

THE BRITISH COLUMBIA TEACHERS' FEDERATION  
AND ITS CONVERSION TO PARTISANSHIP, 1966-1972

by

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## ABSTRACT

This is a study of the conversion to partisanship of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation. Research material was derived from interviews with teachers, former B.C.T.F. Executive Committee Members, B.C.T.F. staff members, school trustees, and members of the government. This information was supplemented by material obtained from B.C.T.F. monthly newsletters and other publications, local newspapers, government reports and interest group literature.

From these sources, some factors influencing the B.C.T.F. to become partisan seemed evident. These factors were: 1. Restrictive government education policies; particularly the removal by legislation of automatic membership provisions in the B.C.T.F., and the elimination of teachers' collective bargaining rights; 2. Societal trends - the late 1960's and early 1970's were times of protest and rejection of the status quo. These trends and the increasing militancy of other teachers in Canada influenced the B.C. teachers to consider anti-government protest action. 3. A power struggle within the B.C.T.F.; between the hired General Secretary, who had held the position since 1947, and the elected Executive Committee, attempting to wield the power it was entitled to according to the B.C.T.F. Constitution. The struggle was won by the elected members, who were then successful in influencing the rest of the membership to take radical action against the government. 4. An increase in wealth and expertise in the B.C.T.F.; from 1966-1972, the budget of the B.C.T.F. doubled, and this helped to increase the capacity of the organization.

Now it became possible to hire experts to help organize political protest action. The President and the Vice-President of the federation had time off with pay from their teaching duties, and this gave them the opportunity to devote their time to politicizing the members. The anti-government campaign of 1972 became a viable alternative to more conventional interest group activity. 5. The Department of Education's seeming incompetence. From 1965-1970, 8 new junior colleges and 2 new universities were instituted by the B.C. government; Deputy Education Minister Dr. Neil Perry was said to have neglected the public school system in favor of post-secondary education. The Department was unable to stretch the education budget to take care of this added load plus the rapidly increasing public school enrollment. Education Minister Donald Brothers antagonized the teachers and imposed measures to try to weaken the B.C.T.F. These departmental inadequacies influenced the teachers to take anti-government action.

The conclusions of the study were that these five factors played a role in influencing the B.C.T.F. to become partisan. As well, it was concluded that the strong anti-government stance taken by the British Columbia Teachers' Federation was the inevitable result of the strong anti-group policies of W.A.C. Bennett's Social Credit government. Interest groups generally do not become partisan; the B.C.T.F., then, was an exception, responding to the exceptional circumstances posed by the strong anti-group government in power in British Columbia from 1952-1972.

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## CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

### 1963 Election to 1966 Election

- March, 1965               - Legislative Changes in Public Schools Act
- January, 1966           - Restriction in Classroom Construction
- August, 1966           - BCTF Sends out Questionnaires
- September 12, 1966 - Provincial Election; L-5, C-0, NDP-14, Socred-33

### 1966 Election to 1969 Election

- March, 1967             - AGM - Resolution to Establish Emergency Protest Fund by levy Defeated
- February/March 1968 - Bennett Freezes School Construction and Bill 86 Introduced
- May 28, 1968           - Cabinet Shuffle - New Education Minister: Donald Brothers
- June, 1968             - Strong Denial of BCTF Partisanship
- October, 1968          - Coquitlam Teachers' Association Organizes Mass Meeting
- November, 1968        - Partial Thaw in Classroom Construction
- April, 1969            - Teachers' Apple Campaign
- August 27, 1969       - Provincial Election; L-5, C-0, NDP-12, Socred-38

### 1969 Election to 1972 Election

- September, 1969       - Strong Denial of BCTF Partisanship
- November, 1969       - More than 4,500 Teachers Protest Negotiations Stalemate
- April, 1970            - AGM Resolution re: Strike Vote over Pensions Passed
- September, 1970       - 88% of Teachers Vote for Strike Action
- October, 1970          - Government Passes FLQ Order-in-Council
- January, 1971          - Bennett Announces Freeze on Gymnasias and Activity Rooms Lifted
- March, 1971            - Amendments to Public Schools Act to Remove Automatic BCTF Membership & Dept. of Education Re-Organized
- March 19, 1971        - Province-Wide One-Day Teachers' Strike re: Pensions

1969 Election to 1972 Election (cont'd.)

- May, 1971           - AGM - Increase in BCTF Fees and Arrangements made  
                          for Emergency Fund
- October, 1971     - Minister of Education Announces Ceiling of 108% on  
                          School Budgets
- November, 1971   - Minister Announces Ceiling of 6.5% Increase on  
                          Teachers' Salaries
- January, 1972     - BCTF Insists on Non-Partisanship
- January, 1972     - Government Introduces Bill 3
- February, 1972    - BCTF Mobilizes to Fight Bill 3
- March 9, 1972     - "Collective Bargaining Defence Committee" Formed  
                          and Mass Rally Held
- March 27, 1972    - Bill 3 Received Third Reading and Passed
- April, 1972       - AGM - Levy of One Day's Pay to Defeat Government  
                          Passed 495 - 84
- April, 1972       - President Adam Robertson Says, "Social Credit Must  
                          be Voted Out at the Polls"
- June 30, 1972     - Injunction in Supreme Court Against Political Action  
                          by BCTF
- July, 1972        - TPAC Formed to Defeat Socreds
- August, 1972      - Election and Socreds Defeated - L-5, C-2, NDP-38  
                          Socred-10



## INTRODUCTION

On August 30, 1972, the Social Credit government in British Columbia was defeated after 20 years in office. One reason for its demise was action taken against the government by interest groups. One such group was the B.C. Teachers' Federation. It had claimed to be non-partisan; however, just before the 1972 election it gave up its ostensible neutrality. In March, 1972, B.C.T.F. President Adam Robertson said, "I call on all teachers and other citizens interested in education, and in freedom, to unite and to work for the defeat of the Social Credit government in the next election." <sup>1</sup> What caused the teachers' organization to give up conventional interest group neutrality and use its resources for anti-government action? Was the decision due to a particular government action? Was government intransigence a factor? Or was it simply time for a change of government in British Columbia?

This thesis is an attempt to answer these questions and others relating to them. It is an examination of the reasons for the B.C.T.F.'s change from non-partisanship to militancy. It is a study of how an interest group was influenced, and what motivated the group to try to defeat the government. Aggressive partisan action by interest groups is not common in Canadian politics. As Presthus wrote:

The need to function within a political structure whose members change periodically means that interest groups typically avoid partisan politics and work towards a specific goal within the prevailing political structure.<sup>2</sup>

Why was the B.C.T.F. different? Walter Young, writing in Democracy and Discontent, said, "When people do seek to change or destroy previously accepted institutions it is usually because they have reached a position, for whatever reasons, where they can no longer continue to live as before; they have reached a point where their frustration, anger or suffering demand relief, and relief requires change."<sup>3</sup> The Social Credit government made the B.C.T.F. suffer. The breaking point occurred with the passage of Bill 3 in the B.C. Legislature. Bill 3 effectively eliminated collective bargaining for the teachers. The B.C.T.F.'s reaction was cataclysmic. The president of the B.C.T.F. said, "We will not live with this legislation!"<sup>4</sup> His position was unanimously endorsed by the Executive Committee and the Representative Assembly.<sup>5</sup> Robertson later said, "I realized that the rational, the reasoned approach in our relationship with government was, is and will continue to be an exercise in futility."<sup>6</sup>

The events leading up to the moment when the B.C.T.F. revolted were many. Ten Social Credit government policies in particular were responsible. These will be discussed in Chapter One. They provide a chronological framework for the B.C.T.F.'s gradual conversion to partisanship. In combination with these actions, four other influences can be isolated. Two of these influences occurred within the B.C.T.F. and two without.

Briefly, the four influences are as follows; the B.C.T.F.'s

increase in wealth and expertise, the presence of a power struggle in the B.C.T.F., the prevailing mood of society, and the incompetence of the Department of Education. These will be elaborated upon in subsequent chapters.

It should be mentioned that, when speaking of the B.C.T.F. as a group, it is never meant to imply that all the teachers were always in complete agreement with everything the group did. The Executive Committee of the group, composed of a current president, a first and a second vice-president, a past president and seven members-at-large, is elected by delegates to the Annual General Meeting; and these delegates are nominated by their local associations. The Executive Committee, after attaining office, makes policy decisions and recommendations, as does the Representative Assembly, composed of geographical representatives. The General Secretary, who is hired by the Executive Committee and can be dismissed by it, can also make policy recommendations; however his power in that matter waned during the period studied. If the policies involve major matters, they are usually brought to the Annual General Meeting in the form of resolutions which are then voted upon by the delegates, the Representative Assembly, and the Executive Committee. Voting procedures are according to By-Law 8.2; mentioned on page 7 of the B.C.T.F. MEMBERS' GUIDE 1978/79:

The voting body of an Annual General or Special Meeting shall consist of the geographical representatives, the members of the Executive Committee,

and delegates from each local association elected in accordance with by-law 2. Each local association shall have the right to representation at the meeting in the proportion of one voting delegate for each 0.2%, or fraction thereof, of the total voting membership of the federation who are voting members of the local association . . .

The decision to study the B.C.T.F.'s conversion to partisanship stems from the author's long-time interest in government education policies in B.C. The interest began with direct involvement in a small protest movement initiated in 1970 by several parents who were dissatisfied with government education policies. Facing the prospect of our children being put on shifts in their schools, we collected 1,300 names on a petition demanding the government place a higher priority on education. We then picketed the opening of the Legislature with other mothers and children. M.L.A. Bob Wenman arranged an interview for us with Education Minister Donald Brothers. His angry defense of government education policies surprised us. Parts of that interview were used in the writing of this paper.

