 'market imperfections'" who believe education would be improved by "removing the negotiating role of teachers' unions, which should become 'professional associations'" (Harris, 2003). Susan Robertson says it is a key strategy in education restructuring to break to power of teachers’ unions because they "stand in the way of opening up education to the demands of the global economy" (Robertson, 2004). She says that this happens through tight control of policy, curriculum, assessment and an audit function, as well as performance pay replacing pay determination by collective agreements. These have the aim of dividing teachers as an occupational group (p. 190). As education becomes marketized, instead of collective professionalism, "teacher entrepreneurship is increasingly valued as the new cultural asset by schools fighting for positions within the marketplace" (p. 192).
Globalization from Below as a Strategy

The strategic response being adopted by opponents of the negative effects of globalization has been characterized as "globalization from below" (Brecher, Costello and Smith, 2000; Munck, 2002). This approach calls for civil society groups—unions, environmental action groups, social movements, and the like—to reach out globally and work with others who share their concerns. Rather than forming new organizations, they form new networks. The networking has been intensified with the development of the World Social Forum and the World Education Forum. Neither of these is an organization to which individuals or groups affiliate, but rather are spaces for networking and developing common strategies and actions. These institutional approaches to globalization from below match the organizational structure of networked capitalism, as characterized by Castells.

Perceptions of Interdependence

This context of an increasingly common experience of teachers globally has created a need, as well as opportunity, for serious working partnerships among teacher unions and others who support the ideals and practice of public education in many countries. Education International, the global union of teacher unions, has identified that knowledge of the impact of globalization is important for unions in industrialized economies of the North as well as in the less developed economies, with member education programs that can be truly cooperative, "with northern trade unions finding themselves with as much to learn as to contribute" (Spooner, 1998, p. 15).

Gordon and Turner (2000) identify basic principles about the potential success of networked internationalism among unions. These include the perception of
interdependence as an essential pre-condition, open-mindedness to working with allies beyond those traditionally worked with, and use of information and communications technology for research and exchange of information across national frontiers. Beyond that, they contend that the willingness of unions to support a cause of workers in another country is a willingness of "workers to be willing and able to mobilize and take risks to defend and improve their own working conditions" (p. 258). Those unions that never mobilize their own members in a confrontation with the employer are less likely to identify with and support other unions that do that.

Openness to Working with New Allies

As will be shown in the remainder of this chapter, the Tri-national Coalition in Defense of Public Education and the IDEA Network both developed with these characteristics identified by Gordon and Turner. There has been open-mindedness about who should be involved, not rejecting groups because of an ideological position or formal affiliations as unions, as well as seeking to include groups outside of unions, such as student organizations and parent and community groups. These coalitions have been spaces for research exchanges and strategic discussion, helping to develop the sense of interdependence among teacher unions and others who support public education, in opposition to the privatization and commercialization of education.

Use of Information and Communications Technology

Just as information and communications technologies are key elements in the networking of global corporations and interests, they have also been crucial to the networks of civil society organizations, including unions. The technology has been used to share information as well as to develop a consensus about activities to be carried out.
These technologies have facilitated expressions of solidarity with teachers in countries other than their own engaged in struggles to defend their working conditions, from South to North as well as from North to South.

Perhaps the best descriptor of the opposition movements, and the one I have adopted, is one that Jacques Deriida used in one of the last pieces he wrote before his death: the “counter-globalization movement” (Derrida, 2004). It captures the strategic position of recognizing that globalization is a reality that cannot likely be reversed, but can be reshaped.

The **intercambio** approach to working in counter-globalization networks adopted by the BCTF International Solidarity Program in the 1990s has been built on a “globalization from below” strategy. Fortunately, the resources in the BCTF—both in funding and staffing—have been adequate to develop in this new direction without the BCTF having to abandon its long-term international work on the gender and union empowerment programs in Latin America and Southern Africa described in previous chapters. In fact, the counter-globalization networking is based on relationships built over an extended period in these other projects.

**It Started With NAFTA**

The agreement in 1993 to expand the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement to include Mexico in a North American Free Trade Agreement provided a challenge to the imagination. What might public education look like in a substantially integrated North American economy? Would the primarily economic focus of this integration distort the broad aims of public education related to democratic citizenship and personal development? Just as challenging was the reconceptualization of the meaning of “trade.”
Before the Canada-U.S. FTA and NAFTA, trade agreements had been applied to an exchange of goods. One of the innovations of these agreements was to expand the meaning of trade to include “services,” including education. What would be the impact on public education of thinking about it as a tradable commodity rather than a social right?

The Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement had been a central issue in the 1988 Canadian federal election, with opponents of the deal appealing primarily to a Canadian nationalist position. This was another of many chapters in Canadian history in which the relationship with the United States was a major theme. Free trade and economic integration with the U.S. had been debated many times by Canadians, and those supporting it had finally been on the prevailing side in putting together the 1988 agreement. Proponents won the election, albeit with a minority voting for the Progressive Conservative government that had negotiated the agreement, the majority of voters having split their votes between the Liberals and the New Democrats, both of which opposed the Canada-U.S. FTA.

The proposal to expand this to a three-country trade agreement created many new challenges. Few Canadians knew much about Mexico beyond the beach resorts that provide a winter respite to tens of thousands of Canadians and versions of Mexican food and chips available at fast-food outlets. Even fewer had any knowledge of the education system in Mexico or of the unions that represent teachers in the public schools and universities. With this ignorance of our new partner, how could one imagine what might be the potential impact of economic integration and of education being considered a tradable service?
The Canadian opponents of NAFTA could not oppose it primarily on the basis of integration with the U.S. They needed to understand the new elements introduced by incorporating Mexico into a North American somewhat common market. In the months leading up to the agreement, the Council of Canadians and a number of unions took part in tri-national conferences to learn more about Mexico and Mexican social and political organizations and to discuss common strategies in opposing NAFTA.

Despite having campaigned with a platform opposing NAFTA, the Chretien Liberal government that was elected in 1993 went ahead with signing NAFTA, with some face-saving parallel provisions on labour rights and the environment, none of which have an enforcement provision. The fears of the social and labour movements about the impact of this step in economic integration and globalization would be tested.

Some of the gloss of NAFTA was erased immediately as it came into effect on January 1, 1994. That day was chosen by the Zapatista Liberation Front to challenge by an armed rebellion the Mexican integration into the North American economy. Unlike most guerilla movements, the Zapatistas did not aim at taking over the national state, but rather at pushing the state aside by creating an autonomous area governed by an indigenous civil society. Effectively they declared independence of the global economy and demanded control not just of their own economy, but also that crucial social-cultural organization, the school.

NAFTA and the response by economic and social groups introduced key political themes of the decade following its implementation: the weakening of the state, with challenges both from outside and inside; the expansion of the power and influence of transnational capital and corporations, with reduced regulation by the state; the
development of civil society groups within societies that in turn seek global connections in response to the reduced redistributive and protective role of the state; a shift from public services being seen as a right to being dealt with as a commodity; and an increase in inequalities of income, both within countries and between countries, with the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer.

Why is NAFTA Significant to Public Education?—Trade in Services

Common conceptions of “trade,” as previously mentioned, used to be based on an exchange of goods from which both sides profit. If these definitions applied to contemporary trade agreements, supporters of public education would have little to worry about from these trade treaties. However, the past fifteen years have brought about an expanded meaning of what is considered to be “trade.”

This shift began with the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and was incorporated in Chapter Twelve (Cross Border Trade in Services) of NAFTA. Among the areas included are professional services, with a definition that includes education: “professional services means services, the provision of which requires specialized post-secondary education, or equivalent training or experience, and for which the right to practice is granted or restricted by a Party.” [Annex 1210.5 Professional Services] (DFAIT, 2004).

However, NAFTA does allow for the countries signing the agreement to place exemptions of some services, including “public education” [Chapter Twelve, Article 1201, 3. b]. This means that those services are not subject to the rules that apply generally, such as Most-Favored-Nation (MFN) and National Treatment (NT). MFN and NT are provisions that do not allow for discrimination against a corporation from one of
the other countries in the agreement in providing a service. The exact extent of such exemptions is not clear—for example, if education were exempted from the trade rules, would that exempt all aspects of public education, or might some areas, like test publishing and marking, be covered by the trade rules? In the trade system, this type of question could be challenged and subject to rulings by trade tribunals, made up of trade lawyers, not educators. What is clear is that public education and other services are brought into the trade agreement framework and thus inherently into a potential "commercial" relationship (Calvert and Kuehn, 1993).

The definition of services in NAFTA and succeeding trade agreements is incredibly broad, described by some as "anything that you cannot drop on your foot" (Grieshaber-Otto and Sanger, 2002, p. 29). The World Trade Organization has adopted a definition in the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) of four types of services that are included as trade. The GATS came into effect shortly after NAFTA and regional trade agreements are required to cover at least as much at the WTO rules, including the GATS. Thus, these rules apply to both the GATS and to NAFTA, and define services, including education services, as falling in four categories: 1) cross-border supply, such as provision of education over the Internet; 2) consumption abroad, such as students studying abroad; 3) commercial presence, such as providing education or testing in another country through direct investment; and 4) presence of natural persons, such as consultants or teachers working abroad on a temporary basis (Grieshaber-Otto and Sanger, 2002, p. 7).
Where is the Threat to Public Education?

One of the essential characteristics of public education is that it serves not just individual interests, but also the social and cultural—as well as economic—interests of the society. This means that it must be responsive to the broad range of interests and its direction must be set by the society that it serves. Defining education as a tradable service covered under trade agreements is a threat to the capacity of a society to control those decisions. The system of negotiation and enforcement of agreements is not open or democratic. Decisions are made—both in the negotiation and implementation—within the framework of trade rules and trade expertise, not incorporating social or cultural aspects.

The trade rules can have consequences that are not understood by the trade negotiators for a country. They cannot and do not have a level of knowledge about all the areas that can be affected by the words that are adopted in an agreement. As an example in the area of education, Canadian negotiators are taking part in negotiations about which the authorities in education—education ministers—have little information, even though the authority for education rests exclusively with the provinces, not the federal government. The federal government has a process of consultation with the provinces, but it is the provincial ministry responsible for trade policy, not the ministry of education, that provides the advice. The ministry of education may be briefed, particularly when an outside group like the BCTF raises the issues publicly, but is unlikely to have the expertise or interest in the trade area to see the potential implications.

What factors are giving an impetus to inclusion of education specifically as a service in the trade regime? The U.S. has had a huge trade deficit for many years, about
700 billion dollars in 2005. The exodus of factories manufacturing goods for the U.S. market to low-wage countries has been the major factor. As goods production decreases and services become a larger and larger share of the economy, it becomes more and more important to be able to turn those services into an internationally marketed activity to counter the negative balance of trade in goods. While the U.S. has lost the comparative advantage in many goods, it still maintains it in some services, including education. The prestige and dominant position of the U.S. is an attraction for at least some people in many societies. The level of scientific activity, the importance of U.S.-based corporations, and the pervasive penetration of “cultural products” (e.g., movies, TV shows, sports, music) are key factors in the value placed on getting an education in the U.S. Even without a guarantee of market access to offer education service to trade rules, the U.S. positive balance of trade in education is over $12 billion, one counter to the huge deficit in the goods trade. The largest portion of the positive balance of trade for the U.S. has been students from other countries studying in the U.S., although this has been declining because it has become more difficult to get a student visa since September 11. However, other aspects are slated to grow more in the future. U.S. universities are exporting programs to other countries, with the private, for-profit University of Phoenix alone offering programs in more than thirty countries. Education offered over the Internet is also a likely growth area, both in English and in Spanish, with the large Spanish-speaking population in the U.S. providing a basis for building programs with an economy of scale that could be very competitive.

Supporters of public education have been left by these trade agreements with a challenge to develop new ways of taking action to preserve the public nature of
education. One of those approaches is to create a network that links unions of educators. In the context of NAFTA, such a network is the Tri-national Coalition in Defense of Public Education.

The Creation of the Tri-national Coalition in Defense of Public Education

Even before the negotiations on NAFTA were complete, and nearly a year before NAFTA came into effect, Dan Leahy, the Director of the Labor Center at the Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington, pulled together a conference on NAFTA in January 1993. Two hundred people came together on the campus in Olympia. Working his teacher union contacts in the U.S. and Canada, Leahy was able to fund some 60 teachers and academics from Mexico to take part. The conference attracted participants from Canada, including the BCTF, the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) and Labour Councils in B.C.; and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF) and the Ontario Public Service Employees’ Union from Ontario. It also had participation from unions in the U.S., primarily from the NEA-affiliated Washington Education Association and the union representing staff at the Evergreen State College. This was the first time that teacher activists from the three countries had come together with a focus on this new influence on public education—trade agreements. The conference working groups developed a plan for a tri-national network of education workers that would have a common research agenda and communication structure and proposals for teacher to teacher exchanges (Kuehn, 1993). The research would be focused on developing an understanding of the education systems in the three countries, and on aspects of education that seemed to be affected by the trade regime and the pressures to harmonize aspects of education among the NAFTA countries.
A small follow-up meeting in Zacatecas, Mexico, in 1994, led to the translation of the idea of a network into the Tri-national Coalition in the Defense of Public Education. That meeting had participants from the BCTF, OSSTF and the president of the CTF from Canada, an executive member from the National Education Association from the U.S. and participants from Mexican academic unions and the “democratic current” groups within the Mexican teachers’ union, SNTE. The meeting produced a commitment from the BCTF and OSSTF to take part in the Coalition and to encourage the Canadian Teachers’ Federation to join as well. One of the Mexican participants, Maria de la luz Arriaga, a professor at UNAM, the largest university in Mexico, said that she would undertake coordinating Mexican participants. However, the NEA executive member who participated recommended that the NEA not take part in the Coalition.