INTRODUCTION FOOTNOTES

1. "Adam asks for protest vote", British Columbia Teachers' Federation Crisis Newsletter #3, Vancouver, 24 March 1972, p. 1.
2. R. Presthus, Elite Accommodation in Canadian Politics, London, Cambridge University Press, 1973, p. 77.
3. W. Young, Democracy and Discontent, Toronto, McGraw-Hill, 1969, p. 1.
4. A. Robertson, "We Won't Live With It", B.C.T.F. Newsletter, Vol. 11 No. 9 Special Edition, Vancouver, February 1972, p. 1.
5. Loc. cit.
6. "Bill 3 - Teachers' 'Pearl Harbour'", B.C.T.F. Newsletter, Vol. 11 No. 13, Vancouver, April 1972, p. 1.

## CHAPTER ONE

## GOVERNMENT ACTIONS AND B.C.T.F. REACTIONS

In the period from 1966-1972, the Social Credit government led by W.A.C. Bennett carried out a series of education policy actions designed to keep education costs to a minimum. This is a chronicle of those actions and the responses to them by the B.C.T.F.

The policies most objected to by the Federation were as follows:

1. Freezes on school construction - 1966-68 1970, 1971.
2. The 1968 education finance formula.
3. FLQ Order-in-Council - 1970.
4. Minister of Education's authority over the school system extended - 1971.
5. Removal of automatic membership - 1971.
6. Further restrictions on school board budgets - 1971.
7. Pensions improvements unfair to retired and short-term teachers - 1971.
8. Ministerial intervention in salary negotiations - 1971.
9. Finance formula made even more restrictive - 1972.
10. Collective bargaining abolished - 1972.<sup>1</sup>

A glance at those government policy decisions shows that the actions most objected to by the B.C.T.F. did not begin to occur until 1966, and that most of them occurred during 1970, 1971, and 1972. Until 1966, when government policies became restrictive, the relationship between the B.C.T.F. and the government was fairly good.

In June, 1966, it was reported in the B.C.T.F. Newsletter that the first restriction on classroom construction had been announced by

Education Minister Leslie Peterson. An editorial followed, blaming restrictions on "rising construction costs, brought on in large part by the hydro policies of the government itself."<sup>2</sup> After this, the B.C.T.F. began to involve itself in electoral politics. When a B.C. provincial election was called for September 12, 1966, the B.C.T.F. launched a program to make education an issue in the election. Questionnaires were mailed out to all candidates.<sup>3</sup>

While the B.C.T.F. had entered the political campaign with this action, it did not advocate support for any particular party. After urging its members to vote for the candidate whose answers to the questionnaire were most favorable to the teachers, the Executive insisted, "The B.C.T.F. has always been a non-political organization. It has therefore avoided actions which could be construed as favoring any political party."<sup>4</sup>

At the B.C.T.F. Annual General Meeting in March, 1967, a recommendation was adopted chastising the government for its "failure to make adequate provision for the financing of education". But the Executive Committee's Resolution 19, which would have established an emergency protest fund by special levy on the membership, was defeated.<sup>5</sup> This was an indication that delegates to the meeting were concerned about education financing, but not so concerned that they felt that they should provide extra money for the purpose of protesting to the government.

In February of 1968, a B.C.T.F. delegation met with the cabinet; something which had not been done for 15 years. The issue discussed

concerned improvements to the teachers' pension plan. At that time teachers retiring after 30-35 years' service received on the average \$275 a month. The teachers' pension fund had reached \$130 million, and was growing at the rate of \$12 million a year, and the delegation wanted higher payouts from the fund.<sup>6</sup> The government controlled the fund and invested the money in its own hydro projects. The teachers felt that return on investment (4% at that time) could be improved upon, and they wanted control of their own pension funds. The government refused to relinquish control, however.

In early 1968, another freeze was placed on school construction; now only essential classrooms were to be built, and no new physical education facilities were to be constructed; as well, only some of the planned libraries were approved. Then a more serious move to hold back on school costs was introduced in the Legislature: Bill 86. Sections 24-27 instituted a new education finance formula. This is how it was to operate:

Grants to school boards were based upon the average approved (by the Ministry of Education) costs of the previous year for the province as a whole. This average cost was applied to each district according to enrolment, and became the cost of the Basic Education Program for the district. Each district was restricted in budgeting for operating costs to a figure that was 10% above the amount of its own Basic Education Program. If a district wished to budget in excess of this Basic Education Program plus 10%, it had to seek voter approval through a referendum.<sup>7</sup>

J. A. Spragge, B.C.T.F. Assistant Director of Professional



Development, called the new finance formula a "strait jacket" and wrote,

Careful examination of Sections 24-27 of Bill 86 convinces us that the Bill is a device to peg rates of expenditure on school operation for an unspecified period of years up at a level equal to, or very closely related to, those in effect in 1967. This bill pegs expenditure at 110% but the Minister can decide that only 90% of last year's budget might be used, leaving the discretion for him to approve only 99% of the previous year's expenditure, which would then force school boards if necessary to get municipalities to raise the mill rates for education purposes.<sup>8</sup>

The B.C.T.F.'s response to the government's new education finance formula was to pass several resolutions at its Annual General Meeting in April, 1968. One was a resolution to initiate a special public relations campaign before the next provincial election, to inform voters of the implications of the new education finance formula, and another was to impose a levy of \$3.00 on each B.C.T.F. member to provide funds for the special public relations campaign.<sup>9</sup> This is an indication that teachers had become more willing to take concrete political action than they had been previously. Just the year before, Resolution 19 to raise funds by levy had been defeated. The teachers were beginning to become more militant. It seemed a direct result of government actions in introducing the new education finance formula. However, not all the members of the Federation approved of the actions the B.C.T.F. had decided to take; a letter to the Editor in the May, 1968 Newsletter, complained that only 10% of the members of the B.C.T.F.

had voted for the \$3.00 levy and the \$5.00 increase in the B.C.T.F. membership. The author felt that members should have had a vote, whether or not they were at the Annual General Meeting, and called the 10% the "Militant Minority" and the 90% the "Non-Violent Ninety." The letter was from Torquil Macleod, of Edmonds Elementary Junior Secondary School.

In May, 1968, the B.C.T.F. began to implement its public relations campaign. An All-Candidates education forum was organized prior to a by-election in South Vancouver. Co-sponsors were: Vancouver Elementary School Teachers' Association, Vancouver School Administrators' Association, the B.C.T.F. and the Vancouver Parent-Teachers' Council. The Forum was publicized by a tabloid newspaper distributed to the houses in the riding, and by radio advertising. Norm Levi, N.D.P. candidate and President of the B.C. N.D.P. Party won the election.

Immediately following the Forum there was evidence that the overt political action taken by the B.C.T.F. in helping to sponsor the all-candidates forum, caused controversy in the membership. An article denying partisanship was printed in the June, 1968 Newsletter:

Despite our efforts to clarify the situation, many people still believe that the Federation has embarked on a partisan political campaign. Were the misunderstanding not so serious, it would be laughable. For reasons which escape us, some people seem to be incapable of distinguishing between opposition to a governmental policy and opposition to the Social Credit Party.

The B.C.T.F. is not now and never has been for or against any political party. Indeed, how can anyone seriously suggest that it would be possible to get 19,000 teachers to agree to support or oppose any party? In short, we support or oppose policies, not political parties . . .<sup>10</sup>

In the same month of 1968, there was a cabinet shuffle, and a new Education Minister was appointed: Donald Brothers, a lawyer who had previously been Minister of Mines and Resources. This move by the government gave B.C. a full-time Education Minister, which the teachers had been demanding for some time. Leslie Peterson, the previous Education Minister, had held a double portfolio; that of Education and Labor. The June, 1968 B.C.T.F. Newsletter reported that the new Education Minister addressed the B.C.T.F. Representative Assembly, and declared that he was a "firm believer in eyeball to eyeball confrontation if disputes arise." He stayed for only half the discussions and then left for a U.B.C. luncheon. This criticism in the Newsletter seemed to indicate the early beginning of a breakdown in communication between the B.C.T.F. and the Education Minister.

By the fall of 1968, the school construction freeze had begun to cause serious disruptions in some of the provincial school districts. A system of sending students to school in shifts had been instituted in the hardest-hit areas, and branches of the B.C.T.F. were organizing public protests. In October, 2,500 people attended a meeting in Coquitlam, B.C. It was sponsored by the local Coquitlam Teachers' Association. Those attending were told of 4,200 students

on shift in the district, a shortage of 71 classrooms and of the refusal of the government to release more than 1/3 of the eight million dollars passed by referendum in Coquitlam by 80% the previous year. Those attending the meeting voted to wire Premier Bennett to request the release immediately of funds for essential classroom construction.<sup>12</sup>

In November, possibly as a response to the public meeting, a partial thaw in the freeze on classroom construction was announced, but gymnasias and activity rooms were not included.<sup>13</sup> This helped districts such as Coquitlam, but it did not eliminate the problem; the secondary school in Coquitlam remained in operation on a shift basis for several more years.

In February, 1969, a B.C.T.F. delegation met with Education Minister Donald Brothers to discuss the B.C.T.F.'s stand on education financing. Brothers was given a copy of a brochure called "Let's Review the Formula;" a B.C.T.F. commentary on the government's education finance policies. Copies of the brochure had been sent by the B.C.T.F. to all M.L.A.s, school trustees and others concerned about education finance. The Minister promised to review the formula with the Federation at a later date.

In March, a group made up of B.C.T.F. executive members and 32 teachers (most of them from districts facing education referenda) met in Victoria to lobby M.L.A.s and cabinet ministers. (Altogether that year, 40 school districts out of 77 exceeded the 110% limit and of those, 9 held referenda and only 2 were passed.)<sup>14</sup> The teachers

confronted M.L.A.s and cabinet ministers in the Legislative Building corridors, had meetings with them in their offices, took them out for dinner, and some met with the Premier personally.<sup>15</sup> Although the B.C.T.F. Newsletter reported the trip as "well worth it", at least one M.L.A. was not so enthusiastic. Bob Wenman, a backbencher in the Social Credit government from 1966-1972, said in an interview with the author in March, 1979, "The teachers who were coming over to Victoria were rude and ignorant when they met us in caucus." He elaborated, saying that the teachers were isolated and had no way of seeing the whole picture, that they lived in an unreal world, going from grade school to high school, to university and proceeding back to the public school again. This, he felt, made them isolated and ignorant. This was a surprising attitude to take, because Wenman was himself a teacher, and a member of the B.C.T.F. Wenman also denied in the interview that there was a cutback on education spending, and claimed that the government had been spending more on education than ever before. He said that there had been a tremendous increase in the bureaucracy in schools, that there were more full-time principals and more vice-principals, and that teachers had fewer students and fewer classes to teach, with more professional days and spares in the high schools; whereas in the early 1960's they had had to teach all the time. He told the author that at that time, the cost of education had escalated tremendously. When the interviewer mentioned that teachers had complained because education had a smaller percentage of the total budget than

previously, he said that percentage of the budget was a meaningless concept, and that the only meaningful thing to look at was the cost per pupil, vis-à-vis other provinces. However, he did not give any figures to support his viewpoint.

Wenman also told the author that the B.C. government never placed a freeze on school construction, but that Bennett had enforced a slowdown to bring inflation under control by placing a restraint on all public sector spending. He said that "freeze" was just a political term used by the teachers. As far as the referendum idea was concerned, he said that it was instituted to let the public say itself that it was dissatisfied with the escalating costs of education. In the interview obtained by the author with Donald Brothers in 1970, the Minister also had said that the reason a freeze had been placed on school construction was to fight inflation; and further, that the freeze on referenda in operation at that time was caused by a hike in interest rates on money for borrowing.

At the B.C.T.F. Annual General Meeting in April, 1969, a resolution was presented to levy one day's salary for the purpose of political protest action. The resolution was defeated, but the Representative Assembly suggested that contributions of one day's pay could be made voluntarily by those of the membership wishing to do so. Some of those against the one-day levy expressed the fear that the government might take retaliative measures against the organization if its members had to contribute to a fund to fight government policies.<sup>16</sup>

This was the first indication that the B.C.T.F. membership was fearful of possible government retaliation for the Federation's political actions. The editors of the monthly B.C.T.F. Newsletter were evidently less cautious; in the June, 1969 edition, they printed a cartoon depicting the Minister of Education as a Nazi with jackboots on, shooting education (a dead teacher) and the caption, "Don't blame me, I didn't pull the trigger."

By this time (June, 1969) another B.C. provincial election was in the offing. The B.C.T.F. made plans to participate in the campaign, and engaged a public relations firm to help them publicize their concerns. A network of contacts was made in local teachers' organizations, and John Arnett, Press and Information Officer, called for maximum participation by the teachers.<sup>17</sup> The money for the teachers' publicity campaign during the election was to come from the \$3.00 fee levied upon the teachers at the recommendation of the 1968 Annual General Meeting. The symbol for the teachers' campaign was an apple. If an election candidate sympathized with the platform of the teachers, he was to use the apple symbol to advertise the fact. Voters were then urged by the teachers to support the candidates who used the symbol.

The election was called for August 27, which made it difficult to enlist the help of teachers since many were away on vacation. However, numerous teachers did participate in the campaign. President Jim Killeen felt that the goal to make education a major issue was achieved, for the following reasons:

Hundreds of teachers all over the province discussed education with individual candidates . . . Teachers sponsored at least two dozen all-candidates' meetings, which featured education prominently . . . Almost all of the candidates featured education in their campaigns . . . Most of the candidates used the apple symbol . . .<sup>18</sup>

The results of the election were: Liberals 5, N.D.P. 12, and Socreds 38, giving the Socreds a gain of 5 seats over the 1966 election, and the N.D.P. 2 less. On C.B.U. Radio, Friday, August 29, Allan Fotheringham reported, "The B.C. Teachers' Federation launched a \$50,000 advertising campaign advocating defeat of the government. The voters laughed at the \$50,000 and ignored the candidates who had the teachers' endorsation."<sup>19</sup> It is interesting to note that none of the Social Credit candidates used the apple symbol in the election campaign.

Apparently, some thought that the B.C.T.F. was out to defeat the Socred government with the Apple Campaign. B.C.T.F. President Killeen found it necessary to report,

Some people felt that the campaign was directed at the government and/or the Social Credit Party. [It was not . . .] Some people thought the campaign was designed to promote the New Democratic Party. [Nothing could be further from the truth . . .] It is safe to say that, by election time, people agreed that the B.C.T.F. campaign had been conducted in a non-partisan manner.<sup>20</sup>

In an interview with the author conducted in March, 1979, Bob Wenman said that the teachers had been very unprofessional in their campaign. He claimed that they had sent radical members to all-candidates' meetings to heckle Socred candidates. He said that some



teachers, embarrassed by the actions of the radicals, had apologized to him. He insisted that the teachers had made fools of themselves in their Apple Campaign, and that it was a "pathetic and ridiculous campaign, which made the public anti-teachers, making it possible to make political hay if you went against the teachers." He felt that the Apple Campaign was "a mess" and said that the teachers didn't like the levy imposed on them the year before. He mentioned that he, too, was expected to pay the levy, "in order to defeat myself." He reluctantly admitted that subsequent actions taken "against" the teachers were "in some measure retribution" for the actions of the teachers during the campaign.

In the fall of 1969, teachers in various school districts encountered problems in the negotiation of salary increases with their respective school boards. As the B.C.T.F. Newsletter reported, "Salary agreements were negotiated in only 32 school districts, affecting 20% of the province's teachers. Salaries for the other 80% were determined by arbitration hearings."<sup>21</sup> It was felt that the School Trustees were bargaining in bad faith, and in November, President Jim Killeen called for a mass protest rally, to be held in the P.N.E. Agrodome. The subsequent rally was the largest meeting of teachers ever held in B.C., with 4,500 in attendance. A vote of censure against the B.C. School Trustees' Association was passed and arrangements were made to strike a committee to probe teachers' bargaining rights?<sup>22</sup>

In spite of the fact that the teachers were dissatisfied at that time with their salary negotiations, the freeze on school construction, the education finance formula, their pensions and their large class sizes, they were advised by General Secretary C.D. Ovans not to "resort to tactics of questionable morality (such as booking off sick) or of questionable legality (such as strike action) to protest the lack of negotiations by school board." He backed up his stand by saying, "Under the terms of the Public Schools Act . . . teachers have contractual obligations they cannot break without putting their jobs on the line. To strike itself is not illegal; to be in breach of a contract is;"<sup>23</sup> he said. Militant teachers later accused Ovans of making policy for the organization, but Ovans was vindicated by President Jim Killeen, who said that Ovans did not make policy for the organization; that the decision against strike action had been made in a meeting of the Executive Committee and the Agreements Committee before the rally.

In March of 1970, besides the regular newsletter, a special edition dealing strictly with teachers' pensions was published. A detailed list of all the B.C.T.F.'s lobbying efforts in the previous months was listed, inadequacies in the pension were pointed out, and it was mentioned that there was no new legislation planned for the year to change the pension plan. There was a strong call for support for a resolution to be brought forward at the Annual General Meeting to be held that month. The resolution to be placed before the delegates to the Annual General Meeting read as follows:

That the B.C.T.F. declare that, unless the Federation receives guarantees that substantial improvements in pensions legislation will be introduced in the 1971 session of the Legislative Assembly, this Annual General Meeting directs the Executive Committee to call for work-stoppages or other sanctions to compel governmental attention to the reasonable proposals the B.C.T.F. has advanced for improving teachers' pensions.<sup>24</sup>

The publication of the Special March Edition of the newsletter and its attempt to make the pensions an issue in the impending Annual General Meeting is an example of executive leadership in the organization; in the Annual General Meeting of March, 1970, the resolution passed, paving the way for the Executive Committee to call a strike vote at some later date. The main cause for complaint about the pension plan was the government's control of the fund, the low government contribution, and the low return to retired teachers. At the time the resolution was passed, the total pension funds paid out each year were less than the interest collected on the fund. The structure of the fund had been fixed in 1961, and the government's contribution - \$281 per teacher, had not changed since that time. Changes in 1965 and in 1968 accommodated the Canada Pension, but the government paid the Canada Pension contribution from the fixed \$281 sum established in 1961.<sup>25</sup>

At this same Annual General Meeting, a speech by Education Minister Donald Brothers was badly received; it was reported in a local newspaper,

TEACHER DELEGATES JEER MINISTER -  
The delegates jeered openly when Brothers said that teachers formerly were drawn to the profession "out of sheer dedication" but that now

many came because of the "favorable working conditions and holiday benefits and good rates of pay."<sup>26</sup>

The teachers seemed to have lost respect for the Minister, and communications were breaking down between the two. Brothers continued, "In an era when confrontation is looked upon as a natural procedure, it may be that from conflict will come the seeds of educational growth."

On October 27, 1970, after the federal government had invoked the War Measures Act during the F.L.Q. Crisis, the B.C. government itself saw fit to add its endorsement to the federal legislation by passing an Order-in-Council regarding the F.L.Q. As it was reported in the B.C.T.F. Newsletter,

Although the Federal War Measures Act was more than adequate legislation to cope with the F.L.Q. crisis in Quebec, the provincial government singled out teachers (public school, college and university) in B.C. and made them the only group of citizens in the entire country subject to instant dismissal for saying or doing anything that could be construed as support of or for the F.L.Q. party.<sup>27</sup>

The F.L.Q. Order-in-Council was followed three days later by a referendum among teachers (October 30). The purpose of the referendum was to see how many would favor a strike to support their pension demands. They voted overwhelmingly in favor of allowing the Executive to call a strike; the results were 88%, or 22,000 teachers in favor.<sup>28</sup>

At the beginning of March, 1971, the government introduced a bill to amend the Public Schools Act - Bill 47. Included in the Bill was removal of automatic membership provisions for certified teachers in the B.C.T.F. and removal of the rights of teachers to run for positions on

school boards. Another section of the Bill made it impossible for the B.C.T.F. to negotiate any union or closed shop agreement with school boards. Teachers were incensed, and saw the amendment as an attempt to destroy their association. Removal of automatic membership was particularly insulting, for the teachers had had those provisions since 1947. They felt that without automatic membership their ability to discipline their own profession was taken away from them, because as long as membership was a criterion for anyone working in a public school, expulsion from the organization meant that the teacher could no longer teach in the system in B.C. Without automatic membership, expulsion from the organization would be meaningless. If one did not have to belong to teach, one would not be compelled to behave in an ethical manner in the eyes of other teachers.<sup>29</sup> Besides these considerations, the Bill presented a serious threat to the solidarity of the federation.