Growing out of that meeting, seven Tri-national conferences have been held by the Coalition:

- Mexico City—February 1995
- Morelia, Michoacan, Mexico—October 1996
- Vancouver, Canada—March 1997
- Queretaro, Mexico—November 1998
- Zacatecas, Mexico—November 2000
- Toronto, Canada—May 2003
- Oaxaca, Mexico—March 2006

Until the meeting in Oaxaca, participation from the U.S. had been almost non-existent. At most of the conferences, the only people from the U.S. taking part were Leahy and a handful of U.S. activists who had been invited as speakers. The reasons given by the NEA for its absence were structural—that it only participated in international activities through the Education International (EI) and Mexico is included in the Latin American region of the EI, not in the North American region. Beyond whatever
internal political reasons may be factors, there is also the reality that the pressure to harmonize policies and practices is less visible and threatening when the harmonization is toward the structures and policies within which you operate—the situation of the U.S. in education in relation to education in the Americas. The first union in the U.S. to formally decide to participate in the Tri-national was the Professional Staff Congress (PSC) of the City University of New York in 2003, after a progressive slate won a union election and created an international committee in this American Federation of Teachers affiliate. The American Association of University Professors did participate in the two Tri-national Conferences in 2000 and 2003, with the encouragement of the Canadian Association of University Teachers, but have not expressed interest in taking part beyond attending the conferences. Participants from the United Teachers of Los Angeles joined representatives from the PSC at the 2006 conference, and activists in the California Federation of Teachers (another American Federation of Teachers affiliate) have indicated they hope to host the next conference in California.

The Canadian unions that have consistently participated in all the activities of the Coalition are the BCTF and the OSSTF. The CTF has sent participants to most of the conferences, although the attitude toward the Tri-national has varied greatly with the frequent changes in the makeup of the CTF executive committee over the decade. CTF President Winston Carter spoke at the 2006 conference. The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, the Manitoba Teachers' Society, the Nova Scotia Teachers' Union, the Alberta Teachers' Association and the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation all participated in at least one of the conferences. From Quebec, the CEQ (now renamed the CSQ) had staff members at several of the conferences and the CSN participated in the
CUPE has sent participants when the conferences have been in Canada and the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) participated in the two conferences, including co-hosting with OSSTF the 2003 conference in Toronto.

**Impact of the Tri-national Coalition**

It would be an exaggeration to claim a rollback of any aspect of neo-liberal globalization because of the work of the Tri-national Coalition in Defense of Public Education. On the other hand, some small gains can be identified as contributions to "globalization from below." Challenging globalization can seem to be an overwhelming task and to even talk about it can demoralize and thus demobilize people who think "what's the use of any small thing I can do." The TINA ("there is no alternative") claims about the domination of market policies put forward by Margaret Thatcher were accepted by many (Munck, 2002). However, in this new century, alternatives have indeed come back on the agenda. The relentless expansion of trade agreements has been slowed greatly, from the failure of the WTO meetings in Seattle in 1999 and Cancun in 2003, to the adoption of a very narrow agenda for the Free Trade Area of the Americas agreed to in Miami in late 2003 and the collapse of any agreement at the Summit of the Americas in Mar del Plata, Argentina in 2005. And the imagination of many has been captured by the slogan of the World Social Forum that "other worlds are possible." (This led to the Mexico City newspaper *la Jornada* calling protestors in Cancun "altermundistas" which might translate as "alternative worlders"—which is actually a more accurate description than being anti-globalization.)
The politics of teacher unions in Mexico is particularly complex. University faculty unions do not have a national organization, but group into three different tendencies, based on political orientation. All teachers in the elementary-secondary system are members of the one national union, SNTE. However, within SNTE are groups of teachers who have organized into what they describe as the “democratic current.” There are multiple political tendencies within the democratic current, some supporting the social democratic PRD party, others the Zapatista perspective, and others Marxist positions. They have in common an opposition to the control of the national teachers’ union by officials who are a part of the group that had been affiliated with the PRI party that controlled the national government until the 2000 presidential election. A coordinating group, CNTE (Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educacion), provides a space for the various oppositional groups to develop common strategies. CNTE-affiliated groups have a majority of the executive positions in a few of the state organizations, including the elementary teachers in Mexico City, the largest of the state unions (Global Exchange, 1997).

The Mexican Section of the Tri-national Coalition is formally organized, with a coordinating group, a publication (a magazine called Coalicion) and meetings of the organizations in the Mexican Section. It has become an organized, but loosely structured, space that brings together some sections of the CNTE and some of the university faculty unions, including those at the major Mexico City universities and some of the universities from other states (Mexican Section, 1998). They all have in common a critical perspective on the educational and economic policies being followed by the Mexican
government, policies that reflect a neo-liberal, market-oriented philosophy rather than seeing the state having a key role in the social and cultural development of the country and in guaranteeing the right to a free education for all.

Probably the most significant single impact of the Tri-national has been the Mexican Section carrying out a campaign opposing a form of standardized testing in Mexico. Members of the coordinating committee of the Mexican Section identified these exams as a concrete manifestation of the adoption in Mexico of practices modeled after those in the U.S. and contrary to the traditional approaches in Mexican education. The standardized testing has taken the form of the “examen unico” or single exam that would determine the post-secondary opportunities for students.

While the campaign on the examen unico is the work sustained over the longest time, a number of other projects have been carried out by the Mexican Section. It has organized workshops on decentralization and on education finance, produced reports on the conditions in education and teacher unions in Mexico for international conferences and published its magazine, Coalicion, which is also available on a labour forum site on the web (http://www.forolaboral.com.mx/).

The seven Tri-national Conferences organized by the Coalition have provided an ongoing focus for the work. The Mexican Section has held a pre-conference before the Tri-national Conferences. These have been forums where the group enters into debate and develops an analysis of the situation of education in Mexico for presentation at the conference. This process has created a space where “different tendencies in Mexican trade unionism are able to work together within it, even though on occasion, they may be at odds internally or within their sector” (Arriaga, 2003).
In addition to high-stakes testing, the Mexican Section has focused on the paradox of apparent decentralization that appears as a common theme of neo-liberal education policy. It is a paradox because this apparent decentralization at the same time increases central control, often influencing the classroom and the school through its defining of outcomes and testing. Susan Robertson (2000) describes the situation as simultaneously promoting neo-liberal localism and neo-liberal globalism. Devolving responsibility for education, but not authority, moves away from the nation-state, and at the same time weakens the power of teacher unions that have in most countries (except the U.S. and Canada, where it has been sub-state) been oriented to the nation state as the area of action. Based on the work of the Mexican Section on this issue, Maria de la Luz Arriaga led the IDEA Network research group on decentralization and produced a research report describing the decentralization policies and their impact throughout the Americas.

Mexico began an attempt to decentralize its education system early in the 1990s as part of the neo-liberal restructuring that began even before NAFTA. The assessment of the Mexican Section is that this decentralization did not take very well. They do not claim this as a success of their organized opposition, but rather a reflection of the strength of the traditions and centralized institutions that had been built as Mexico took on basic education as a national project in the first half of the 20th Century.

In summary, the Tri-national Coalition has served several purposes. It has been a transnational link for teacher union activists who see that the new context of globalization requires understanding and work across national borders. The Tri-national Conferences have provided a venue to increase the number of union activists in Mexico and Canada and recently the U.S. who have a chance to hear an analysis of what is happening in the
three countries in relationship to education. For Canadian teacher unionists, this has provided a context for understanding the relationship of provincial government actions in Canada to neo-liberal ideology and policies pursued in other countries. The Mexican Section of the Tri-national has provided an organizational venue for speaking out on issues within Mexico, particularly on standardized testing, that may not otherwise have had public articulation.

The most significant international outcome of a decade of work in the Coalition has been to build a network that links Canadians and Mexicans who are activists in teacher unions. These links are called on during periods of crisis. For example, when several of the leaders of Section 9, the elementary union in Mexico City were imprisoned during a dispute with the government, a campaign of Canadian teacher unions brought international attention and assisted in gaining their release. When the B.C. government imposed a contract on teachers, a group of Mexican teachers showed up at the Canadian embassy in Mexico City with a petition of protest. When the students at Mexico’s largest university, UNAM, were on strike for nearly a year in opposition to imposing tuition fees, the Mexican Section provided information about the events and issues, got international expressions of support for the students, and included the students in the international meetings held during that time. The Mexican Section provided articles for the Canadian education activist publication, Our Schools, Our Selves, about education in Mexico in the context of NAFTA (Mexican Section of the Tri-national Coalition, 1998). A seminar on the GATS and education with a Canadian speaker was covered in the Mexico City press, providing a critical perspective about another aspect of globalization. Hugo Aboites, a professor at the UAM, was included in an American Education Research
Association panel talking about globalization and education in Mexico. These are all concrete examples of the *intercambio* approach, the exchange and interchange relationship among teacher unions on a cross-national basis. While none of this is earth-shattering, they are small things that contribute to building the “globalization from below.”

On the other hand, among the many limitations of the Tri-national Coalition is its place on the margins of the national unions. The two national U.S. teacher unions, the NEA and the American Federation of Teachers, have had no relationship to the Coalition and have not sent participants to any of its activities since the organizing meeting in Zacatecas until two AFT locals participated in 2006. The teacher union in Mexico, SNTE, has seldom challenged the neo-liberal policies of the government, either when Mexico was governed by the PRI, or more recently, with President Fox from the PAN party. The Canadian Teachers’ Federation representative agreed at the meeting in Zacatecas in 1994 to take part in the Tri-national Coalition. Although it sent representatives to all the conferences except the 2003 conference in Toronto, the CTF has generally designated its representatives as “observers” rather than delegates, although that is not really a significant difference in practice.

The shifting position of the CTF has been an indication of the differences in the perspectives of the provincial unions that make up its membership, as well as the philosophy of the CTF international program. The CTF international program identifies its work as “development,” not “advocacy,” and the Tri-national Coalition is clearly advocacy. Many of the provincial unions are content to follow the approach of CTF, although some have participated in the conferences out of curiosity and concern about
what is happening with teachers in Mexico. The internationalist view of the CTF president at any particular time also has an impact. When a BCTF member, Jan Eastman, was CTF president, she was a strong supporter of CTF participation in the Tri-national and was directly engaged in planning a conference. Some other presidents have been less supportive. The one anglophone provincial union that has consistently worked with the BCTF on programs in South Africa and in Latin America, including the Tri-national, is the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, but it has disaffiliated from CTF, so is not at the CTF table when decisions are made.

Although “coalition of the willing” is a phrase that has been devalued by President Bush using it to describe support from countries other than the U.S. in the Iraq war, that is what coalitions always really are. If the purpose of a coalition is considered to be of importance to some, they can act together and take it as far as possible. While acknowledging limitations, these need not get in the way of creating political space for the objectives on which coalition partners can agree. However, impact is limited without participation of the larger national organizations.

**Leadership is Key—Bringing Together Imagination, Organization and Resources**

With all its limitations, the Tri-national Coalition in Defense of Public Education has continued to exist for much longer than any of the many tri-national activities that sprouted up when NAFTA was new. Several NGO and labour initiatives brought people together to try to understand one another's realities and the possibilities of challenging the neo-liberal policies, of which trade agreements are a part. Why would this initiative survive for a decade, while others turned out to be short lived?
The key to this has been leadership from three people and three elements of their work: imagination, organization and resources. The mutual support and commitment were built in the process of the interchange, the *intercambio* nature of the work.

Three people have been a part of the organizing of the Tri-national from the beginning. These are Dan Leahy, who created the Labor Center at the Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington; Maria de la Luz Arriaga, a professor of economics at UNAM in Mexico City; and me, as the director responsible for the International Solidarity Program at the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation in Canada. Even when there are no specific activities taking place, this group maintains communication, planning for what the program might be for the next period of time and what steps and resources are necessary for the work to continue. One of the key reasons that the Coalition has continued beyond an initial meeting or two is because the same three people have been committed to it as a part of their work since 1993, although it is not a part of the employment responsibilities of either Leahy or Arriaga.

The initiative to call a conference about education and NAFTA required imagination—particularly on the part of Dan Leahy. Few people in 1992 were aware that trade agreements could have an impact on public education. The fact—let alone the impact—of services such as education being a product to be traded and regulated through trade agreements was not widely known. Leahy imagined that one could bring together teacher union activists from the three countries and through sharing information about their realities and discussing common concerns could create the basis for common understanding and joint action. He also imagined that this could be the basis for an
ongoing organization that would monitor the impact of the effects of NAFTA and the integration of economies and would develop campaigns carried out by the unions.

Leahy had participated in a conference of labour and social organizations held in Zacatecas, Mexico in 1992, aimed at building a tri-national opposition to NAFTA. This had provided him with contacts in Mexico to identify the Mexican educators who might be interested in both the issues and working toward a long-term international linking project. He had contacts within the U.S. teacher unions, particularly in the Washington Education Association, having worked with the WEA offering programs through the Labor Center. And he had contacts in Canada through OSSTF, which had sent its General Secretary as a delegate to the meeting in Zacatecas and through me, a member of the staff at the BCTF. Leahy's wife and I had worked together on the student newspaper at Reed College and been friends who had remained in contact after our student days. It was the Labor Center that he used as a platform to host the first tri-national conference on “The Future of Public Education in North America.”

Through discussion groups operating in both Spanish and English— an ongoing element required for the success of the Coalition—agreement was reached on an “Olympia Declaration.” (Appendix E) The issue that showed the greatest gap in understanding based on national experience was whether post-secondary public education should be free of tuition. That was a fundamental principle to the Mexicans—something guaranteed in the Mexican constitution, but under threat as neo-liberal policies were being applied to education. Participants from both Canada and the U.S. could not imagine a guarantee of free post-secondary education. However, there was consensus among all about the centrality of public education to a democratic society. The
declaration also proposed an ongoing organizational structure to build communication and solidarity, but without any specific commitments for how that might happen.

To create the connections necessary to build the Coalition, Leahy took a leave from Evergreen State College and moved his family to Zacatecas, Mexico, for six months. From there he sent invitations to the organizations that had sent representatives to the Olympia conference. He had hoped that participants in the meeting would be able to bring organizational commitments and resources to build a tri-national monitoring and organizing group. However, such was not the case. As mentioned before, the NEA national executive member who attended left with a recommendation that the NEA not participate further. The Canadians present—the president of CTF, the General Secretary of OSSTF, as well as me, representing the BCTF—could not commit to the scale of organization proposed by Leahy. Further, despite valiant efforts by Leahy, only a handful of people from Mexico showed up. One of the few who did was Maria de la Luz Arriaga, from the Economics Faculty of UNAM in Mexico City.