On March 19, 1971, the teachers carried out their threat to strike for better pensions. The strike was province-wide and lasted for one day. It was the first province-wide strike of teachers ever to be held in B.C. Many teachers felt after the strike that it had been a good experience, in that it brought the teachers together in a common cause; that of concern for the poor returns offered to retired teachers. It made them feel selfless to be agitating for something that would not bring them immediate personal returns. One former Executive Member later told the author, "Some beautiful things happened during that strike." Evidently, the government was less enthusiastic. Four

days later, on March 23, Bill 47 passed Third Reading in the Legislature, and the automatic membership provisions were removed from the legislation. However, the section of the Bill regarding the removal of the teachers' rights to run for school board had been withdrawn.<sup>30</sup>

President Jim Killeen felt that the passing of the Bill was an act of retaliation for the teachers' Apple Campaign waged prior to the 1969 election. He felt that it was also an attempt to weaken the organization. M.L.A. Bob Wenman, however, had a different interpretation. In an interview with the author in March, 1979, he claimed that it was he who first introduced the removal of automatic membership in the B.C.T.F. to the Legislature as a Private Member's Bill. Later the government made the policy its own and implemented it. Wenman said that the rationale behind the change in the membership provisions was that no-one should be required to belong to anything, and that the broad public liked the idea. He said it was designed for the public, because only about 35% of the workers in B.C. were unionized, and that therefore the majority of people in B.C. were against unions. He also said that the B.C.T.F. had been getting militant, and many of the teachers were uneasy about having to belong to such a militant organization.

Jack Smedley, President of the B.C. School Trustees' Association at that time, mentioned in an interview with the author conducted in March, 1979, that he felt that the reason the government took away the automatic membership provisions was that some members of the B.C.T.F. had complained to the Minister that they didn't like the militancy of

the B.C.T.F. and didn't want to belong to an organization that was anti-Social Credit. However, both Wenman and Smedley felt that the removal of the membership provisions was the straw that broke the camel's back as far as the B.C.T.F. was concerned. The removal of the automatic membership provisions was criticized in the press; Arthur Mayse, of the Victoria Times, wrote,

It is the nature of government to reserve its most pious face for its more dubious undertakings. By this ploy, what might look suspiciously like a Social Credit venture into union-busing is presented as something quite otherwise . . . I'm solidly on the side of the federation in this assault by the government on a membership which for its own sake would be wise to stick with its union . . . . The alternative is to be divided and conquered . . . . 31

Feeling threatened by the government's apparent attempt to emasculate their organization, the B.C.T.F. launched a public relations campaign to make the teachers aware of the many benefits belonging to the Federation, and at the Annual General Meeting of May, 1971, delegates approved a policy that would increase B.C.T.F. cash reserves by an amount of half a million dollars over the following five years. The amount would come from an increase in membership fees. Delegates also approved a decreasing line of credit at the bank in order to provide funds immediately in case of an emergency. At this Annual General Meeting the Minister of Education did not speak. School Trustee Jack Smedley told the author that Brothers did not feel that he would get a fair hearing, so he didn't give his usual address. From the evidence collected so far, it appears that the more

punitive the government legislation appeared to teachers, the more willing the teachers were to provide extra funds and to increase their membership fees in the organization.

On October 4, 1971, the Minister of Education announced at the B.C. School Trustees' Association Convention that the ceiling in those school districts with budgets of three million dollars or more would be lowered from 110% of the Basic Program to 108%. Those districts, 35 in all, accounted for about 85% of the province's pupil population, and 85% of the gross operating budgets. Brothers told the delegates:

This is the fairest formula for operating expenses of school districts in Canada. We have labored long and hard to arrive at a solution which is fair to everyone and which corrects the deficiencies in the original formula.<sup>32</sup>

An editorial in the Vancouver Sun stated, "All the biases of the Social Credit government are exposed by the new school financing policy announced by Education Minister Donald Brothers. . . . It is anti-urban, anti-teachers, anti-education and insensitive to economic conditions."<sup>33</sup> President Adam Robertson stated, "If carried through, this action must be regarded as a tragic blow against quality education in B.C., and another step in the process of educational erosion."<sup>34</sup>

In November, 1971, while collective bargaining was proceeding between the teachers and the school boards, Education Minister Brothers put a ceiling of 6.5% on teachers' salary increases. This was seen as a clear disruption of the bargaining process; President Adam Robertson stated,



In a careless manner the Minister, with his focus on inputs and outputs in dollar terms alone, disrupted the process of collective bargaining. With an announcement that whatever the salary increases were gained, he would share costs only up to 6.5%, the Minister attempted to destroy collective bargaining throughout the province . . . This year, as a result of the Minister's unwarranted intrusion into collective negotiations, 53 of the province's 77 school districts are committed to arbitration; only 24 districts have settled or have agreements-in-committee.

In January, 1972, in spite of all the recent measures taken by the government which seemed calculated to antagonize the teachers, the B.C.T.F. still insisted it was non-partisan; it was announced in the Newsletter that "The B.C.T.F. will continue to maintain an independent political stance but continue its practice of commending or criticizing government education programs . . . A general consensus of opinion indicated that 'partisan politics' was felt to have no role in a professional organization."<sup>36</sup>

However, in the same month, the government introduced Bill 3, which put a ceiling on teachers' wages, making any increases above that amount agreed to by negotiation or arbitration subject to a referendum in the school district concerned. This meant that the taxpayers were to decide directly on teachers' salaries, and given the failure of most of the school referenda up to that time, it would be extremely doubtful if any of them would pass. Robertson said,

The amendment takes away from teachers their collective bargaining rights. It denies trustees, as duly elected representatives of the people, the

authority to exercise responsibility accorded to them in law of acting as employers of teachers. As president of the B.C.T.F., I took a strong public stand against the legislation, stating firmly: 'We will not live with it'. There was no intimation from government that such legislation was contemplated. At six o'clock on January 28, the Minister told me that the Bill had been presented in the legislature. The government's attitude toward teachers was made clear - they don't care what we think . . . We have no choice but to turn to political action in defending ourselves . . . This is not to say that we should or need to engage in partisan politics . . . .<sup>37</sup>

Even at this late date, the President was still insisting on "non-partisanship". He was willing to see if the government would change its policies, but if it would not, he threatened, "we must actively oppose the policy until a new government is elected."<sup>38</sup>

The B.C.T.F. Representative Assembly met on February 3 and approved several measures to fight Bill 3, the most significant of which were to begin preparations for a strike vote, and to levy one day's salary from each of the members, the money to be used for "publicity and political action." The matters would be brought up for ratification at the Annual General Meeting.<sup>39</sup>

In March, Robertson strongly condemned the government and announced that he would attempt to defeat it if Bill 3 was not withdrawn. With these words, the B.C.T.F. gave up its non-partisanship and embarked on an anti-government political campaign,

I take a strong personal stand against the government at this time. The government must change its policies - display a reasonable degree of fair play and respect

toward teachers and show some concern for the quality of education, otherwise I will do everything in my power to bring about its defeat in the next election.<sup>40</sup>

By this time, the B.C.T.F. was not the only organization in B.C. opposed to Bill 3. Other public employees and labor union members saw the Bill as an attempt to abolish collective bargaining. The "Collective Bargaining Defence Committee" was formed, with representatives from the B.C.T.F., the B.C. Government Employees' Union, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Hospital Employees Union, the Psychiatric Nurses' Association of B.C., and the College Faculty Federation. A mass rally was held at the P.N.E. Garden Auditorium in March, 1972, for the purpose of discussing the implications of Bill 3:

B.C.T.F. President Adam Robertson chaired the meeting and Jim MacFarlan, First Vice-President, delivered the opening address at the rally that rose from teachers' appeals to other organizations for support in the fight against Bill 3 . . . More than 3500 people roared approval as speaker after speaker denounced Bill 3 . . . Gary Greene, President of the B.C. Division of C.U.P.E., spoke and pledged that 15,000 C.U.P.E. members would do everything in their power to defeat Bill 3 if it were passed (sic). Conservative party leader Derril Warren lent his support at the meeting, as did Liberal M.L.A. Barrie Clark, Opposition Leader Dave Barrett, B.C. Federation of Labour Secretary Ray Haynes and others. At the finish the crowd voted unanimously to condemn the Bill as anti-educational and anti-democratic.<sup>41</sup>

On March 27, despite the protests of teachers, public employees, union members and other segments of society, Bill 3 passed Third Reading in the Legislature by a vote of 30 to 19. The fat was in the fire. At

the B.C.T.F. Annual General Meeting held in April, 1972, the recommendations dealing with Bill 3 were all passed. The resolution to begin preparations for a strike vote passed, 428 to 122. The resolution to impose a levy of one day's salary on each member of the B.C.T.F. passed, 495 to 84.<sup>42</sup>

With funds coming in from the one-day levy, the teachers began to organize their political action campaign against the Social Credit government. They organized voters' action groups, made sure all eligible voters were on the voters' lists, and began to answer Education Minister Brothers' election newspaper ads. For example, Press and Information Officer John Hardy sent several newsletters to local associations. One of them, dated April 14, 1972, had the following bits of advice;

Over the next three weeks the Minister has reserved space in newspapers for more of his propaganda. What does it indicate? First that he has enacted poor legislation and feels compelled to rationalize it with advertising. Second, that our reply has shaken him--and by our reply, I mean the million dollar levy as well as specific ads. Here's the immediate plans. We will be moving on to a new medium even while he is running his ads. TV clips are being prepared. After he has exhausted his creativity in the newspapers it is likely that we will price his effort and let the people know the shocking waste of public money, all to degrade education. We may also run an ad in the Financial Post, which is an influential journal Canada wide, and point out the gross mismanagement of public monies. . . . Another thing to do is to get letters in to the editor. Spread the word locally that teachers have been singled out as an occupational group (dictatorship) and that the government is covering up its sins with taxpayers' money in an advertising campaign calculated to mislead the public (fraudulent advertising).<sup>43</sup>

The B.C.T.F. and Donald Brothers engaged in a war of statistics in the local newspapers. Brothers declared that with school costs rising, within 10 years education would take over the entire budget. Teachers replied with graphs showing that the percentage of budget earmarked for elementary and secondary education was on the decline rather than on the upswing. The B.C.T.F. published a series of four "Crisis" newsletters, bearing such bylines as "Gov't Obscures Real Issues," "Socreds crying wolf on costs," "Salary share same for decade," "Adam asks for protest vote," "It's the end of an era -- Socreds vulnerable in coming election" "Teachers not to blame for poor school conditions," "Is Premier Bennett another Juan Peron?" and "Financial Wizard or Master of Deceit?"