Arriaga is a long time activist, reaching back to her student days at the time of the massacre of students in protests leading up to the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City. She had contacts in university unions that opposed the neo-liberal directions the Mexican government was taking, and with some factions in the “democratic current” opposition within the teachers’ union. When a decision was made in Zacatecas to hold a conference in Mexico City to launch the coalition, it was Arriaga who was the key on the ground organizer. She has used her considerable organizing experience and contacts to facilitate—working along with a number of other people—the development and continuity of the Mexican section of the Tri-national Coalition.
Continuity in leadership is a challenge when working with Mexican teacher unions—at least those in the "democratic current." One of the hallmarks of democracy—as seen by the caucuses within the unions—is changing leadership, with officers not able to run for re-election after completing what is generally a single, 3-year term. Frequent turnover requires constant efforts to interest new leaders and to get priority on an international coalition in competition with many pressing membership issues. The stability required to keep this political space open over the long term has been largely provided by Arriaga. While a number of others, including those working on the Mexican Section coordinating committee, have played an important role, Arriaga has been the person who has been a constant throughout from her original commitment made at the meeting in Zacatecas to organize a Mexican presence in tri-national work.

The third person who has been involved throughout has been me, as the Canadian presence in the decade of existence of the Tri-national Coalition. I brought two particular things to the work of the Coalition: a focus on trade agreements and the resources of the BCTF International Solidarity Program.

The debates about the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement and then NAFTA had raised a general awareness that something different was happening under the guise of trade. The possible impact of NAFTA was pointed out in discussions with two people in particular, Jim MacFarlan from the BCTF staff and John Calvert, a research officer for the Canadian Union of Public Employees. Calvert and I decided after the Olympia conference to co-author an article about the potential impact of NAFTA. He was particularly looking at the issues from the perspective of the impact on the public sector generally of trade rules that would limit the ability of governments to locally source
supplies. Services sections in trade agreements provide a very real challenge to public employees. My interest was in looking at how trade agreements might affect public education, particularly in pushing in the direction of privatization. In addition, both of us were particularly concerned about the “ratchet effect,” the framework of both NAFTA and subsequent trade agreements that only allows for movement in one direction—public services can be privatized, but another government with another philosophy can not move to put a privatized service back into the public sector without stiff penalties. The article we wrote was published in Our Schools, Our Selves (Calvert and Kuehn, 1903b). With more research and additional materials that we picked from the Olympia conference, the article was expanded into a book called Pandora’s Box: Free Trade, Corporate Power and Public Education, also published by Our Schools, Our Selves. (Calvert and Kuehn, 1993a)

The resources of the BCTF International Solidarity Program have also been a significant factor in the continuity of the Tri-national Coalition over a decade. Until the work with the Tri-national began, the BCTF work in Latin America had all been done in a partnership with CoDevelopment Canada, with limited direct contact between the BCTF as a funding organization and the unions in Latin America. The work with the Tri-national was the first major project that the BCTF undertook independently of CoDev. At the time, CoDev had a small staff and was still focused on development work, much of it described in the projects covered in earlier chapters. It had not begun to work on advocacy and policy, although it later expanded to this type of work as a partner with the BCTF in developing the IDEA Network. Funding from the BCTF International Solidarity Fund has provided an ongoing base of support both for the Tri-national
Conferences and for the work of the Mexican Section in producing publications, holding workshops and conducting campaigns.

One of the reasons for the limited direct work by the BCTF had been language. CoDev provided staff who were bilingual and could deal directly in Spanish with our partners in Latin America. In the Tri-national we were able to find ways around the language problem. Dan Leahy had learned Spanish as a part of his preparation to do this work, and Mariluz Arriaga took English lessons to be able to work directly with folks in the U.S. and Canada. While I don't speak Spanish, I did take it in high school many years ago, and was able to use that limited knowledge, along with the crude online translation tool, Babblefish, to read email in Spanish from Mariluz and she was able work out the content of my email messages written in English. Internet technology has played a key role in facilitating communication for purposes of coordinating the organizing of conferences and events.

While other tri-national projects among unions and social movement groups have largely disappeared, the Tri-national Coalition has survived. It has provided rich links between some Mexican and Canadian teachers and their unions. This continuity has been built on leadership by coordinators in each of the three countries. Together, they, along with the people and other resources of their organizations, have built and maintained for more than a decade a space for mutual support and cooperation.

The process of interchange in the series of tri-national conferences, helped to clarify for participants the common patterns in education that flow from neo-liberal globalization. The perspective provided by trying to understand someone else's reality helps to give insight into one's own reality. The *intercambio*, exchange, aspect of the
ongoing work helped all involved to see in our own situations the themes that are now more clearly established: decentralization, privatization, standardized testing for accountability systems, along with attacks on the labour rights of teachers. While there is now a large literature on globalization, including on the impact of globalization on education, that did not exist at the beginning of the 1990s. The exchanges and publications that flowed from the tri-national conferences provided insights into the implications for education of globalization and trade agreements. This happened well before globalization and education became common currency among academics and books and articles on the topic began to appear (Spring, 1998; Edwards and Usher, 2000; Robertson, 2000; Smith, 2002; Anderson-Levitt, 2003; Barrow, Didou-Aupetit and Mallea; Spring, 2004; Journal—Globalisation, Societies and Education). The early recognition of the impact of free trade and globalization and using the opportunity to build cross-national links, was but one example of the richness of the intercambio approach to internationalism.

**Expanding the Reach from the Arctic to Argentina: the IDEA Network**

NAFTA had barely come into effect before a Summit of the Americas was called together in 1994 by President Clinton to promote a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). A second Summit of the Americas held in Santiago, Chile, in 1998, brought education directly into the official hemispheric process. In addition to looking to the creation of a hemispheric trade agreement, the governments participating outlined a number of commitments in regard to improving access to quality education throughout the hemisphere—positive developments if the countries actually did what they said they would (Second Summit of the Americas: Education, 1998). Responsibility for planning
and monitoring was assigned to the secretariat of the Organization of American States (OAS). The central purpose of the Summit of the Americas meeting, however, was to push for the FTAA. If the FTAA were to follow the pattern of NAFTA—and it was often talked of as an expansion of NAFTA to the hemisphere—it would bring education into the trade regime throughout the Americas.

A civil society coalition called the Hemispheric Social Alliance had been created by several environmental and human rights groups, as well as by ORIT, the regional labour grouping for the Americas within the structure of the ICFTU, the international union body made up of national labour centrals. This group held a People’s Summit in Santiago at the time of the second Summit of the Americas. This activist civil society Alliance made a commitment to develop an alternate program to that being developed by governments through the Summit process and to monitor developments in the negotiation of the FTAA and the economic integration process. The Education International had representation at the alternate summit and it had been identified as the group with responsibility for follow-up in the education area.

For different reasons, neither the Hemispheric Social Alliance nor the Education International seemed likely to be successful in putting public education on the agenda for the activist alternative to the FTAA negotiating process. The Hemispheric Social Alliance had produced a program that they called Alternatives for the Americas: Building a People’s Hemispheric Agreement (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and Common Frontiers, 1999). While this covered a wide range of topics, including human rights, environment and labour, it was silent on the issues of public education and had been developed without participation from education unions or others with a focus on
public education. While the Education International would have brought a focus on education issues to any participation, it did not have the resources to devote to a regional program of this sort. EI has fewer than 50 people on staff for an organization whose members are 343 unions with 29 million members and seven regional offices (EI, 2006). In addition, EI faced the limitation that in its structures, North America and Latin America are separate regions and only have contact during the EI’s tri-annual Congress. Further, a number of significant Latin American teacher unions had not joined EI, and Cuba was not allowed to be a member because of strong opposition from the two U.S. teacher unions.

In light of these limitations, and given the experience with the Tri-national Coalition, it seemed that it might be possible to develop a larger education coalition, one that would reach from the Arctic to the Argentine, just as the FTAA was promoted as expanding NAFTA from north to south. This initiative might fill a political space that was important, but empty.

The Contribution of CoDevelopment Canada to Building the IDEA Network

The initiative for this new project came out of a discussion between the CoDev staff person who worked on the education projects, Jim Rader, and me. Rader said that in discussions with the unions CoDev and the BCTF worked with in Latin America, there was an interest in developing policies as alternatives to the neo-liberal policies that were being imposed by their governments. In addition, the joint statement by governments from the Santiago summit provided some targets for improvements in education that should be monitored in an attempt to get these governments to live up to their promises.
These discussions coincided with the time that I was involved in organizing an international education forum as part of the People’s Summit on APEC ’97 that took place in Vancouver. As we looked at the work on education of the Education Forum of APEC (meetings of education ministers from the APEC “economies”), it became ever more obvious that the issues being faced in Mexico and Canada were very similar to issues arising in Asia and Latin America. To broaden the basis of discussion and to try to build wider coalitions, we decided to organize a small meeting of teacher union leaders from around Latin America in Mexico City in the days just before the 4th Tri-national Conference in Defense of Public Education in Queretaro, Mexico in November of 1998.

We identified unions in each region of Latin America that the BCTF and CoDev had worked with at some point in the previous decade and invited them to send a participant to the meeting in Mexico City. These included FOMCA (the Central American federation of teacher unions), CTERA (Argentina), SUTEP (Peru), UNE (Ecuador), the CEQ (Quebec), the CUT (Caribbean Union of Teachers) and the Tri-national Coalition from Mexico. In addition, two people from the U.S. took part, Dan Leahy from Evergreen State College and the Tri-national Coalition, along with David Stratman, a strong critic of U.S. foreign and domestic policies and former head of the Parent Teacher Association in the U.S., although neither of them represented a particular organization at this meeting.

The delegates sent by the unions were also invited to attend the Tri-national Conference and to speak in the sessions. Even if nothing came from the meeting in terms of a hemispheric coalition, the Tri-national Conference would at least be a richer experience for both the Mexican and Canadian participants, hearing about the issues and
the actions being taken around the hemisphere. This, we felt, was particularly important for the Canadian participants. Clearly Canada was being integrated into the Americas as it never had been in the past. Canada had joined the Organization of American States only in 1990, indicating an official symbolic declaration that finally we considered ourselves a part of the Americas. Canada was slated to host the Summit of the Americas, scheduled for 2001 in Quebec City and we felt that Canadian teacher unions should take a central role in organizing a hemispheric education conference. Yet the structures of teacher unionism did not facilitate activities that involved all the Americas. The Education International had its two regions—North America and Latin America, with Mexico a part of Latin America, not North America. The other regional body that most Latin American teacher unions belonged to was CEA (Confederation of Educators of the Americas), but the only union from Canada that was a member was the CEQ from Quebec.

As organizers of the meeting in Mexico City, we would have been satisfied just to break through these barriers that kept Canadian teachers isolated from any real contact or understanding of the situation of the teachers around Latin America. But much more came from it. There was agreement to create a network of teacher unions and others who support public education in the Americas. All the participants agreed to recommend to their organizations that they take part in the creation of this hemispheric coalition. The first major activity would be a conference to be held in Ecuador in 1999. The conference would provide a venue for developing reports and recommendations for the alternate summit to be held in Canada in 2001. The initial group that met in Mexico City, except for the two participants from the U.S., who did not represent organizations, would serve
as a steering committee to generate research papers and to plan the conference in Quito. CoDevelopment Canada would serve as the secretariat for the project through CoDev staff.

The network was not intended to be a competing organization to the various other teacher union regional organizations—the EI regional structures and CEA. Rather it was to be a network that welcomed teacher unions, but also sought to include student organizations (including the Caribbean and Latin American Student Association and the Canadian Federation of Students), parent groups, community organizations and any others supporting public education. The description of the IDEA Network/Red-SEPA from the web site says:

Red-SEPA seeks to build an understanding of the impact of neo-liberal policies on education throughout the Americas and proposes alternative approaches consistent with strong public education systems. Red-SEPA connects civil society groups in the Americas that have an interest in protecting and enhancing public education as a basic institution of democratic development and human rights. Red-SEPA also works with other groups who are concerned about the impact of the FTAA and other processes on education and social services. Red-SEPA conducts research, develops communication networks, publishes educational reports, and holds conferences. We also mobilize support for educators and students facing repression in their own countries for activities in support of democratic and public education. (http://www.vcn.bc.ca/idea/intro_eng.htm)

In many ways, the IDEA Network was built on the shoulders of the Tri-national Coalition. The founding meeting was tied to a Tri-national conference. The Tri-national

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1 [A note about the name. In Spanish, the name chosen was Red Social para la Educacion Publica en las Americas, thus the acronym Red-SEPA. The same acronym works for the Portuguese and French versions of the name. The name in English was Civil Society Network for Public Education in the Americas, but since that did not work well for an acronym, the group was usually referred to as Red-SEPA in English as well. However, some of the Canadian union leaders said that it wouldn't be possible to recommend to their members a group with the name “red,” even though red in Spanish means network. The Cold War has survived the death of communism in some places. So the decision was made to use the name of the first conference—IDEA, an acronym for Initiative for Democratic Education in the Americas. It would have been a more sensible name anyway. Thus, the organization is the IDEA Network in English, and Red-SEPA in the three Latin-based languages.]
had shown that it was possible to create an international network that was a space for different organizations to work together, if it was loose enough that no one had to agree to more than very broad principles and to show up and join in the discussion. It also showed that it is possible for unilingual participants to work together across languages, using translation equipment that is much less expensive and more flexible than was required for translation for meetings in the past. In particular, the Tri-national experience demonstrated that there is a very real interest in understanding the forces that are affecting education policy that now are global in nature. It is not enough to understand the policy choices being made in your own country because they are very much influenced by global forces.

Teacher Union Strategies in the Context of Globalization

When the work on the Tri-national began, the focus in both Canada and Mexico was to a large degree on the relationship that each of the countries had with the United States, rather than the more general issues of globalization. With the development of the FTAA and the Summit of the Americas process, as well as the APEC summits, it was becoming clear that globalization was a much larger issue, related not just to trade agreements, but to a general restructuring that was taking place.

Based on what we learned from the Tri-national Coalition experience and looking at other counter-globalization activism that had developed since the beginning of the Tri-national, we developed a "challenge neo-liberal globalization" strategy. Challenge could have a number of stages, beginning with resistance, then going beyond resistance to propose and work toward achieving alternative policies and practices. Not surprisingly, resistance is the most common stance. Many teacher unions have sought to maintain the
conditions that they gained during the Keynesian period of expansion of public education and improved teaching conditions and professional influence. The efforts of the "competitive state" push toward a "reconceptualisation of professionalism as individual entrepreneurship and managerialism [that] threatens to create new fissures between teachers and to fragment them as an occupational category" (Robertson, 2000, p. 186). The resistance to the withdrawal of the state from its previous defining and financing public education brings teachers into conflict with the state. The first response is to struggle to maintain working and learning conditions against the reductions of state expenditures and, in the process, to retain or regain collective labour rights. It is in this conflict between teachers and the state that a collective consciousness of teachers as a group may be reinforced, against the pressure to individualize and atomize the autonomy of teachers. Alternatively, the levers held by the state may be sufficient to break that collective identity and the power of solidarity.

**Strategic Development from Resistance to Alternatives**

Resistance alone is probably not sufficient to maintain permanently a collective position and identity. Resistance without hope of some victories and improvements is difficult to maintain for the long term. Some ideas of an alternative must be there to encourage struggle. These ideas do not have to be a return to what was, but must have the promise of the same values applied in new ways.

Just when the domination of neo-liberal globalization seemed the only possible outcome, as mentioned earlier, those not prepared to give up developed an alternative that could rekindle hope through the World Social Forum and its slogan, "Other worlds are..."
possible” to contrast with the sense that there could be no alternative to neo-liberal policies.

An analysis of the current situation of education in the developing context of globalization was the basis of the strategy paper for the IDEA conference in Quito, Ecuador, in October of 1999. This was one of three main papers that were developed through a collective process of individuals writing an initial draft in either English or Spanish. Each of the papers was translated into the other language and distributed to members of the IDEA/Red-SEPA coordinating committee, made up of representatives of the unions that had accepted an invitation to participate in the development of the project. The papers were all discussed at a meeting of the coordinating committee, and with suggestions made to the authors. Each of the authors then revised the papers based on the advice of the group. Here was another concrete example of intercambio—it was through a process of exchange that we developed the core of the program for the IDEA Network.

It should be noted that this approach to engaging together unilingual speakers of either English or Spanish is only possible with a bi-lingual intermediary who has a compatible political perspective and is committed to the project. The person must not only be bilingual, but also able to provide simultaneous and consecutive translation. Steve Stewart, the CoDevelopment Canada staff person who has worked as the secretariat from the beginning of the Network has these qualities and abilities, and his work has been key to any success of the project.

Core Ideas for a Program

A paper by Carlos Lopez of Honduras provided an analysis of “The Effects of 15 Years of Neo-liberal Policies on Public Education in the Americas” (Lopez, 1999). That
was complemented with the paper by Jose Ramos from Peru on "An Alternative for Democratic Education in the Americas" (Ramos, 1999). The third paper that I drafted was called "Responding to Globalization of Education in the Americas—Strategies to Support Public Education" (Kuehn, 1999). The approach was one of challenge to neo-liberal globalization, as described in the previous section, using the network approaches adopted by the Social Forum process. This paper set out suggestions for a strategy which have been the basis for the work of the IDEA Network as it has continued to develop. The full text of the strategic suggestions is provided in an Appendix. The following outlines the strategies from that paper:

Trans-national strategies to defend public education

1) Defend public education at the local and national levels with a strategic consciousness of the global context. Inform and mobilize teachers to take part in this defense.

2) Counter neo-liberal ideology with an alternative program for public education nationally and internationally.

3) Conduct research and analysis and share it with other organizations throughout the Americas.

4) Build communication links among organizations with conferences and communication using the Internet.

5) Work in international and regional teacher and labour organizations (e.g., Education International, the Red-SEPA, CEA, ORIT) to develop common understanding and strategies.

6) Participate in building a global civil society that works toward a healthy environment, peace, social justice—and public education. Utilize these groups to challenge the international institutions of neo-liberalism--the WTO, the Free Trade Area of the Americas, the IMF and World Bank.

7) Take part in international campaigns aimed at achieving social rights, including the right to an education and the right for workers to form organizations that provide protection.

8) Constantly challenge the "cult of the inevitable"—the claim that there is no alternative to neo-liberal policies. (Kuehn, 1999)
The Quito IDEA conference brought together delegates from around the Americas and from a wide range of organizations that represented teachers, other education workers, students, and peasant organizations. The one major country that had no participation was the United States. The only person there from the U.S. was there as a member of the staff of the Organization of American States (OAS) from the Social Development and Education Unit that had responsibility for monitoring the commitments about education made by governments at the Santiago summit. She had been responsible for getting some OAS and UNESCO funding that added to the Canadian funding from the BCTF, CIDA through CoDev, and the Alberta Teachers’ Association and OSSTF.

One of the issues that I raised in my presentation to the conference was the negotiation of the GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services) that was intended to be an element of the WTO negotiations in the Seattle round, scheduled for the end of November, 1999. International civil society groups were only just becoming aware of the existence of the GATS. It had been negotiated as a part of the agreement that created the WTO in 1995 and already applied to all WTO members, but few outside of those who negotiated it in secret were aware of its existence. However, it took only a mention of the treatment of public services, including education, as a tradable commodity for many participants to understand that this was a significant challenge to the way that public education had been understood historically. Participants from Latin America were particularly sensitive to the possibilities of education imperialism from the United States if the state is excluded from regulatory actions to protect their national education systems.
from demands of U.S. institutions for free access to students in Latin America as a market.

In response, one of the resolutions adopted at the end of the conference said:

Whereas the next round of negotiations of the World Trade Organization, scheduled to take place in Seattle, USA next November 30 – December 3 will include the topic of education and other services and;

Whereas the inclusion of education as commodity in these negotiations threatens national sovereignty and the concept of education as a universal, equitable and free social right;

Be it resolved that participant organizations in this conference carry out on November 30, 1999, in conjunction with other popular organizations, a Continental Day of Action in Defense of Public Education to protest and publicize the negotiations to expand neo-liberal policies in education and other service sectors. (IDEA, 1999)

The Quito conference took place just two months before the “Battle in Seattle”--the opposition in the streets to the World Trade Organization, complemented by the delegates from the less developed countries inside the meeting saying no to the plans to further expand trade liberalization. The BCTF took part in the peaceful labour and environmentalist demonstration of about 50,000, with several busloads of B.C. teachers traveling to Seattle. Steve Stewart, the CoDev staff person who is the secretariat for the IDEA Network, took part in the roving street protests that produced most of the media coverage. Although less emphasized in the media reports than the physical confrontations, these protests in Seattle brought together trade unionists, with environmentalists and human rights activists, sometimes referred to as the Teamster-turtle alliance. The protests in the streets and the breakdown of the negotiations inside in the meetings produced a new sense that opposition was not hopeless, that globalization from above was vulnerable to challenges from below and that broad alliances in
opposition to neo-liberal policies were possible. This, in turn, energized subsequent activities of the IDEA Network.

The Santiago Summit of the Americas and the negotiation of a Free Trade Area of the Americas had been a spark to bring together the IDEA Network. Not surprisingly, the Quito conference also called for participation in an alternative summit to the official Summit of the Americas scheduled for Quebec City in 2001. The meeting resolved that the IDEA Network should cooperate with other education organizations in the Americas to "ensure that a conference on education issues be an integral part of this summit" (IDEA, 1999). It also called for five regional conferences to be held before the 2001 Quebec summit to inform those interested in public education about the issues and to "elaborate an alternative proposal for education to be presented both at the official Americas and in the Peoples' Summits" (IDEA, 1999). Four of these regional meetings were held before the summit—and the fifth after. An Education Forum was held as a part of the Quebec People's Summit in April 2001, modeled on the Education Forum in the APEC '97 Peoples' Summit. It was co-sponsored by the Canadian Teachers' Federation and the CEQ and included representatives from around the Americas, with many of them brought to Quebec by the IDEA Network.

The CTF was convinced to be a co-sponsor of the Education Forum because the event was being held in Canada. However, unlike everyone else involved, they saw the Education Forum as a separate event and not a part of the People's Summit and the protests on the streets. Seemingly, to make this clear, the CTF officers quickly left Quebec City before the other events began.
The Development of the IDEA Research Network

One of the trans-national strategies identified in my presentation to the IDEA conference was a call to “Conduct research and analysis and share it with other organizations throughout the Americas” (Kuehn, 1999). As participants from many countries talked with one another at the meetings in Quito and Quebec City, it became clearer to all that neo-liberal policies were producing similar concerns in the different countries. These included familiar items of reduction in funding for education from the state, and shifting costs to local government or families; proclaiming decentralization of responsibility for education and at the same time increasing centralized control through the use of standardized examinations; and, as well, attacking the labour rights of teachers. It was agreed that cross-national research should be conducted on these areas. Much of the international education research on these issues has been carried out by, or is funded by, the World Bank. Its definition of “best practice” is more determined by the privatization agenda of the World Bank than by research based in classrooms. An IDEA Research Network was established to undertake research based on public education as a social right. The Network included union researchers, union activists with a research interest, working along with sympathetic university academics. The Research Network met in Havana in 2002 and Cancun in 2003 in conjunction with meetings of the IDEA coordinating committee. The Research Network meetings have been a venue for presentations and critical discussions of the research that has been carried out and for identification of further areas for work. It has also incorporated the work of two regional research projects—one in Central America and the other in the Southern Cone of South
America. These regional projects have been supported financially by the consortium of the CSQ, OSSTF and BCTF, along with CoDevelopment Canada.

The research strategy for the IDEA Network has incorporated several features. One is a comparative method—gathering information about common themes in different countries and finding patterns that exist. Another is seminars where researches and activists are brought together to grapple with an issue and to make some recommendations about policy or action. The third is to talk to folks who care—students, parents, teachers—about their experience and about their ideas and dreams for what public education might be.

One of the Research Network reports, “Educational evaluation in school systems of the Western Hemisphere: A comparative Study,” (Rodriguez, 2002) was included in an anthology on standardized testing published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (Moll, 2003). This report was written by Lidia Rodriguez, one of the researchers who worked for CTERA, the teacher union in Argentina, based on a survey of unions participating in the IDEA Network. It demonstrates that “policy borrowing” has led to the promotion of similar focus throughout the Americas on the use of standardized testing.

An additional topic for IDEA Network research was identified in Quito—health and safety of teachers and students. Deolidia Martinez from CTERA (Argentina) wrote a research report on this area, called “The Teaching Profession and Labour Health and Safety” (Martinez, 1999). The paper links both the worsening social conditions of students marginalized by the inequalities in the global economy and the intensification of the work of teaching as having a negative health impact on teachers. As a strategic
response to these conditions, she proposed a hemispheric School Health and Safety Code to provide an opening for discussion of the inter-relationships of health, social conditions and education, both within the teacher unions and with governments.

The IDEA Network organized a regional meeting on the Health and Safety Code in 2002 in Costa Rica for union representatives from Central America and the Caribbean. Teachers in Costa Rica and some of the Caribbean islands have used the concept of a School Health and Safety Code as an opening for discussions with their governments about the relationships between social and teaching conditions and the health of teachers. This has provided a way of talking about conditions outside of traditional union action through collective bargaining. Martinez also came to British Columbia to present her ideas at a training program for the health and safety contacts from the BCTF’s local unions. Her presentation created a broader discussion than the usual focus in health and safety training on the technical aspects of Workers Compensation Board regulations and procedures. Her work brings together the social conditions of education and students, the working conditions in the schools and the personal health of teachers into a holistic view. This then provides an approach to improving conditions that has a focus on all three aspects, rather than seeing them as separate issues to be pursued separately.

Regional Teacher Union Research Projects

Two regional research projects in Central and South America developed in parallel, and were linked to the research of the IDEA Network. Each combines an analysis of the current situation in public education, as seen by teachers and their unions. Each also presents proposals to make to governments for new directions in education policy. The Southern Cone project includes teacher unions in Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina
and Chile, and has been coordinated by Pablo Gentili from the Laboratory for Public Policy, which works out of both Rio de Janero and Buenos Aires. The other is carried out by FOMCA, the regional teacher union organization in Central America. It is a joint project of the teacher unions in Central America and has been coordinated by the Educational Institute of the Central American University, located in Managua, Nicaragua. The funding for these projects has been jointly provided by the CSQ, OSSTF and the BCTF, along with some limited CIDA funds through CoDevelopment Canada. The Central American study, in particular, used qualitative research methods that engaged large numbers of teachers through their unions.

While the focus of each of these is on the region under study, they also contribute to a broader understanding in relationship to globalization. One intercambio aspect in this project is a series of seminars held in Canada. These exchanges were designed to have representatives working with each of the projects present their findings and issues. In addition, David Chudnovsky, a past president of the BCTF, reported on the process and the substance of the Charter for Public Education. This was an approach that had been used in British Columbia to engage teachers and the public in looking at what public education should be like, trying to focus on visions, rather than the current trying circumstances in the schools. Three seminars were held in May and June, 2004, one at a session at the Canadian Society for Studies in Education, a second at a meeting in Winnipeg of researchers who work for the teacher unions in Western Canada, and a third seminar at the BCTF in Vancouver. Similar seminars were held in the two regions in Latin America.
In concept and practice, the IDEA Research Network has been an application of *intercambio*. The topics chosen are relevant across countries, the research work is carried out by engaging union researchers with assistance from academics from the various countries, and the work is disseminated in multiple languages using the web, print and conferences and meetings. Research is exchanged and contributes to a cross-national understanding and potential for action.

**The IDEA Women’s Network**

Another activity that came out of the Quito conference was the result of a caucus called by women participants at the lunch break on one of the meeting days. This group identified a lack of focus on gender issues in the program of the conference and in the analysis of globalization and its impact. The group on the spot created an IDEA Women’s Network. They asked for a specific position on the coordinating committee for a representative of the Womens’ Network, and this was agreed to by the coordinating committee. Many of the women at the conference had become activists through successful programs aimed at engaging women in the leadership of their union. In addition, some women were at the conference because invitations had been sent to women working in community-based programs. However, the group rightly pointed out that the program of the conference did not reflect gender issues or analysis, either within topics or as a separate topic.

Since the Quito conference, a steering committee of the IDEA Women’s Network has met in conjunction with the People’s Summit in Quebec City in 2001, the Tri-national Conference in Toronto in 2003 and the conference against the FTAA in Havana in January of 2004. A larger group met in Zacatecas, Mexico, in 2002, to define what the
activities of the women's network should be. In addition to calls for networking among the women union leaders, they identified the need for training for women to become more effective as leaders and more influential in their unions.

A week-long project, primarily funded by the BCTF, was held in Havana in November 2004. It brought together more than twenty women from the various regions of the Americas to develop a capacity-building training program. Each of the participants is expected to carry out training for women leaders in the countries in the region of the Americas they are from.