Besides these newsletters, the B.C.T.F. published numerous pamphlets and letters. Teachers wrote letters to editors of newspapers, and a comprehensive booklet was sent out, called Teachers versus Social Credit; in it B.C.T.F. President Adam Robertson issued a battle-cry; "I call on all teachers and other citizens interested in education, and in freedom, to unite and to work for the defeat of the Social Credit government in the next election."

The campaign of the teachers became a public issue. One fundamentalist Surrey clergyman wrote a letter to the Columbian newspaper condemning the teachers for being "unchristian." Several Socred teachers, (Barber and Hale from Victoria) took issue with the one-day's

salary levy, took the matter to court, and obtained an injunction against the B.C.T.F. The funds which had amounted to approximately \$1 million were frozen, and none of the assets of the B.C.T.F. could be touched for use as political protest. The whole political campaign which had been planned to defeat the Socreds seemed in jeopardy. Undaunted, the Executive Committee formed the Teachers' Political Action Committee, incorporated it under the Societies' Act, and carried on their campaign until the election of 1972 when the Socreds were defeated.

This chapter has dealt with the major policy actions carried out by the government and objected to by the B.C.T.F. The restrictive 1968 education finance formula, the freezes on school construction necessitating the institution of shifts, the lack of pension improvements, and finally the removal of automatic membership provisions and the passage of Bill 3, were seen by most teachers as actions punitive to them as a group. They felt that the last two actions especially were taken in retaliation for the teachers' criticisms of the government. While the teachers insisted that they were criticizing the government's policies and not the government itself, the government did not make that distinction. The teachers finally turned to partisan political action prior to the 1972 election. On the surface, it seemed a direct result of the government's actions. But there were also other factors which influenced the teachers to act as they did. The following chapters will deal with these less tangible influences.

# CHAPTER ONE - FOOTNOTES

1. "The Social Credit Record", British Columbia Teachers' Federation Crisis Newsletter #3, Vancouver, 24 March 1972, p. 1.
2. "Editorial", British Columbia Teachers' Federation Newsletter, Vol. 5 No. 7, June 1966, p. 2.
3. "Federation Calls for Public Stand," British Columbia Teachers' Federation Newsletter, Vol. 6 No. 1, September 1966, p. 1 Questions:
  1. What, if anything, would you do to reduce the pupil-teacher ratio?
  2. What positive measures would you propose to ensure an adequate supply of well-qualified teachers for B.C. schools?
  3. What steps would you recommend to maintain the present high standards of teacher training in the province?
  4. Are you in favor of a greater percentage of the tax dollar being allocated to education?
  5. Do you believe that B.C. should have a full-time Minister of Education?
  6. Are you in favor of setting up an educational research program in B.C.?
4. "Political Action", British Columbia Teachers' Federation Newsletter, Vol. 6 No. 1, September 1966, p. 2.
5. B.C. Teachers' Federation, Annual General Meeting Report 1967, p. 8.
6. "Delegation Meets Cabinet on Pensions", British Columbia Teachers' Federation Newsletter Extra Edition, Vol. 7 No. 6, February 1968, p. 1.
7. "Education Finance", Members' Guide to the B.C.T.F. 1978/79, Vancouver, p. 75.
8. J.A. Spragge, "New Finance Formula a Strait-Jacket", British Columbia Teachers' Federation Newsletter, Vol. 7 No. 9, April 1968, p. 1.
9. B.C. Teachers' Federation, Annual General Meeting Report 1968, pp. 5 and 6.

10. "500 at Forum", British Columbia Teachers' Federation Newsletter, Vol. 7 No. 12, June, 1968, p. 1.
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12. "2500 Attend Meeting", British Columbia Teachers' Federation Newsletter, Vol. 7 No. 14, October 1968, p. 1.
13. "Predictions True", British Columbia Teachers' Federation Newsletter, Vol. 8 No. 2, November, 1968, p. 2.
14. "40 School Districts Exceed 110% Limit", British Columbia Teachers' Federation Newsletter, Vol. 8 No. 7, April 1969, p. 7, and "Washington, Oregon Experience Operating Referenda 'Disastrous' ", British Columbia Teachers' Federation Newsletter, Vol. 8 No. 9, June 1969, p. 1.
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16. "One Day's Pay Sought to Build Fund", British Columbia Teachers' Federation Newsletter, Vol. 8 No. 9, June 1969, p. 1.
17. "Education Big Issue in Upcoming Campaign", British Columbia Teachers' Federation Newsletter, Vol. 8 No. 9, June 1969, p. 8.
18. "Says President Killeen 'Campaign will Continue' ", British Columbia Teachers' Federation Newsletter, Vol. 9 No. 1, September 1969, p. 1.
19. "Killeen Comments 'How Do you Measure Success?' " British Columbia Teachers' Federation Newsletter, Vol. 9 No. 1, September 1969, p. 4.
20. "Says President Killeen 'Campaign will Continue' ", British Columbia Teachers' Federation Newsletter, Vol. 9 No. 1, September 1969, p. 1.
21. "Committee to Probe Bargaining Rights," British Columbia Teachers' Federation Newsletter, Vol. 9 No. 6, January 1970, p. 1.
22. Loc. cit.
23. "Rally for Teachers", British Columbia Teachers' Federation Newsletter, Vol. 9 No. 5, December 1969, p. 1.
24. "Pensions Resolution to be Placed Before Annual General Meeting", British Columbia Teachers' Federation Newsletter, Special Edition, Vol. 9 No. 9, March 1970, p. 4.



25. T. Hutchison, "Pensions", British Columbia Teachers' Federation Newsletter, Vol. 9 No. 9 Special Edition, March 1970, p. 1.
26. "Teacher Delegates Jeer Minister", Surrey Columbian, Surrey, Tuesday 31 March 1970, p. 1.
27. "The Social Credit Record", British Columbia Teachers' Federation Newsletter Crisis #3, 24 March 1972, p. 1.
28. "88% Will Strike if Necessary", British Columbia Teachers' Federation Newsletter, Vol. 10 No. 5, December 1970, p. 1.
29. "Message from President Jim Killeen", British Columbia Teachers' Federation Newsletter, Vol. 10 No. 9 Special Edition, March 1971, p. 1.
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31. A. Mayse, "Others Are Saying Social Credit 'Union Busting' ", Victoria Times, March 3, 1971, as reported in British Columbia Teachers' Federation Newsletter, Vol. 10 No. 9 Special Edition, March 1971, p. 2.
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33. Ibid., p. 2.
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35. A. Robertson, "Minister Disrupting System", British Columbia Teachers' Federation Newsletter, Vol. 11 No. 5, November 1971, p. 1.
36. "Partisan Politics Out!", British Columbia Teachers' Federation Newsletter, Vol. 11 No. 7, January 1972, p. 2.
37. A. Robertson, "We Won't Live with It!", British Columbia Teachers' Federation Newsletter, Vol. 11 No. 9 Special Edition, February 1972, p. 1.
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43. J. Hardy, "Advertising, B.C. Teachers' Federation Newsletter for Local Association Pros. Vol. 3, No. 8, April 1972, pp. 1 & 2.

## CHAPTER TWO

## B.C.T.F. INCREASES WEALTH AND EXPERTISE

In the period 1963-1972, the B.C.T.F. changed its philosophy of non-partisanship, gained a wealth of experience in lobbying and succeeded in its campaign against the Social Credit government. Without changes in the resources of the organization (and in its number of paid personnel), these things might not have been possible. What, then, were these changes, and how did they affect the success of the teachers in their opposition to the government and its policies?