One area of focus was how to increase the participation of women in their unions, drawing on the experience of the national and trans-national training programs that have been carried out in Central America over the past 15 years in programs, supported by the BCTF and CoDevelopment Canada. The other central focus was on the impact of neo-liberalism on women and on women teachers, in particular. The workshop was jointly facilitated by Maria Trejos from Costa Rica, Nancy Hinds and Marian Dodds from the BCTF, and two women from the Cuban teachers' union, with the entire program over four days being carried out in two languages, English and Spanish. Maria Trejos, in particular, has extensive experience in workshop facilitation in Central America using popular education techniques. In addition to participating in the regional training programs in Central America, she was one of the women who came to Vancouver for Intercambio '94, described in Chapter Four, and was the central person in developing and then facilitating the non-sexist pedagogy workshops in Costa Rica and in several other countries in Central America.
The IDEA Women's Network and its training program is another example of the interchange of *intercambio*, as well as of feminist practice. At the conclusion of the workshop the women indicated that the program should be extended to engage more women, in particular because, unlike the women's network programs organized through the Education International regional structure, the IDEA Network program integrated the analysis of the impact of neo-liberalism with the development of skills. In addition, as mentioned earlier, the EI organizational structure places Canada in North America, rather than seeing the Americas as one region, and thus provides no opportunities for women from the North and South to work together.

The BCTF in “transnational advocacy networks”—Civility, Democracy, Contention

It was in exploring the implications of NAFTA that the issues and strategies related to globalization began to emerge for the BCTF International Solidarity Program. In both its relations with the state in British Columbia and in its international program with other unions, the BCTF has maintained its commitment to collective action and to social justice values and objectives. How these values apply in the new context of globalization has been and is being worked through in two transnational networks in which the BCTF has played a founding and ongoing role: the Tri-national Coalition in Defense of Public Education and the Initiative for Democratic Education in the Americas (IDEA) Network.

Both of these initiatives could be characterized as “transnational advocacy networks,” described by Mundy and Murphy (2000). They characterize these as “new organizational forms [that] bring together a wide array of nongovernmental organizations, citizens associations, and trade unions, in forms of activism which target
global level institutions and issues, while also attempting to use global level visibility to
level changes at the national level” (p. 1). This description catches the dual character of
the objectives. On the one hand, the Tri-national and the IDEA Network are
transnational groupings, attempting to influence as part of a larger movement, the nature
of trade agreements and other transnational education policies. On the other hand, the
participating groups try to bring these transnational elements into the attempts they make
to influence their own governments. As an example, the UNE (teachers union in
Ecuador) took into a meeting with their minister of education the information from the
IDEA Network about GATS negotiations on education, attempting to get him to take a
position within the government of not including education within Ecuador’s demands and
offers in the GATS negotiations. The UNE representative indicated that the possible
implications of the GATS for education was new information to the minister of
education.

Mundy and Murphy provide a framework of three concepts for testing whether
transnational advocacy networks approximate a “global civil society”: civility,
democracy and contention. By civility they mean “development of a dense pattern of
sustained interaction and collaboration among international nongovernmental actors,
around a coherent framing of the issue of education” (p. 3). The two networks seem to fit
this criterion. They have developed over more than a decade, have been collaborations
among a number of organizations that have been dense enough to survive changes in
leadership and have been framed around the impact of trade agreements and globalization
on education.
“Democratic” in the context of Mundy and Murphy’s argument about global civil society is measured by “horizontal linkages, through new forms of communication, decision-making and direct participation” (p. 4). Both networks have been open to any groups that share an interest in the work. There is no test of membership, or requirement of a formal adoption of a motion by an organization, other than a desire to participate. Decisions are made by consensus and organizations are expected to participate only to the degree to which there is support within their organization for any particular activity. Decisions are made at meetings through discussion or by email consultation of coordinating committee members in the periods between face-to-face coordinating committee meetings.

The third characteristic identified by Mundy and Murphy is “contentious.” By this they mean “advocating fundamental social change, independent of, or in opposition to, existing structures and initiatives organized by states and international governmental organizations” (p. 4). Again, the networks seem to fit this characteristic in opposing both the inclusion of education in trade agreements and the neo-liberal policies of which trade agreements are a part. Mundy and Murphy draw here on a Gramscian conception of civil society as a space where legitimizing and de-legitimizing official policy takes place through conflict. It is because the Tri-national and the IDEA Network are oppositional that they must operate as coalitions that are open to all those who agree, but not seek to be all encompassing organizations. The task within this conception of civil society is not just to challenge state or international governmental policies, but also to broaden the support for the oppositional position within civil society. As an example, BCTF representatives attempt on an ongoing basis to influence colleagues in the CTF to support
oppositional positions in regard to trade agreements and education. However, if that is not successful, that does not mean that the BCTF should not itself act with others who share its perspective, or not continue to work to influence the CTF to adopt its perspective.

All three of the elements that Mundy and Murphy describe in their look at "transnational advocacy, global civil society" also describe what we have been calling intercambio, with a focus on social justice: civility, democracy and contention. The specific program that Mundy and Murphy analyze using their categories is the "Education for All" campaign carried out over several years by a coalition of Oxfam International, Education International and other international non-governmental organizations. The campaign to keep education out of trade agreements of the Tri-national and the IDEA Network, easily fits into the categories of transnational advocacy and global civil society as well.

**Global Citizenship**

Another term that has gained some currency in public discourse is "global citizenship." Probably even more so that "global civil society," "global citizenship" is a contested concept. One group that promotes global citizenship sees it primarily as an economic opportunity or a necessity for national success in global economic competition. Examples of this can be seen in many of the "internationalization" of education initiatives of the University of British Columbia and other post-secondary institutions. This view of globalization is also the main factor in the tremendous growth of income from international students in the K-12 schools in B.C., from $23 million in 1998-99 to some
$100 million in 2004-05. The objective of B.C. schools going global is primarily economic, not rooted in ideas of equity or cultural exchange.

Global citizenship based primarily on a commercial motive is characterized by Leslie Roman as "global citizenship from above." In contrast to this she outlines her vision of "global citizenship from below." She says

Strong radical democratic conceptions of "global citizenship" will necessitate other examples of such grassroots transnational alliances, as well as coalitions of educators and students with critically-engaged non-governmental agencies and progressive social movements working for non-U.S.-controlled and dominated participation in multi-lateral global geo-political institutions. (Roman, 2004)

It would be wrong to claim that this well-articulated vision was present in the initial creation of the two transnational alliances, the Tri-national Coalition and the IDEA Network. However, piecemeal, through activities and meetings, research and publication, and steady financial support from the BCTF International Solidarity Fund and CoDevelopment Canada (with CIDA funding), these two groups have developed as networks of mutual support and articulation of alternatives to the neo-liberal policies of education in the Americas. While both may be marginal to the power of the institutions promoting neo-liberal policies, and even marginal to the daily work of the unions and other organizations taking part, they are the types of networks that are required, in numbers and in reach, if there is to be a democratic form to globalization.

In 2006, the development of the IDEA Network is a work in progress as one of many initiatives aimed at responding to the challenges created by neo-liberal globalization. An EI regional meeting in Latin America in 2003 identified a need for "programs that contemplate the modernisation of the structures of unions, that promote the active participation of women in the organisation, that develop plans aimed at
improving social and organizational communication methods and techniques and projects that have in view the promotion of a union linked to different sectors of society." (EI, 2003) The IDEA Network has developed as one way of contributing to these needs which exist in Canada as well as Latin America. The BCTF support and participation in the IDEA Network has been an expression of the ideals of public education, social justice and intercambio.

Resistance and Reclaiming the Commons and Democracy

As part of a strategy of responding to globalization, opposing NAFTA had several positive elements. As indicated earlier, of all the aspects of the globalization process, trade agreements are the easiest to focus on for organizing purposes. They are concrete as documents and they are associated with places where people are gathered to make decisions—whether in international negotiating meetings or when a legislature ratifies a treaty. Again, they provide a face and a place to globalization.

The proposed extension of NAFTA to the rest of the Americas in the form of a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) provided another strategic opportunity for organizing on a broader basis. The trade agenda could be linked to other reforms that characterize the neo-liberal agenda for education being pursued with the encouragement of the World Bank—decentralization of governance, a focus on comparison of standardized outcomes, and compensation based on performance evaluations rather than level of training and experience (World Bank, 2004).

The negotiation of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), a potentially broader inclusion of services than that of NAFTA, makes the trade agreement link to education even clearer on a global, not just a regional basis. Not surprisingly, the
Education International, the Global Union of teachers’ unions, has adopted a strategy of using opposition to the GATS as a focus for opposing the neo-liberal privatization thrust. It has called on national unions to pressure their governments to exclude education from their GATS commitments, including the range of education-related services besides teaching, such as library services and building services (Education International, 2004f). The EI has identified that multinational companies may target the education system in a kind of “pincer operation,” taking over as much as possible so that “even if they have not yet asked for access to professional educational services in this round, they will be in a position to go to your government over the next few years…and say: You have given us the rest of your system, now give us your teachers” (EI, 2004f, p. 1).

That is a pretty dramatic definition of the possibilities—but strategically an important one. If opposition is to be mobilized, it helps to identify the worst case that is likely if there is no resistance. To wait and see what will happen, so that you can say for sure what the impact will be, leaves an open field for the worst to happen. Successfully organizing opposition, on the other hand, can influence the outcome. Resistance and building a counter-globalization movement in education and elsewhere, may succeed not just in making the cost of privatizing the commons too great, but the struggle itself may also revitalize democracy in the new global context. The two networks—the Tri-national Coalition and the IDEA Network—can continue to engage in this process and the BCTF International Solidarity Program can, through an intercambio approach, continue to make its contribution.

The case for the shaping of its internationalism by the social and political context of the BCTF is perhaps clearest in the case of its international coalition work in
relationship to globalization and trade agreement issues. Since the 1990s, the public education system in British Columbia has faced all the elements of the neo-liberal program for education: fewer resources from the state; market-like "choice" policies; decentralization of responsibilities from the state to the local, but with in reality tighter control through accountability structures; increases in public expenditure on private education; and limitations on the labour rights of teachers. The work in international coalitions has helped in understanding the forces at work in these policies.

When B.C. teachers said enough is enough and organized resistance in the form of a two-week illegal strike against another legislatively imposed contract in October 2005, immediate support came from teacher unions throughout Latin America and Southern Africa, in recognition of the common struggle. While much of this support came in the form of letters of support to the BCTF and letters of condemnation to the B.C. government, two groups went beyond that. COLPROSUMAH, the union in Honduras with which the BCTF has a particularly close relationship organized a protest demonstration at the Canadian Embassy. Colleagues in the Mexican Section of the Tri-national Coalition in Defense of Public Education held a demonstration at the Canadian embassy, and also filed a request with the International Labour Organization office in Mexico, calling on it to investigate still another violation by the B.C. government of the ILO Conventions.

The intercambio exchange and interchange of the anti-globalization networks was both a source of mutual understanding and of actions of mutual support.
CHAPTER 7: EXAMINING MY PRACTICE

Writing this work has provided a number of rich experiences. It has led me to examine the history of the BCTF, particularly its very long internationalist engagement, and to have a much deeper understanding of how its internationalism fits with the dynamic social and political institution that is the BCTF. It has made me review some twenty-five years of my own work, looking more deeply at the values and strategies that are implicit in the activities of the international program. Finally, it has encouraged me to reflect on my own practice, what has motivated it, the values and philosophical perspectives on which it is based, and to identify some unresolved contradictions.

This chapter will pull some of these elements together. Initially I describe my role in the programs in providing strategic, administrative and policy leadership. Then I describe some of the personal experiences that strengthened my commitment to international work and shaped my view on the appropriate strategic approaches—intercambio, in particular. These strategic elements are explained further, drawing on the examples developed in the earlier chapters. Further, I contend that my international work has only been possible because of the nature of the BCTF and the members and leaders who have made it a union that has commitment—beyond the direct interests of its members—to social justice in a global as well as local context. Finally, I project some possible directions for BCTF internationalism.

Personal Engagement in the BCTF International Program

Throughout most of the past twenty-five years, I have been directly involved in the BCTF’s international program. As 1st Vice-president of the BCTF, I seconded the motion at the 1981 AGM that designated a grant to support the teachers in El Salvador, a
motion that was an indication of a change in direction for the organization, as it moved beyond sending B.C. teachers overseas through Project Overseas. As President of the BCTF, I drafted the recommendations to the executive committee that set up the International Solidarity Committee and the policies under which it would operate. After finishing my term on the executive in 1985, I was appointed as a member of the International Solidarity Committee. This was a period of exploration of how the BCTF should carry out work with the expanded fund and the shift in name and philosophy from "assistance" to "solidarity."

When I was appointed to the BCTF staff as Director of the Organizational Support Division in 1988, the international program was one of the departments in the division and I undertook it as an area of personal responsibility. When the BCTF created the Research and Technology Division in 1991 and I was appointed Director, the international program moved with me to this new section of the Federation. Throughout this period, the support work for this program has been provided by Leona Dolan, as program coordinator, and together we have constituted the leadership and support for the program. Although the amount of my time officially assigned to the program has been only a small part of my overall responsibilities, it has, from my perspective, been a particularly important and satisfying part of my work on behalf of teachers.

The international aspect of my work has been important in helping me to do the other parts of my work more effectively. As Jonas Stier has said about international education, "by being abroad the features and oddities of the home institution become obvious...[and help one] detect cultural biases or embedded ideologies" (Steir, 2004, p. 92). When one finds "charter schools" used as Spanish words in Argentina, loose-tight
structures with apparent decentralization but more real central control in many other
countries, and standardized test results and league tables promoted by international
institutions, one knows to look behind the policies of a particular government to
dominant ideologies and the institutions promoting them at home as well as elsewhere.

Again quoting Stier, "internationalization may contribute to personal growth and
self-actualization" (Steir, 2004, p. 92). The rest of this chapter is largely about just that—
personal growth and self-actualization in the context of the BCTF and intercambio
internationalism.

**Perspective Gained by International Experience**

The first time I had traveled outside of North America was in 1984 when I
represented the BCTF at the bi-annual congress of the World Confederation of
Organizations of the Teaching Profession (WCOTP). That congress was held in Lome,
Togo, a country in West Africa. This was my first time in a less developed country, in a
country where English is not the main language, in an African country, and at an
international meeting with teachers from well over a hundred countries. It was ten days
of intense experience.

This was also when I started developing a conception of what teacher union
internationalism should—and should not—be. The major policy discussion at the
meeting centred around Willy Brandt's commission that called for a new international
economic order. Brandt was a former German Chancellor who had made serious
attempts at East-West détente and North-South redistribution. Essentially, the
commission said that the countries of the North have a responsibility to achieve a more
just distribution of the benefits of the global economy. As was still fashionable in some
circles in days before the dominance of neo-liberal ideology, U.S.-based corporations were identified as the main culprits in the North-South global inequalities. Delegates from many countries supported this call for a new world order. Not, however, the delegates from the National Education Association (NEA) in the U.S. The NEA was the largest union in the WCOTP, and the largest financial contributor. The NEA delegation, led by its president, Mary Futrell, (later the first president of Education International) was not just outraged at this resolution, but even more, they felt insulted. The entire idea of a realignment in the global distribution of resources seemed to be taken as a personal attack on all Americans, including the delegates from the U.S. at the meeting.

That wasn't the way I felt at all. Every day as we walked from the high rise luxury hotel to the convention centre for the meetings, we passed dozens of young children with their hands out for 'cadeau,' instead of being in school. What could be more just than limiting the power of transnational corporations and redistributing the global economy so that the society we saw beyond the hotel could afford to have all its children in school?

But I wondered what I would have thought if I had been in the NEA delegation, instead of being there as a Canadian. I had left the United States sixteen years before and immigrated to Canada. I had taught in Canada for eight of those years, had been a Faculty Associate at Simon Fraser University for one, and had worked for the union as an elected officer locally and provincially for the remaining seven.

I realized that I could never have been in Lome as an NEA delegate. I had left the U.S. because I wanted to teach, and I was unlikely to even get a teaching job in the U.S., let alone be elected to a union office that would allow me to be a delegate to an
international meeting. When I finished my year of teacher education in a Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program at Reed College in Portland, Oregon, my one prospect was landing an interview for a teaching job with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The principal of the school that I had been teaching at as an intern had written a report on my teaching that had said "He would do well teaching Indians or Negroes, but will not fit into American public schools." This was a result of some of the content that I included in the 11th Grade American History that I was teaching—namely, including slavery and genocide as a part of American history. Beyond that, many of the students that I was teaching would themselves be going to Vietnam, or their boyfriends would, within a couple of years and I wanted them to have some perspective on how the story of war is defined by the "winners" and "losers," by power and results.

At the time, I thought it was a disaster that I was not going to be able to teach in a public school. However, some friends who had recently emigrated to Canada because of the draft said not to worry, just come to Canada, there are lots of teaching jobs. A week after sending out a couple of resumes in response to ads from the Vancouver Sun that my friends had sent, I had an offer of a job in Kitimat and took it.

Looking back in Lome over the sixteen years I had spent in Canada, I realized how much I owed to the principal who made sure I would not get a job in the U.S. I had been able to move from a negative definition, as "unAmerican," and adopt a positive identity as a Canadian, without changing my views on society or my beliefs about education and the way that I teach. What I had not directly seen before Lome though, was how some of the rest of the world saw Americans, and why. It was clear to me that it was possible for Canadian teacher unionists to play a different—and more positive—role.
than could even the best intentioned of U.S. unionists. Watching the NEA at work there also made the concept of “trade union imperialism” easy to understand when I ran into it later in researching for this work, as discussed in an earlier chapter.

While the meeting in Lome helped define for me some attitudes and approaches to avoid in international work, it was a ten day trip the next year, through Central America, that cemented my motivation and commitment to teacher union internationalism based on a social justice perspective that I have called intercambio.

**Impact of Seeing the Repression of Teachers’ Unions in Central America**

A two-week “exposure” trip to visit teacher unions and human rights organizations in Central America in October 1985 gave me an insight into the challenges and the dedication required for teacher union work in repressive conditions. It also allowed me to imagine how the resources and support that the BCTF might contribute in some small ways to struggles for social justice.

That trip was also one of the experiences that helped frame for me the positive approach that we should take in doing international solidarity work, the approach that I have called intercambio. It was not just what we saw or who we talked to. Rather, it was also the philosophy behind CoDevelopment Canada, the new NGO for which this trip was the first project. Rick Craig, the organizer of the trip and one of the founders of CoDev, as we traveled articulated the conception he and his colleagues had in creating the international NGO. Its role would be one of serving as a link and facilitator, but the projects carried out would be projects of the unions in the North and the South through interchanges and exchanges. The idea was to find shared values and to engage unions and activists in ways that deepened the relationships among them.
Smoke in My Eyes in El Salvador

Still, my strongest memory of the Central America trip is of the extreme discomfort caused by smoke in my eyes. We had gone to visit a refugee camp in the middle of the city of San Salvador in El Salvador. Several hundred women and children and a few men were living in what must have been intended as an enclosed play area next to one of the large Catholic churches. A meal was being cooked by a group of women standing over a large brick grill burning charcoal as they fixed tortillas by the hundreds. After only a few minutes in the building, my eyes were burning from the smoke and I wanted to get out of there.

Yet, these hundreds of people lived like this 24 hours a day, afraid to go out to the street for fresh air even, for fear of being picked up and joining the disappeared, officially or unofficially. Each person in the shelter had about the equivalent of a sleeping bag worth of room in this huge open space. I couldn’t imagine what fear could lead people to live in these conditions day after day and month after month, some for as long as five years. The woman running the shelter brought a few people to tell us their stories and then it made a little more sense.

The notes in my journal tell the story as translated for us:

We lived in tunnels to defend ourselves from bombing. But then they brought dogs trained to find us. We saw people with bodies all torn apart by bombs thrown in tunnels. My husband and seven of my family were killed in a tunnel. Sometimes operations last fifteen days. They watch over us so we can’t move from the tunnels. They destroy all of our crops. (Kuehn, 1985)

Our visits with executive members of ANDES, the teacher union, could only be described as intensely fear-inducing. When we entered El Salvador by plane, we did not indicate on the visa forms that we were teacher unionists. The same when we registered at our hotel. To have done so would have alerted the authorities to follow us, we were
told by Rick. To get to a meeting with the union executive, we took a cab to the market—no talking in the cab, we were told, because many cab drivers were informers. We then walked through the large market, emerging on the other side, where we were met by one of the union officers with a car and were taken to a restaurant where the rest of the executive were waiting for us.

To have a long and open discussion with the union president another time, we went to a Catholic school run by nuns, ostensibly to see a musical performance by the students. The president of the union just happened to be there. He introduced us to the nun who was principal of the school, and a supporter of the union. She loaned us the school’s VW bus, and came along as the president drove us out of town to an outdoor restaurant on one of the high hills outside of San Salvador.

The mid-1980s was a time of civil war throughout much of Central America, with U.S. military aid going into El Salvador, in particular. At the same time, many in the Catholic church were opposing the U.S.-backed government. Archbishop Romero had been murdered in the Cathedral. Several nuns from the U.S. had been murdered as they came into the city from the airport. Further, the CIA was involved in covert activity in support of the right-wing government.

This era in El Salvador came up at a meeting nearly fifteen years later in connection with Albert Shanker. At the American Education Research Association (AERA) meeting the year after Shanker died, the program for the “Teachers’ Work/Teachers’ Unions” Special Interest Group brought together a range of perspectives on Shanker. These varied greatly—from a woman who was sure that he must be an angel looking down on us to accusations that he had played a significant role with CIA
operations in El Salvador in the 1980s. In the closest that I have seen to a punch-up at AERA, the latter led an AFT staff member in the audience to jump up and say that it was statements of that sort that led to the deaths of two Americans in El Salvador.

The climate of fear in El Salvador helps to explain the difficulties that the BCTF and CoDev have had in working with ANDES over the years. Even after the end of the war and the combatants on both sides were engaging in elections and parliamentary politics, the factionalism within the unions had led to us ending our projects in El Salvador.

Cash for the Authentic Executive in Honduras

Honduras, like most of the countries in Central America at the time, had a government controlled by the military. In Tegucigalpa, as we drove by a huge building all enclosed with a high fence, we were told that this was the U.S. embassy, one of the largest buildings in the country. Honduras was being used as the staging site for the Contra war against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua and this was why the U.S. had such a large presence there.

The largest of the teacher unions, COLPROSUMAH, which represented elementary teachers, had been taken over by the Honduran government (ILO, 1989). The elected officers had been evicted from the union building and the government had installed new union officials who would do their bidding. The elected officers then set up the authentic COLPROSUMAH and rented an office space to operate from. The day we arrived several hundred activists had gathered for a meeting and protest demonstration calling for a return of their union and we joined the group.
The WCOTP was supporting the right of the officers of the authentic COLPROSUMAH to be recognized as the union. The BCTF International Solidarity Committee had agreed to provide funding to allow the authentic leadership to continue to operate. However, getting resources to the group was a serious problem. They didn’t have the union dues coming in any longer—the government was passing those on to their agents who had taken over the union offices. The authentic officers couldn’t open a regular bank account so money could not be transferred on a bank to bank basis. The solution was for me to carry the money personally and to hand it to a union official.

I had about $10,000 in traveler’s cheques which I had to go to a bank to cash, walking past the guard, my first experience of seeing what seemed like a 16-year-old standing with a machine gun at the ready, but something I would see many more times during the trip. The cash was handed over by me at the home of the president, Carlos Mauricio Lopez, where several of the executive members had arrived to greet us. This cash, along with grants from Norwegian teachers, allowed the authentic officers to maintain the union long enough for a political change in the country. When the union’s lawyer was later elected president of the country, the union was returned to the elected officers.

I was able to return the hospitality the next year when Carlos Mauricio was in Vancouver for the Peace Education Conference sponsored by the BCTF, after the WCOTP Congress held in Regina. We reconnected again when, as the president of FOMCA, (the federation of teachers of Central America) he was one of the people who initiated the IDEA Network and authored the analysis of “Fifteen Years of Neo-liberal
Policies in Latin America,” (Lopez, 1999) one of the papers prepared for the IDEA conference in Quito.

One of the BCTF International Solidarity Committee members, Jacquie Birchall, was in Honduras on a CoDev solidarity trip in the summer of 2005. As she was standing outside the COLPROSUMAH building, one of the Honduran teachers approached her and told her that the building was there for teachers because of the support that the BCTF had provided to keep the authentic union alive in the 1980s.

Freire at Work in Nicaragua

The experience in Nicaragua was very different from that in the other countries we visited. The Sandinista government was attempting to put into practice the educational ideas of Paulo Freire. After the success in getting rid of the Somoza dictatorship, they attempted a revolution in education. They initiated a “literacy crusade,” sending those who could read and write into the countryside to teach those who couldn’t, following the model from other political revolutions that held education to be central to a social revolution, including Cuba and Mozambique. The BCTF had provided support to the literacy crusade and this visit was a chance to see how the Nicaraguan’s were pursuing their educational dream.

We saw textbooks that had been developed, using concrete experiences of people in rural areas as a basis for literacy, working on the ideas of Paulo Freire that there should be a link between literacy and social understanding. We visited a teacher education program where teachers—mostly women—were being prepared to go and teach in areas that had never had teachers. We visited cooperative farms and coffee plantations, where a primitive building for a classroom was mixed in with the small homes for each family.
Everywhere we went, we were met at an intersection of a road by a local union officer who had somehow, without telephones, known where to be and when in order to meet us. In many cases, the union officer was a woman, unlike the situation in the other countries that we visited.

However, the strongest impression was not one of education, but of war. We had been taken to the northern part of the country, in the area close to the border of Honduras, where the main Contra incursions from outside were taking place. We saw buildings burned out, guards with guns at many of the bridges, and visited a hospital for soldiers, with only primitive medical equipment to deal with serious injuries. We were impressed with the hopes for education that we heard when we met with the minister of education and the union officers. However, when we left it was with a sense that the war was overwhelming the best of intentions.

**Machine Guns as an Alarm**

The only time I have been wakened in the morning by machine gun fire was at a hotel in Guatemala City. The guns weren’t in the building, but close enough to wake a sound sleeper. Guatemala was the most obviously oppressive regime of the four countries we visited, with a civil war and repression of the majority indigenous population that had gone on for decades and would continue long after democracy was supposedly restored by elections.

Unlike in the other three countries, we weren’t able to talk to any union leaders. There was no union. Unions had been illegal for some time. We were able to talk to some insurance officials, though, from a teacher insurance plan. This was, in fact, an underground network that linked teacher activists.
The word "disappeared" was used as both a noun and a verb during the military dictatorships that characterized the governments in many parts of Latin America from the 1960s through the 1980s. The "disappeared" were people who simply did just that—disappeared. They were not formally arrested or put on trial. They were simply taken away, never to reappear. The process of this happening was them being "disappeared."

An insurance society was a clever way of being able to investigate what had happened to teachers who had disappeared. This wasn't a human rights organization investigating to be able to tell the world that the regime repressed its people through extra-legal and illegal executions. It was an insurance plan that had to verify whether a person was or was not dead, before it could pay out the insurance claim for someone who was no longer there. Traveling the country on these investigations was also a way of maintaining links in a network that could and did reemerge as a union when that became legal.

A return to Africa

These international experiences concentrated in the mid-1980s dramatically shifted the focus of my work. Some things did not change—my commitment to social justice and a belief that the union could be a vehicle for positive change, both for teachers and for public education. Now, however, I saw a broader field in which this work could and should be done, with the resources that the BCTF had committed offering opportunities for us to support other teachers working for social justice, with their unions as the vehicle for that work. I also saw that although the resources we brought to the work were of significance to our colleagues, being there personally and being a witness and support in their struggles was also of value to them. The commitment to an
*Intercambio* approach grew out of the combination of these direct experiences with colleagues working in oppressive situations, along with the kinds of strategic discussions the group of us from Canadian unions had with Rick Craig about how solidarity work could be carried out in a way that was mutual and reciprocal.

Ironically, although the motivation for international work was stimulated by the visit with teachers in Central America, the immediate focus of my internationalism was not in that region, but rather in Southern Africa. In part, this was because the work in Latin America had to be in Spanish, which I did not speak, and it was focused on gender equity, with leadership by women activists in the BCTF, initially by Julia Goulden and later Carmen Kuczma.

My return from Central America coincided with a resurgence of the open struggle against apartheid in South Africa and a renewed focus of solidarity work in Canada and elsewhere. The nature of institutionalized racism in South Africa had a particular impact on me. My children have African ancestry among the mix of ethnic combinations that make up who they are and what they look like. This, I think, gave a personal motivation for work in challenging a system that was an outrage against them in an indirect way, as well as being indefensible from the perspective of human rights. This fueled my solidarity work for the remainder of the 1980s. With the beginning of the end of the apartheid system in South Africa in 1990, there were new opportunities for sharing and supporting in small ways the constructive work of a new non-racial union, and learning from some of the approaches used by them to build connections between the leadership and the membership.
My leadership role in the international program

An obvious question—although not one that was articulated—was what could be my leadership role within this work. Before writing this, I have never focused directly on the question of my style of leadership, although this process of reflection now has led me to believe there is a pattern, not just in the approach to leadership in the union, but also in the way in which I taught and in my role as an administrator of a union department.