In October of 1966, the B.C.T.F. increased its physical facilities. A \$500,000 addition was built to the eight-year-old B.C.T.F. building on Burrard Street in Vancouver. This added 18,000 square feet and a 300-seat auditorium, doubling the previous facilities. At that time, the membership in the B.C.T.F. was 16,600 and growing at 6% per year; and 2% of the population in British Columbia were teachers.<sup>1</sup>

In March, 1967, the B.C.T.F. income totalled \$914,059; this is how it was spent:

Salaries	32.03%	
Salary Indemnity & Benevolent Fund	8.82%	
Travelling	4.46%	
Excess Revenue	18.18%	
Canadian Teachers' Federation	3.09%	
Convention & A.G.M.	1.53%	
Departments & Committees	9.25%	i.e. Public Relations & Education Week -
		\$10,564.35

General	16.15%
International	
Assistance	1.72%
Magazine	4.77%

- Surplus \$166,161.16<sup>2</sup>

Soon the B.C.T.F. budget passed the million dollar mark, and budgets continued to increase:

1967	\$ 914,059
1968	1,362,582
1969	1,685,704
1970	1,699,100
1971	1,647,779
1972	1,906,184 <sup>3</sup>

In the short space of five years, the budget of the B.C.T.F. doubled. Even accounting for inflation, the increase was substantial. The B.C.T.F. also had the ability to raise funds quickly for the purpose of political campaigning; for example, the three-dollar levy approved at the 1968 Annual General Meeting, the one-day's pay levy passed in 1972, and the ability of members to raise money for T.P.A.C. when they were thwarted in using their one-day levy. As well, it was possible to raise membership fees; for example, the May 1971 B.C.T.F. Newsletter announced that delegates to the Annual General Meeting had approved an increase in the membership fees, aimed at increasing B.C.T.F. cash reserves by half a million dollars within five years. A decreasing line of bank credit to provide possible emergency funds was also agreed to by those attending the meeting.<sup>4</sup>

The budget for the B.C.T.F. came from membership fees. As a matter of interest, the B.C.T.F. also had assets in its Teachers'

Investment and Housing Co-operative Association and in the B.C. Teachers' Credit Union. The B.C.T.F. Co-operative Association offered "investment opportunities, mortgages, insurance, charter flights, etc. . . . The B.C.T.F. Teachers' Credit Union . . . savings plans, personal loans, chequing accounts, endowment plans, safe deposit boxes, travellers' cheques, etc."<sup>5</sup>

In March, 1970, it was reported that the assets of the B.C.T.F. Co-operative Association had exceeded \$25 million. While the B.C.T.F. did not receive income from these associations, their existence did increase the federation's scope.

The B.C.T.F. had become a wealthy organization, and could afford to pay for expertise. The three-dollar levy in 1968 was used to fund the Apple Campaign before the 1968 provincial election. The campaign was not left for amateurs to organize. John Arnett, former education reporter for the Vancouver Sun and the B.C.T.F.'s new Press and Information Officer, together with Foster, Young, Ross Anthony and Associates, the Federation's advertising agency, organized the campaign. They made preparations to start the campaign the day the election was announced, wrote local association presidents asking them to consider setting up local committees to co-ordinate the campaign at the local level, and generally devised a plan of action, encouraging the teachers to co-operate with their plans.<sup>7</sup>

Even though the election of 1969 was called for the summer when

many teachers were away, they still managed to mobilize, as President Jim Killeen reported:

When contacts were arranged, bits of information were sent to them, including such material as; electoral district maps, school district maps, sample copies of the two brochures, reprints of the four major ads used in the media campaign, elaboration of our education platform statements, suggestions for holding meetings of local candidates, questions that could be asked of local candidates, or posed at candidates' meetings, bumper stickers, articles by C.D. Ovans and J.A. Spragge on the education finance formula . . . . All candidates (187) received a personal letter from the president plus a kit of information and materials . . . . All T.V. and radio stations and all B.C. newspapers (95) received a kit of information explaining the Federation's position. An aerial sign--towed by an airplane--floated above the P.N.E. parade.<sup>8</sup>

The three-dollar levy was put to good use. The B.C.T.F. spent \$39,000 on media advertising alone, in the 1969 campaign. The levy was not an unusual or difficult asset to tap. At the 1970 Annual General Meeting, when former B.C.T.F. President Bob Buzza attempted to increase the teachers' membership fees from \$80 per year to \$200 per year to provide money for militant action regarding the teachers' pension plan, the motion was defeated, but the Annual General Meeting decided that another levy could be used later.<sup>9</sup>

In February of 1970, the B.C.T.F. President's allowance was raised, and First Vice President became a paid position with full time off from teaching duties. This enabled democratically elected representatives of the teaching profession to devote their energies full-time to leadership in the Federation. More time was now available for

the creation and execution of plans and policies on behalf of the teachers.<sup>10</sup>

In March, 1971, when the Public Schools Act was revised to eliminate automatic membership in the B.C.T.F., an informational article was printed in the Newsletter. The purpose of the article was to remind teachers of the many services provided by the B.C.T.F. It was hoped that in spite of the removal of automatic membership, teachers would voluntarily remain in the organization. The statements in the article provided a good survey of the many aids available to teachers, and demonstrated the extensive range of services offered. For the purpose of describing some of the capacities of the B.C.T.F., part of the article is included here:

#### DID YOU KNOW

The B.C.T.F. is the only teachers' organization in the world that offers a Lesson Aids service; any B.C.T.F. member may borrow books, periodicals, films, filmstrips, recordings and tapes from the B.C.T.F. Resources Center. The B.C.T.F. has assisted thousands of teachers in locating teaching positions. The B.C.T.F. has successfully opposed such proposals as one to shorten the Easter Vacation and one to institute provincial salary bargaining on terms that would have been unfavourable to teachers. The B.C.T.F. offers grants to local associations to enable them to send delegates to the Annual General Meeting and Summer Conference, so that all associations can be represented. The B.C.T.F. Retirement Savings Plan offers B.C.T.F. members tax sheltered savings. The B.C. Teacher is rated by outside publishers as the leader in Canadian teachers' magazines. B.C.T.F. summer short courses offer practical assistance

to teachers at all levels. The B.C.T.F. pays for local associations the cost of salary arbitrations over and above a sum equal to \$10 a member of the local association. The B.C. Teachers' Credit Union offers savings plans, personal loans, chequing accounts, safe deposit boxes, travellers' cheques, etc. The B.C.T.F. Co-operative Association offers investment opportunities, mortgages, insurance, charter flights, etc. Through grants to isolated local associations, the B.C.T.F. makes it possible for teachers in those areas to meet with their colleagues on professional and organizational matters. The B.C.T.F. Benevolent Fund provides financial assistance to teachers and their families in cases of emergency. Any B.C.T.F. member is entitled to free legal advice on any matter arising from his position as a teacher. The B.C.T.F. Teacher Award Fund provides cash awards to teachers for innovative teaching practices. There are 22 provincial specialist associations within the B.C.T.F. through which teachers can pursue their specific professional interests. The B.C.T.F. provides all members each year with a summary of the salaries paid by all school districts in the province. This year's summary will be published in the March issue of the B.C. Teacher. The B.C.T.F. is promoting the development of curricula at the school district level. The B.C.T.F. campaign on class sizes virtually eliminated classes of more than 40 students. The maximum classroom teacher's salary in 1947, the year the B.C.T.F. gained automatic membership was \$4,400 a year. In 1971 the maximum class room teacher's salary is \$15,118.<sup>11</sup>

An example of the B.C.T.F.'s growth in capacity was the increase in the number of policy and procedure statements. For example, from 1953-1963, 34 policy statements and 35 procedure statements were made by the B.C.T.F. From 1964-1974, 215 policy statements and 210 procedure statements were made.<sup>12</sup> Such statements are made by Annual General Meetings, meetings of the Representative Assembly, and the



Executive, or a combination of these. It would be difficult to find a category not covered by the organization's policies and procedures. Policy statements range from such seemingly obvious statements as 1.A.01 - "(a) A supervisor, to be effective, must enjoy the confidence of those supervised." to such loaded statements as 37.01 - "That the B.C.T.F. go on record as being opposed to the continuation of nuclear weapons testing ('62 A.G.M., P. 44 & Reviewed Nov. '73 Ex p 3) and "That the B.C.T.F. voice its opposition to any further uranium mine site developments in British Columbia, until a judicial inquiry has been held." (Jan.'78 Representative Assembly).

From the beginning of the period in question until its end in 1972, the B.C.T.F. progressed from an organization concerned with lobbying for the teachers, to a militant and highly organized, partisan force in the political system in British Columbia. The membership alone increased from 16,000 in 1966 to over 22,000 in 1972, in spite of the fact that the government had taken away provisions for automatic membership. An indication of how important the federation was to most teachers was the fact that when it was no longer mandatory to belong to the organization, only 69 teachers chose not to renew their memberships.<sup>14</sup> The increase in wealth was partly as a result of the increase in membership and partly the result of increases in membership fees and the institution of levies. It is quite possible that the B.C.T.F. would not have become as large and as wealthy if the government had been more

sympathetic to what the teachers saw as necessary in the education system. When the government refused to comply with the teachers' demands to lower pupil-teacher ratios, proceed with planned school construction, increase retired teachers' benefits, change the finance formula and provide for free collective bargaining, teachers were willing to provide funds for political protest purposes. Increases in membership fees allowed the budget of the organization to double in six years while the membership increased by only 33 percent. With its high degree of expertise, organization and resources in terms of money and the potential to raise money, the B.C.T.F. became a force to reckon with in the B.C. political system. When the resources of the Federation were mobilized for the purpose of defeating the government, even an injunction could not staunch the flow of anti-government propaganda and political action mounted by the teachers under the leadership of their organization.

## CHAPTER TWO - FOOTNOTES

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7. "Education Big Issue in Upcoming Campaign", British Columbia Teachers' Federation Newsletter, Vol. 8 No. 9, June 1969, p. 8.
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## CHAPTER THREE

## A POWER STRUGGLE AND THE BIRTH OF T.P.A.C.

It has been established that there was an internal change in the B.C.T.F. in that it became more wealthy and more professional in the 1960's. There were also other internal changes during that period. These were the result of a power struggle, and a victory of the left over the right in 1972.

In March, 1979, the author conducted interviews with several members of the Executive Committee who had held office in the B.C.T.F. during the late 1960's and early 1970's. They claimed that there was a power struggle between C.D. Ovans, who was the General Secretary from 1945-1973, and the Executive Committees. Constitutionally, the Executive Committee had the power--according to By-Law no. 5.3, "Subject to by-laws 6, 8, 9 and 14, the Executive Committee shall exercise all the powers of the federation, the direction and supervision of the business and the conduct of the affairs of the federation."<sup>1</sup> However, the Executive Committees did not really begin to exercise that power until the mid-1960's, when several strong presidents came into power; these were J.H. Robertson (1966/67), Bob Buzza (1967/68), and subsequent presidents, especially Jim Killeen (1969/70), who responded to a real movement from the teachers themselves for a more political stance (according to an interview with present President Al Blakey). General Secretary C.D. Ovans had been against the

teachers taking political action. In some ways, he had become a restraining influence on some of the more militant members in the Federation. But now, while retaining the position of General Secretary, he ceased to be the major spokesman for the organization. He lost much of his influence in policy-making, and became sort of a "resident philosopher".

C.D. Ovans had been quite a radical when he first joined the B.C.T.F. in the 1930's. But he obtained the position of Assistant General Secretary in 1942 and that of General Secretary in 1945; and thereafter he became more interested in furthering the cause of education itself, than in any other consideration. He had very definite views on education, and some of his ideas were innovative to the point of being radical. When he retired in 1973, he settled down to write a book about his views on education-- Behind the Looking Glass: Toward the Educating Society. He had an intense interest in bettering education, and he was an advocate of professionalism, who felt that teachers should not take overt political action. He was against teachers striking.<sup>2</sup> There has long been a philosophical argument among teachers; it deals with the idea of professionalism versus unionism. Some teachers believe that teachers are professionals and as such, they should not stoop to the tactics of ordinary union members. Others feel that their organizations are true unions, and as such should have the betterment of the lot of teachers as their

main objective. Ovans was one who subscribed to the idea that the B.C.T.F. was a professional organization. This did not mean that he did not criticize the government and its policies; he did so consistently. But he stopped at the idea of mounting a political campaign against the Social Credit government as such. That was taboo. Ovans had been the General Secretary for a long period of time, and with his wealth of experience, came the exercise of influence. When he lost that influence, when the power struggle was won by the elected representatives, he felt his function in the B.C.T.F. was virtually over, and he retired in 1973. In his book, he was quite frank about the reasons:

The third turning point came in 1968 when the B.C. Teachers' Federation in annual convention in creating a fund to make education an issue in the forthcoming provincial election took the first step toward politicization. Within three years the process was complete; power in the organization had been firmly won and tightly held by elected officers who were politically oriented. I do not claim or maintain that the organization was wrong in this change in direction. The change was openly and fairly made as a democratic expression of the will of the membership. For the first time in my thirty-year career as the secretary, however, the "trajectory" of my personal life and that of the life of the organization did not coincide. In my view a teachers' organization that professes a concern for education should use an educational, not a political model in pursuing its objectives. The educational model for effectiveness depends on persuasion; the political one that teachers were favoring on coercion . . . I was not prepared to change my "life plan"; therefore I took the easy way out in early retirement.<sup>3</sup>

Jim Killeen was a strong president who held office from 1969-1971. During his term in office (in 1970) the salary of the President was increased, and the position of First Vice President was made full time and paid. In 1969-1970, Adam Robertson was First Vice President; in his younger days, he had been a member of the Rural Teachers' Association, which had ties with the C.C.F. Party and organized labor. In the background by this time, were some real radicals, anxious to change the B.C.T.F. and aiding and abetting the "elected" side of the struggle. With Ovans losing influence, Jim MacFarlan, a self-professed Communist and social activist and his friend, Gary Onstad, often called a "Marxist N.D.P.er", entered the fray. They were both members of the Burnaby Teachers' Association, which along with the Vancouver Elementary Teachers' Association, had a reputation for being left-wing radical and militant.

In 1968, the year the Annual General Meeting was held in Penticton, a group of radical delegates including MacFarlan met the evening before the meeting started and agreed that the B.C.T.F. was not taking the political action it should to fight the education formula. The group managed to have the matter included as Number One on the Agenda for the following day. As a result of the ensuing discussion, a resolution was made to levy \$3.00 on the membership to be used later for political action.

In an interview with the author, MacFarlan said that he felt that the 1968 resolution to levy \$3.00 was very significant, in that it gave teachers a clear understanding that they had a right to take political action. Many of those the author talked to also mentioned

the 1968 Annual General Meeting with its \$3.00 levy as a definite turning point in the organization. For the first time, the organization really was determined to take concrete political action; the levy was something that everyone was obliged to participate in. C.D. Ovans called it the "first step toward politicization." With the money from the levy, the B.C.T.F. launched its Apple Campaign before the 1969 election. One of the purposes of the campaign was to get public support for the repealing of the finance formula. This purpose was not achieved, but the experience was, according to MacFarlan, "a huge step in the politicization of the membership." President Adam Robertson felt that subsequent action taken by the government were in retaliation for the teachers' Apple Campaign. This was a view shared with 1971 President Jim Killeen and M.L.A. Bob Wenman. Killeen wrote after the government's removal of the B.C.T.F.'s automatic membership, "One of the main reasons for the government's desire to clip the Federation's wings, was the Federation's 'apple campaign' in the 1969 provincial election, a campaign designed to make education an issue in that election, not to attack or promote any political party."<sup>4</sup> Bob Wenman said in an interview with the author in 1979, "There was an element of retribution" in the Socred's measures to remove the automatic membership, and the Apple Campaign had backfired on the teachers. He added that it was popular at that time to "break the backs of unions."



MacFarlan felt that the government facilitated the politicization of the membership by failing to provide an adequate pension plan for the retired teachers. Adam Robertson, President in 1972, claimed that the pension returns for the retired were the worst in the country at the time; B.C. was number 10 province as far as teachers' pensions were concerned. It was on March 19, 1971 that teachers all over the province went out on one-day strike; but while MacFarlan called this event the "second nodal point in the radicalization of the B.C.T.F.," Gary Onstad felt that the one-day strike was a compromise for the radicals. He said that, in order to get the teachers to go along with the strike, a lot of hard backroom work had to be done, convincing the teachers that it was the right thing to do. However, when they did become convinced, Onstad said, it turned out to be the most important event in the process of the radicalization of the teachers. They felt that they were doing something selfless--they were striking for their retired colleagues, and they saw that it was really possible to get together and take collective action. After that, said Onstad, it was much easier to get the teachers to participate in militant actions. In an interview in 1979, Adam Robertson said that the one-day strike embarrassed Premier Bennett, because until then, the Premier had always had a reputation for taking good care of oldsters. Robertson felt that later measures taken by the government against the B.C.T.F. were partly as a result of this strike, and Bennett's

reaction to it. MacFarlan felt that the strike was "99% successful" and that its impact was to radicalize the association permanently. He claimed that the two events--the passage of the \$3.00 levy in 1968 and the strike in 1971, were essential preconditions to what happened in 1972. All these opinions were given to the author in interviews in March, 1979.

Another significant action taken by the teachers was the passing (at the urging of the Executive Committee) of the one-day levy at the Annual General Meeting of 1972, when the "unity" coalition was in action. In 1970, MacFarlan was elected a Member-at-Large. In 1971, he and Gary Onstad ran for office. Instead of submitting autobiographies to the B.C.T.F. Newsletter as the other candidates did, they submitted political statements. The editor refused to publish them, so MacFarlan and Onstad had their statements printed at their own expense and distributed them to about 1,000 members each. They were both elected; Onstad as a Member-at-Large, and MacFarlan as First Vice President. MacFarlan told the author that there were two "leftists" in the Executive Committee then--he and Onstad; that that there were also two "liberal leftists", two "right wingers" and two in the middle; the rest were "floaters."<sup>5</sup> MacFarlan and Onstad undertook to develop radicalism in the organization. There ensued a struggle over what to do about the measures being taken by the government; the struggle finally culminated in the decision to recommend to the

1972 Annual General Meeting a levy of one day's pay as a contribution for the purpose of taking political action against the Socreds.

In 1972, Macfarlan was entitled to run for President, but, knowing that a provincial election was pending, he decided that it would be better if he did not run, but instead formed a "unity" coalition and supported Adam Robertson in another term as President. MacFarlan said that if he had run for President, it would have polarized the membership, and they might not have been so co-operative in the impending anti-Socred campaign. MacFarlan tried to get Frank Roemer (Second Vice President) not to run either. He wanted the whole Executive Committee to unite and stand behind the collection of the one-day levy for the purpose of defeating the Socred government. Roemer ran and lost, but the "coalition" managed to get the Representative Assembly and the delegates at the 1972 Annual General Meeting to pass the one-day levy for political action. It was passed by a vote of 495-84.<sup>6</sup>

Collecting the one-day levy netted the B.C.T.F. almost one million dollars. Two Socred members of the B.C.T.F., Barker and Hale from Victoria, sought and obtained an injunction on June 30, 1972. The injunction, issued in the Supreme Court, restrained the B.C.T.F. from collecting the rest of the levy and prevented the association from using any of the funds already collected.

By that time, however, the B.C.T.F. had put \$10,000 into opposition education critic Eileen Dailly's election campaign. Some

other money had already been spent, but the rest was frozen. This meant that the preparations the B.C.T.F. had made for the election campaign at the end of August could not be carried out. The Executive met and tried to decide what to do. Since they weren't allowed to take political action in the name of the B.C.T.F., they left the B.C.T.F. building, rented a room in the Rembrandt Hotel, and formed the Teachers' Political Action Committee, or T.P.A.C., as it became known. They incorporated the Committee under the Societies' Act. They collected money for political action from teachers and other interested citizens. Within a week they had \$85,000. \$25,000 of that amount was used for radio ads, overtly against the Socred government and advocating its defeat. The rest of the money was spent mostly to sponsor candidates who were running against the Social Credit government. In most constituencies they sponsored N.D.P. candidates, but the idea was to sponsor the candidate most likely to defeat the Socred candidate. Thirty-three of the thirty-six successful N.D.P. candidates in the 1972 election had been sponsored by T.P.A.C. Some Liberals, including Patrick McGeer and Garde Gardom, were also sponsored. Money was also sent by T.P.A.C. to Conservative Leader Scott Wallace for his campaign, but he sent it back, saying that he didn't want the support of any particular group. The amounts given to candidates were quite substantial, with some receiving up to \$4,000.<sup>7</sup> While it is difficult to assess the impact of the support of T.P.A.C. on candidates receiving money, no doubt the N.D.P.

candidates at least benefited, because that party was traditionally short of money for campaign purposes. MacFarlan claimed in an interview with the author that at least 6 of the candidates got into power entirely because of the teachers. He felt that the new N.D.P. government had a "huge debt" to pay the teachers for their support during the campaign.