I am a reluctant leader, particularly on a day to day basis. I am excited about opportunities to analyze a new situation, to understand it in relationship to existing values and to define a strategic vision of how the situation might be influenced to bring more congruence with those values. The key element in this process is listening. Part of it is listening to what people say, as well as what they don't say, but do mean. Another part is listening to many sources and trying to find the patterns of meaning within those. That is a key part of my understanding of intercambio, of exchange and interchange, rather than imperial decision-making. The greatest compliment I have ever received on my work was from my colleagues who were members of the BCTF Task Force on First Nations Education because it characterized the style of leadership that I want to exercise. They gave me an Aboriginal name, Hul'nuhw, which they said meant “one who writes our thoughts.”

Initiating an activity and framing and structuring it so that it will lead toward the desired objective gives me the greatest satisfaction. Finding ways to communicate so that others share the vision and see how the work supports and leads toward that objective is the other key part of the process. Then it is time to back off, to leave a space for others to carry on the work and reshape it and reframe it in the process, so that it is the work of all
of us. That does not mean abandoning the work and just leaving it to others. Paying attention and intervening when, from my perspective, things are going off the track or when requested are important aspects. However, as much as possible, I prefer to be a background presence, rather than a highly visible leader.

This approach does not always work. As a teacher, I recognize that it worked well for some students, but did not provide enough structure and daily guidance for others, and if I were to teach again I would work on finding a balance. As president of the BCTF, one cannot be a background presence because you are the voice and face of the collective interests of teachers. For me personally, it was by far the most difficult work that I have done. I felt a great weight lifted the day that I no longer had to assume that when the phone rang I had to have a sound bite ready or that when I opened the front door of my home that I would find a BCTV reporter and camera.

It was also not adequate in the early years of my administrative responsibility for the BCTF International Solidarity Program. As a political leader of the BCTF, I had played a key role in the creation of the expanded program, including recommending the renaming and drafting the policies that provided a framework for the program. However, by the time I was assigned administrative responsibility for the program, the definition of the projects and the ongoing monitoring of them had been given largely over to CoDevelopment Canada. Through former International Solidarity Committee members on both the board and the staff of CoDev, the program reflected the directions that the BCTF wanted it to go, but the direct BCTF presence was limited. The first expansion of the program after this was to enter into a consortium with the CEQ (the francophone teacher union in Quebec) and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation.
Again, I was involved in the framing of the consortium, but the work was carried out primarily by the CEQ staff and Carmen Kuczma, who had previously been on the BCTF committee and been the CoDev staff person working on BCTF projects, and who then worked on a consultant basis for the consortium.

Carmen urged that the BCTF, in general, and that I, in particular, take a more active direct role in the Latin America programs. She pointed out that on the ground, the people in Latin America doing the work supported by the BCTF did not see the BCTF. The contract they signed was with CoDevelopment Canada. They were told that the money to fund the projects came from CIDA and from the W.R. Long International Solidarity Fund. The name of the fund did not suggest that this was another union, but made it sound more like this was a foundation. Carmen felt that we had to take some action to give the BCTF more of a visible presence, and to take more direct responsibility for the projects that we were supporting.

So we took a number of actions to make changes. A simple one was to use only part of the official name of the program and fund so that it became the BCTF International Solidarity Fund, making clear the BCTF is a partner in these projects. I also played a much more direct role as we developed new programs, including those in Southern Africa and particularly in the Tri-national Coalition in Defense of Public Education and the IDEA Network, as described in Chapter 6.

Canadians have had a particular leadership role to play in raising the issues of globalization and trade agreements, probably because the first of the newly expanded trade agreements affected Canada in particular—both the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement and NAFTA. It was the Council of Canadians that raised the alarm
internationally about the proposed OECD Multi-lateral Agreement on Investment and helped to stop it from being put in place. Similarly, the BCTF has also had a role in working through the Tri-national Coalition and the IDEA Network in putting the issues of trade agreements and their relationship to education on the agenda for teacher unions in the Americas.

**Shared Leadership of BCTF Internationalism**

Although a single individual may have been seen to be carrying the internationalist work at times, such as during the era of Charlesworth, that has not been the case in the last quarter century. From Julia Goulden and Carmen Kuczma in the women’s programs, to Don Reader in the Namibia program, both the vision and the day-to-day work has often been led by committed activist members. There has also been leadership from several BCTF presidents who have managed to include international work as a part of their conception of the leadership that they should provide from that office. Three BCTF presidents in the last decade have taken a particular interest in the international programs and have played a significant role in building and maintaining programs, allowing me to play more of a supportive role.

Kit Krieger provided leadership in the development of the program with Cuba, including the negotiations with the Cuban teachers’ organization, the SNTECD. He coordinated the ESL project on one occasion, as well as organizing for the provision of fax machines and computers that allow the union to communicate with all the provincial branches. He continues to raise funds at BCTF meetings, as much to ensure that local leaders know about the projects as to be able to purchase teaching resources for the team to take for the Cuban teachers they work with.
David Chudnovsky was one of the team that first went to South Africa to work with SADTU in creating a training program for local officers. The connections that he made there have led to an ongoing link with SADTU. He organized the exchanges of local SADTU officers, as well as student exchanges, as he and other teachers took Surrey students to South Africa and brought South African students to B.C. He has maintained a personal link with the lead officers of SADTU, which has been key to more recent training projects jointly supported and carried out with OSSTF and SADTU. In doing this work, he has always articulated the concept of intercambio, always emphasizing what we learn and the mutual gain.

Jinny Sims, the current president, has taken an interest in the IDEA Network and, in particular, the IDEA Women’s Network. Her active presence there has helped to build the relationships between colleagues in Latin America and Canada.

The long-term continuity and effectiveness of BCTF internationalism requires the direct and ongoing involvement of BCTF leaders, both the elected officers and the staff. This was true in the first two decades of the BCTF, when Harry Charlesworth and other officers of the BCTF took part in the World Federation of Education Associations, and it continues to be true. A key part of my role is to provide leadership in making the connections and framing the programs, but also to create opportunities and encourage others in the leadership of the BCTF to play an active role in these programs.

Charles Ungerleider, in a 1996 article, said “The involvement of Kuehn and like-minded individuals among the leadership in the BCTF and the BCCT make resistance to globalization…a likely feature of educational politics in British Columbia for the
foreseeable future” (Ungerleider, 1996). His prediction has turned out to be correct, at least the part about the BCTF.

**BCTF Internationalism and Global Citizenship**

Although a significant portion of my work with the B.C. Teachers’ Federation has been with the BCTF International Solidarity program, it is the organization and its leaders and members that deserve the credit for whatever we have accomplished. As we have seen, internationalism has been a part of the fabric of the organization from nearly its beginning. Throughout the most recent forty years, a significant allocation from the fees collected from members has been devoted to internationalism every year. That amount has been consistently more than twice the commitment of .7 of income, which has been set internationally as the proportion every industrial society should be providing for development assistance (and that few, including the Canadian government, do) to move toward some equalization of opportunities globally.

Hundreds of members and staff of the BCTF have played a direct role in the international program: they have attended international conferences; they have provided in-service for colleagues through Project Overseas; they have worked with colleagues from other unions in developing union training programs; they have provided pedagogical workshops and video resources for teaching English as a Second Language; they have written articles to let colleagues know about the work they have done and the situation of teachers in other countries.

These activities have been carried out with a philosophy of exchange and interchange, of *intercambio*, as we collectively have learned and developed through this sharing. These activities have been expressions of a commitment to social justice and
have hopefully made a contribution to moving toward that ideal, in the face of economic and political forces pushing in the opposite direction. When he spoke at the BCTF AGM in March 2006, Stephen Lewis singled out the BCTF international solidarity program for praise. He read to the meeting the quote from Samora Machel, the first president of an independent Mozambique, that is at the top of the BCTF international solidarity web page and is another way of describing intercambio: “International solidarity is not an act of charity. It is an act of unity between allies fighting on different terrains toward the same objectives. The foremost of these objectives is to aid the development of humanity to the highest level possible.”

The term “global citizenship” appears frequently these days, with lots of possible meanings. In a globalized world dominated by the ideology of neo-liberalism, defending and advancing public education anywhere is a part of defending public education at home. The support of public education by insisting on education for all requires a challenge to the ideology and the forces that call for the decline of the commons and the expansion of the private. Certainly if working for social justice and equity through public education is an element of global citizenship, then the BCTF international program and intercambio approach can be seen as an exercise of global citizenship.
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Malunga, Q. (2003). Personal letter from Quito Mulunga to Don Reader.


WCOTP. (1986). Project for the training of women leaders: COLPROSUMAH.


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Appendix A

Acronyms used in this work

ACILS—American Center for International Labor Solidarity
AFL-CIO—American Federation of Labor—Congress of Industrial Organizations
AFT—American Federation of Teachers
AIFLD—American Institute for Free Labor Development
ANC—African National Congress
APEC—Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
ATASA—African Teachers’ Association of South Africa
BCTF—British Columbia Teachers’ Federation
CAUT—Canadian Association of University Teachers
CCF—Cooperative Commonwealth Federation
CCL—Canadian Congress of Labour
CEA—Confederación de Educadores Americanos
CEQ—Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec
CIA—Central Intelligence Agency
CIDA—Canadian International Development Agency
CLC—Canadian Labour Congress
CNTE—Coordinadora Nacional de los Trabajadores del Estado
CODE—Canadian Organization of Development through Education
CoDev—CoDevelopment Canada
COLPROSUMAH—Professional College for the Advancement of Teaching in Honduras
(English translation)
COSATU—Congress of South African Trade Unions
CSQ—Cetrale des syndicats du Quebec
CTERA—Confederacion de Trabajadores de la Educacion de la Republica Argentina
CTF—Canadian Teachers’ Federation
CUT—Caribbean Union of Teachers
EI—Education International
FISE/WFTU—World Federation of Teacher Unions (FISE is the French acronym)
FOMCA—Fédération des organisations enseignantes de l’Amérique centrale
FTAA—Free Trade Agreement of the Americas
GATS—General Agreement on Trade in Services
GNAT—Ghana National Union of Teachers
ICFTU—International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
IDAFSA—International Defense and Aid for South Africa
IDEA Network—Initiative for Democratic Education in the Americas
IFFTU—International Federation of Free Teacher Unions
IWA—Industrial, Wood and Allied Workers
NAFTA—North American Free Trade Agreement
NANTU—Namibian National Teachers’ Union
NEA—National Education Association
NED—National Endowment for Democracy
NGO—Non-governmental Organization
ONP—Organizacao Nacional de Professores (Mozambique)
ORIT—La Organización Regional Interamericana de Trabajadores
OSSTF—Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation
SACP—South African Communist Party
SADTU—South African Democratic Teachers’ Union
SNAT—Swaziland National Association of Teachers
SNTE—Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación (Mexico)
SNTECD—Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educacion la Ciencia y el Deporte (Cuban National Union of Workers in Education, Science and Sports)
SUTEP—Sindicato unitario de trabajadores en la educacion del Peru
SWAPO—South West African People’s Organization
TLC—Trades and Labour Congress
UNE—Unión Nacional de Educadores (Ecuador)
WCOTP—World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession
WFEA—World Federation of Education Associations
WFTU—World Federation of Trade Unions
Appendix B

BCTF International Solidarity Program from BCTF Web Site
Retrieved December 25, 2005 from www.bctf.ca/social/isp

"International solidarity is not an act of charity. It is an act of unity between allies fighting on
different terrains toward the same objectives. The foremost of these objectives is to aid the
development of humanity to the highest level possible."

Samora Moises Machel (1933-1986)
first president of an independent Mozambique

Education plays a central role in what Machel calls the development of humanity. The work we do together with teachers from other countries is a part of our contribution to shared objectives.

The international work of the BCTF has a history almost as long as the organization. In 1923, Harry Charlesworth, representing the BCTF as General Secretary, was one of the founders of an international organization devoted to achieving peace and co-operation in a world that had recently gone through a destructive war.

The international work continues today through BCTF’s International Solidarity Program which provides support for projects with teacher unions in less-developed countries that are working to improve conditions for teachers and public education. It is also a way that the BCTF engages with other education organizations in understanding the impact of globalization and participating in activities aimed at protecting public education from the negative effects of globalization.

Gender equity in Latin America

Like the BCTF until recent years, teacher unions in Latin America traditionally have been led primarily by men, even though women are the majority among teachers. For more than 15 years, the BCTF has supported projects and training for women teachers in Central America and the Andean region of South America. The result is that now more women are participating as leaders in their unions. Some projects have also provided support for the development of non-sexist pedagogy and teaching resources.

Developing non-racial unions in Southern Africa

A priority for reconstruction after the end of apartheid in South Africa and Namibia was building non-racial institutions, especially in education. The BCTF International Solidarity Program provided funding and support, including experienced union trainers, in the building of non-racial teacher unions in South Africa (SADTU) and Namibia (NANTU). We have also learned from these colleagues, who were experts at organizing to challenge governments aimed at ensuring that a segment of the population, based on their ethnicity, were kept from being well educated.
Keeping public education public, globally

Globalization and trade agreements promote the privatization of public services in general and education in particular. The BCTF has played a key role in the development of the Initiative for Democratic Education in the Americas (IDEA). IDEA research and conferences have helped leaders in unions and other organizations throughout the Americas develop an understanding of the global patterns and share ideas about how to promote the public aspect of public education. The BCTF work on globalization issues began in 1993, after the negotiation of NAFTA. We developed links with Mexican teachers, in particular, through the Tri-National Coalition in Defense of Public Education.

Cuts to funding, increases in class sizes, decentralization to school-based decision-making, parent-run school committees, fundraising, standardized testing, limits to the union rights of teachers—these are common themes in the experience of teachers throughout the Americas, not just in British Columbia. Teacher unions in Latin America have been challenging governments imposing these conditions, and the solidarity of others facing similar situations is important to maintaining the morale and stamina for the long-term campaign to support public education.

Information on the impact on education of globalization and trade agreements and on IDEA and the Tri-National Coalition can be found on our Globalization, Trade Agreements and Education page.

Global education in B.C. classrooms

As teachers it is important that we bring global perspectives to our classrooms as well as to our union. The BCTF International Solidarity Program has supported many classroom and school global education projects over two decades. Teaching units, classroom activities and course descriptions are available free on our Global Education page.

International Solidarity requires partners

The most important partners are the teacher unions in the countries in which we work. However, BCTF international work also depends on other organizations with expertise and connections. BCTF programs have been carried out in conjunction with CoDevelopment Canada, Oxfam-Canada and the Canadian Teachers’ Federation (CTF). We have also worked in joint projects with the Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation (OSSTF) and the Centrale des Syndicats du Québec (CSQ), which represents francophone teachers in Québec. Through these partnerships, some of the project funds from member fees receive matching grants from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

The role of individual teachers in international solidarity

International solidarity work helps us to better understand our own situation, as well as contributing to the development of humanity. Most teachers who have participated in an international project have found it profoundly rewarding, as well as giving a new perspective on our own situation in B.C. and Canada.
Since CTF’s Project Overseas began in 1962, hundreds BCTF members have provided professional development for colleagues in other countries. Some teachers have taken students to other countries, engaging them in development projects. BCTF PD Associate trainers have worked with colleagues in other countries developing and delivering union training programs. Twenty-five BCTF members with second-language teaching expertise have offered inservice to Cuban teachers of English in Cuba.

Two locals, Vancouver Elementary and Surrey Teachers’, have supported their own international projects and Surrey has created a local International Solidarity Committee.

The BCTF International Solidarity Committee comprises four BCTF members who make recommendations to the Executive Committee on general directions and specific programs. Vacancies are advertised and BCTF members are appointed to the committee by the executive.
Appendix C

BCTF INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY PROJECTS

COALITIONS & CONSORTIUMS

Tri-National Coalition in Defense of Public Education with teacher unions in Mexico and the United States (1994–present)

Alberta Teachers’ Association/BCTF/Canadian Teachers’ Federation Consortium on Mozambique (1997–present)

Initiatives for Democratic Education in the Americas (1999–present)

CANADIAN TEACHERS’ FEDERATION PROGRAMS
Project Overseas
Social Development Education Program
Thompson Fellowship

OVERSEAS PROGRAMS

AFRICA

Regional
1990–1991    Pan African Conference in Ghana
              Cuso/Africa Information Afrique: Publication
              Backing the Frontline States: Coalition project

Botswana
1986–1987    Cuso: Bookbinding project
              Save the Children of B.C.: Teaching materials

Eritrea
1986–1990    Oxfam-Canada: Women’s literacy
              National Union of Eritrean Women: Literacy for women

Ethiopia
1991        CODE: Pre-primary teacher upgrading

Ghana
1984–2004    Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT):
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>1987–present</td>
<td>ONP (Mozambican Teachers' Union): Organizational support, supply kits for graduating teachers, capacity building, women's leadership training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cuso: Evaluation of science labs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Canadian Organization of Development through Education: Teacher seminars, local book publishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Education International, Oxfam-Canada: Disaster relief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namibia</td>
<td>1985–present</td>
<td>NANTU (Namibia National Teachers' Union):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*Work experience programs at BCTF for NANTU officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*Training of school representative trainers &amp; workshop facilitators at NANTU &amp; BCTF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*Oxfam-Canada: Upgrading of teachers’ English skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>CTF/EER (Rwanda Teachers’ Union): Disaster relief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>1984-present</td>
<td>SADTU (South African Democratic Teachers’ Union):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*Capacity building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*Work experience programs at BCTF for SADTU officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*Training of school representative trainers &amp; workshop facilitators at SADTU &amp; BCTF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swaziland</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>SNAT (Swaziland National Association of Teachers):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*Technical equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>TTU (Tanzania Teachers’ Union):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*National Women’s Committee seminar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>UTA (Uganda Teachers’ Association):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*Renovation of premises</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Zaire
1984–1987
FENEZA (Zaire Teachers’ Union):
*Union leadership training
*CODE: Literacy program

Zambia
1986
Cuso: Primary project

Zimbabwe
1984–1991
ZIMTA (Zimbabwe Teachers’ Association):
*Technical equipment and professional development
*CODE: Mini-library
*InterPares: Literacy programs

ASIA

Bangladesh
1986
InterPares: Education & training program

India
1990
All India Primary Teachers’ Federation
*Leadership training workshops

Malaysia
1989–1999
NUTP (Malaysia Teachers’ Union)
*Professional development, legal costs

Pakistan
1986
*CODE: Literacy training

LATIN AMERICA

Regional
1983–present
CEA (Confederation of Education Associations):
*Funding of several annual congresses
FOMCA (Federation of Teacher Organizations of Central America):
*Organizational support, leadership training & conferences for women

Argentina
1984–2001
CTERA (Argentina Teachers’ Union)
*Equipping union office, sponsored visits to B.C. of CTERA members
*Included in work of BCTF/CSQ/OSSTF Co-operative: see page 1
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Union/Program</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>1991–1998</td>
<td>CTEUB &amp; CNMRB (Bolivian Teachers’ Unions)</td>
<td>*Education policy development, capacity building, women’s leadership training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>1983–present</td>
<td>CPC (Chile Teachers’ Union)</td>
<td>*Capacity building, professional development, women’s leadership training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>FECODE (Colombia Teachers’ Union)</td>
<td>*Assistance to families of murdered teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>1986–present</td>
<td>SEC (Costa Rica Teachers’ Union):</td>
<td>*Leadership training for women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>1997–present</td>
<td>SNTECD (Cuba Teachers’ Union):</td>
<td>*Second-language methodology &amp; language enhancement university workshops for Cuban teachers of English *Campaigns in B.C. schools to collect school supplies for Cuban schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>1991–2000</td>
<td>CENAISE &amp; UNE (Ecuador Teachers’ Unions)</td>
<td>*Health &amp; safety research, document centre, communication network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>1986–2001</td>
<td>ANDES 21 de Junio (El Salvador Teachers’ Union):</td>
<td>*School construction, literacy, women’s leadership training, disaster relief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guyana</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td></td>
<td>*Used office equipment, literacy classes in villages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>1984–present</td>
<td>STEG (Guatemala Teachers’ Union):</td>
<td>*Capacity building, women’s leadership training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>1985–present</td>
<td>COLPROSUMAH (Honduras Teachers’ Union):</td>
<td>Capacity building, women’s leadership training, disaster relief</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mexico
1985–1996
*School, daycare construction, literacy
Included in work of Tri-national Coalition in Defense of Public
Education

Nicaragua
1984–present
ANDEN/CGTEN (Nicaragua Teachers' Union):
*Capacity building, teacher centre construction, literacy, women’s
leadership training, disaster relief
*Tools for Peace: School supplies

Panama
1997–present
FREP (Panama Teachers’ Union)
*Women’s leadership training

Peru
1984–present
SUTEP (Peru Teachers’ Union)
*Organizational support, women’s leadership training, professional
development centre

PACIFIC

Regional
1984–1988
Caribbean Teachers’ Union
*Capacity building, conference

Belize
1988
CODE: Curriculum development

Cook Islands
1984
Cook Islands Teachers’ Institute: Newsletter

Dominica
1995
Dominica Association of Teachers: Disaster relief

Haiti
1985–1996
CNEH (Haiti Teachers’ Union)
*Capacity building

Indonesia
1984
Indonesian Teachers’ Association: Memorial fund

Jamaica
1989
Mico Teachers’ College: Hurricane relief
**Montserrat**  
1984–1987  Montserrat Union of Teachers  
*Organizational support & equipment

**Philippines**  
1986–1994  Alliance of Concerned Teachers of the Philippines  
*Capacity building, organizational support, professional development, teacher tours, women’s leadership training, emergency solidarity relief

**St. Vincent & the Grenadines**  
1986–1991  St. Vincent Union of Teachers  
*Adult literacy
Appendix D

MEMBERS
BCTF INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE
1982-2006

Jacqui Birchall
Patrick Brady
David Chudnovsky
Valerie Dare
Sandy Dore
Jan Eastman
Julia Goulden
Gavin Hainsworth
Herb Johnston
Sarah Joyce
Carmen Kuczma
Larry Kuehn
Marion McIntyre
Josiane Ochman
Scott Parker
Sherry Philpott-Adhikary
Joan Robb
Peggy Salaberry
Linda Shuto
Peter Thomson
Diane Tijman
Appendix E

THE OLYMPIA PROCLAMATION ON FREE TRADE
January 31, 1993

The delegates from education organizations and unions of Canada, Mexico and the United States at the tri-national conference, “The Future of Public Education in North America,” held at the Evergreen State College Labor Center in Olympia, Washington, U.S.A., on January 29-31, 1993 believe that the continuation of accessible, democratic, universal, free, quality public education is endangered by the proposed North American Free Trade Agreement.

We believe education is a social right and that a strong public education system is vital to maintaining the cultural, social, and political heritages of our peoples. Strong public education depends upon both democratic, pluralist and participatory management at the heart of our educational institutions and upon a healthy social fabric.

We aspire to a rejuvenated university system in the service of social and democratic development. We support institutions of higher education which are public, democratic, free, accessible and of high academic quality.

To protect both the public education and the social fabric in our countries, we could support an alternative model which: (1) Recognizes self determination in culture, language, education and communication; (2) Is based on social participation and subject to democratic processes; (3) Promotes continental development which includes a plan that eliminates the Mexican debt; (4) Guarantees the fair distribution of wealth; (5) Recognizes the rights of sovereign states and upholds the dignity of all people; (6) Sets a code of conduct for transnational corporations that protects basic labour rights, fair wages, human rights and defends and protects the environment.

We reject any trade agreement which: (1) Lacks a public decision making process; (2) Destroys or degrades the environment; (3) Promotes unlimited indiscriminate consumption; (4) Impoverishes the majority; (5) Undermines food security; (6) Responds only to the needs of the transnationals.

We the undersigned have considered the US-CANADA Free Trade Agreement and the proposed North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and have concluded that they have already caused serious negative impacts on public education on the continent and will continue to have serious negative impacts unless amended.
Appendix F

The IDEA Network strategy from “Responding to Neo-liberal Globalization in the Americas,” a presentation to the 1999 IDEA Conference in Quito, Ecuador (Kuehn, 1999).

Trans-national strategies to defend public education in the Americas.

Groups of committed people working persistently on common concerns for social justice can have an impact. This work needs organization and coordination, and requires coalitions among unions, NGOs, and other organizations with a social base. These are some strategies for consideration of those who are committed to defending public education in the Americas.

1. **Defend public education at the local and national levels with a strategic consciousness of the global context. Inform and mobilize teachers to take part in this defense.**

   Although much of the action to defend public education will take place at the local level, it is important to understand the global context that is shaping national and local policies. We can also all learn from one another about approaches that have worked effectively, sharing our strategies and linking our actions.

   World Teachers' Day each October 5 is an example of a global activity, which consists of national and local actions. In 1999 the Education International (EI) has identified the theme as "Teachers, a force for social change."

2. **Counter neo-liberal ideology with an alternative program for public education nationally and internationally.**

   Part of the strategic strength of neo-liberalism is that there is no alternative. A key element of the strategy of IDEA—Initiatives for Democratic Education in the Americas—is to propose and debate alternatives that support public education as a right for all.

   a. **Conduct research and analysis and share it with other organizations throughout the Americas.**

      Many thinkers and writers are producing materials in support of the neo-liberal positions, financed by corporations and international bodies. It is essential that unions and other groups who have an alternative agenda produce the intellectual work to support alternatives to neo-liberalism.

   b. **Build communication links among organizations with conferences and communication using the Internet.**
The successful campaign by NGOs to block the negotiation of the MAI at the OECD is a demonstration of how essential it is to use the global communication networks to maintain links among groups to share information, strategies and successes.

c. **Work in international and regional teacher and labour organizations (e.g., Education International, CEA, FOMCA, CUT, ORIT) to develop common understanding and strategies.**

International organizations of trade unions have a key role to play. They have existing networks and more resources than most civil society groups that can be devoted to building links across borders. They can reflect the public interest, including workers' interests to international bodies where governments are creating and extending the neo-liberal global structures.

d. **Participate in building a global civil society that works toward a healthy environment and social justice, including public education. Utilize these groups to influence decisions of international organizations such as the WTO, the Summit of the Americas, and the Organization of American States.**

Global and regional civil society organizations are bringing together many non-governmental organizations to research the issues, promote progressive positions and develop common campaigns. These groups are intervening to make their voices heard with demonstrations, by holding alternative summits, and meeting with government officials to put forward an agenda that reflects environmental health and social, economic and labour rights.

The Canadian government says that there is a commitment to having civil society views heard as part of the negotiation process related to the meeting of the Summit of the Americas in Canada. The OAS Inter-American Education Plan includes mention of consultation with groups representing academics and teacher organizations. Education ministers from the Americas meet twice yearly to discuss the developments in the Inter-American Education Plan.

Activities like the IDEA (Initiatives for Democratic Education in the Americas) conference in September/October 1999 in Quito, Educador, are aimed at ensuring that there is a well thought out and widely supported program to put forward to these international bodies on the issues important to public education in the Americas.

The Continental Social Alliance is another civil society organization aimed at bringing together labour, environmental, and social action groups to the agenda neo-liberal globalization in the Americas.

For these international efforts to have an effect they must have a social base of activists who have an understanding of the nature of the neo-
liberal project and who support an alternative global civil society described by some as "globalization from below."

e. **Take part in international campaigns aimed at achieving social rights, including the right to an education and the right for workers to form organizations that provide protection.**

The success of the "Jubilee 2000" campaign for debt-relief for the most indebted nations of the South shows that it is possible for an international campaign to put an issue on the global agenda. The model of this campaign should be studied in developing campaigns for social, economic and labour rights as part of the response to global and regional trade negotiations. A campaign for "social clauses" in trade agreements is an approach being pursued by the ICFTU (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions) and by the Education International.

f. **Constantly challenge the "cult of the inevitable"—the claim that there is no alternative to neo-liberal policies.**

Those who are pushing the neo-liberal agenda aim to deflate opposition with constant claims that there is no alternative to making economies more "flexible" by eliminating social, economic and labour rights. They contend that transferring more and more power to the corporations and producing increasing inequality in all societies are just inevitable side effects.

Presenting sound alternatives, along with examples of successful campaigns such as Jubilee 2000 and the opposition to the MAI, is essential if we are to motivate ongoing resistance to the damage created by trade and investment agreements and neo-liberal globalization.