Besides providing support for candidates, T.P.A.C. formed alliances with some trade unions. The Hospital Employees' Union donated its offices to T.P.A.C. for use as a mailing headquarters. T.P.A.C. provided a leadership role in the election campaign, helping other trade unions to take collective action against the government by giving advice, providing examples of ads, etc. Some patterned their campaigns on that of T.P.A.C. The Chairman of T.P.A.C. was Gary Onstad, and the co-chairman was Bill Broadley, a Liberal. This was done deliberately, so that T.P.A.C. wouldn't look like an N.D.P. organization, Gary Onstad told the author.

T.P.A.C. was very well organized and took over the political action committees which had been started by the B.C.T.F. as part of its political campaign in connection with the one-day levy. There was a network of political action committees throughout the province, and in spite of the fact that the election campaign was in the summer when teachers were off on holidays, (it was called on July 24 for August 30), it was later estimated by those involved that 3,500 teachers took part in the campaign to defeat the Social Credit government.

They volunteered their help in N.D.P. constituency offices, campaigned from door to door, gave out political campaign material, and in some constituencies did more to support N.D.P. candidates than the party workers themselves. Gary Onstad believed that the N.D.P. party members were by and large not optimistic about winning the election, and therefore did not work as hard at it as they could have. First Vice President Jim MacFarlan co-ordinated the activities of the political action committees, and consolidated a network of "left" people. The whole thing was a grass roots movement; in the words of Gary Onstad, "beautiful." Al Blakey, from the militant Vancouver Elementary Teachers' Association, ran the T.P.A.C. office and Gary Onstad did the political speech-making, talked at and organized political rallies, all-candidates meetings, etc. The group took public opinion polls, and if they found out that Premier Bennett was unpopular in a particular area, they would capitalize on that information in their campaign. Several groups who allied themselves with T.P.A.C. were the Pensioners For Action Now Committee, and the newly-formed Unemployed Teachers' Federation; they participated in the campaign and Gary Onstad was the liaison to them.<sup>8</sup>

In an article in This Magazine is About Schools published in the fall of 1972 after the defeat of the Socreds, it was reported,

On the whole T.P.A.C. was quite successful in carrying out the election plans made by the B.C.T.F. They spent \$25,000 on an advertising campaign on radio and gave financial support to

36 candidates. They had to use volunteers rather than paid staff, but this may not necessarily have been a bad thing. It could well be that more teachers became politicized, knowing that the campaign depended on their voluntary efforts, rather than on a masterplan directed and financed by the Federation.<sup>9</sup>

By looking at the prime movers in the T.P.A.C. organization, it can be seen that the radicals were prevalent. MacFarlan never made a secret of his affiliations; in his farewell speech as President in 1975, he addressed the Annual General Meeting, saying,

During those four years some of my political opponents both within and without the Federation have called me a militant, a socialist, a marxist, a radical. Well, although those terms were used by frightened people, I have never attempted to deny those allegations because they are all true. I am proud of the fact that some of the most conservative and reactionary elements among our colleagues have chosen to criticize me on this basis.<sup>10</sup>

Gary Onstad, who mentioned in an interview that many called him a "marxist N.D.P.er", was Chairman of T.P.A.C. Al Blakey, of the militant Vancouver Elementary Schools Association, was in charge of the office of T.P.A.C. (he was later to become President of the B.C.T.F. in 1979). Blakey was head of the Vancouver group when it was awarded the first learning conditions contract given out in a B.C. school district. It had been a big battle for the B.C.T.F. to get teachers to demand good learning conditions, such as smaller classes. It was Vancouver and Burnaby, the two most radical teachers' organizations in the province, that got the first learning conditions

contracts.<sup>11</sup> In an interview in 1979, Gary Onstad said that making the teachers aware that they should be working for good learning conditions was essential to the politicization of the teachers, and that it had been a struggle, because teachers tended to be martyrs and put up with whatever was given them, without doing anything about it.

In an interview with Jim MacFarlan in 1979, he told the author it would be a mistake to assume that it was purely the actions of the government that brought about the militancy and radicalization of the members of the B.C.T.F. He said that there had been a long history of leftist activity in the B.C.T.F., just as there is in the history of B.C. itself. The B.C.T.F. was the first teachers' organization in Canada to strike, and in the early 1930's there were many radicals and leftists in the organization, particularly in the Rural Teachers' Organization, who were experiencing bad conditions and lower pay than their urban contemporaries. Ovans himself was one of those radicals. MacFarlan said that there were radical members in the 1940's as well, who were active in the organization and took leadership positions. Two of these were John Sutherland and John Prior--they later became Presidents of the Canadian Teachers' Association. There were some very bitter struggles in the 1930's, and these spawned militant leftist action that was to continue in the B.C.T.F. into the 1940's. Then there was a dying down of radicalism



in the B.C.T.F. in the 1950's with the McCarthy era, but in the early 1960's it began to come back. For example, in 1961 a group of members of the B.C.T.F. got together and paid for an ad in the newspaper protesting nuclear weapons. Later in the 1960's radicals and leftists took positions on the Executive Committee, and continued to try to radicalize the Federation membership. MacFarlan said that many of the leftists in the organization who were taking positions of leadership came out of families with a long experience in the trade union movement, the C.C.F. Party or the Communist Party. He felt that the leftist tendencies were a continuum--that the radicalization of the B.C.T.F. was not a phenomenon associated entirely with the actions of the Social Credit government, but a tradition in the B.C.T.F. that was "dormant but not dead."<sup>12</sup>

On election night in 1972 when the Socreds were defeated by the N.D.P. Party, a reporter present at B.C.T.F. headquarters wrote,

Many of the older teachers present are visibly moved by the N.D.P. victory. In talking to them I discover that many of them had been active in the founding of the C.C.F. party forty years ago, which was a forerunner to the N.D.P. They had also been members of the radical teachers' caucus in the B.C.T.F. in the 'thirties' and 'forties', which had forged closer ties with teachers and organized labor.<sup>13</sup>

MacFarlan felt that the radicalization which manifested itself in the B.C.T.F. in the 1960's and early 1970's caused a profound change in the organization; it became more militant, more politicized, and now (1979) manifested a social conscience. A very active status of

women organization was instituted with a full-time paid staff member, and the women's group was radical and willing to take political action. The antiracism program in the B.C.T.F. also had its roots in the period under question. MacFarlan felt that the radicalization helped to make teachers more aware of social issues and gave them the idea that they could do something about them.<sup>14</sup>

Another change that came about in the organization, was that the "unity coalition" formed before the 1972 election soon fell apart after the N.D.P. got into power. They had a falling out over tactics, with Adam Robertson wanting to leave the new government alone, but MacFarlan demanding his pound of flesh. In spite of the fact that Robertson attacked MacFarlan publicly in the next executive election campaign, MacFarlan won the Presidency in 1973.<sup>15</sup>

MacFarlan felt that the change in the B.C.T.F. came about as a "complex dialectic of a combination of external threat, growing militancy on the part of the teachers, and the influence of radical members who were long-standing radicals and did not just become that way because of what the government did in the way of education policy." He said that now (1979) there is a large, mass-based left caucus in the B.C.T.F. that plays a big role and has a powerful voice in the organization. It collects fees of \$10 (actually a donation) from its members, and publishes a fortnightly newsletter called "Teacher Viewpoint" which is critical of the rest of the B.C.T.F. MacFarlan claimed that the radical wing of the federation is a coalition of

liberal humanists and revolutionaries; not the usual trade union militancy, but in fact, more radical.

The radicals in the B.C.T.F. influenced the Executive and the membership to take partisan political action. They were behind getting the membership to pass the \$3.00 levy in 1968 for political action, they were instrumental in introducing the one-day salary levy for political campaigning, they formed a coalition for the sake of unity against the Socreds, and they organized T.P.A.C. for the final rout of the government. However, in spite of the leftist influences within the Federation, present President Al Blakey when interviewed in March, 1979, did not feel that the B.C.T.F. was as radical as most unions in B.C. The radicals did win out in 1972, but he claimed that now the organization is polarized, with fluctuations in control--sometimes the radicals win out, and sometimes the conservatives do. However, he did say that the whole spectrum of views in the B.C.T.F. has shifted to a more radical position, relatively speaking.

It seems apparent that the elected representatives of the B.C.T.F. won a power struggle with the General Secretary. This led to the further struggle between the right and the left in the organization, with the left winning out in 1972 before the provincial election. The decision of the Executive to give up its non-partisan stance and advocate the defeat of the Socreds was arrived at after a struggle between the militants and the moderates within the Executive Committee.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

## THE EFFECT OF SOCIETAL TRENDS ON THE B.C.T.F.

While the power struggle and the democratization of the B.C.T.F. played a part in influencing the Federation to become more radical and partisan, societal trends seemed also to affect the organization. The late 1960's and early 1970's were times of rapid change. This was the era of the hippies, the anti-Vietnam War protest, the student radicalization, and the rejection of old ways of doing things, even in the field of education. The old concepts of rigid examinations, rote learning, and basic subjects, was being rejected for a new "do-your-own-thing" philosophy. Teachers were not immune to these shifts. They too questioned old values; they too changed their ideas about things and dared to become more militant. Charles A. Reich, writing in his popular book The Greening of America (1970), described it as an important revolutionary period:

But if we think of all that is now challenged-- the nature of education, the very validity of institutionalism and the legal system, the nature and purpose of work, the course of man's dealing with environment, the relationship of self to technology and society--we can see that the present transformation goes beyond anything in modern history. Beside it, a mere revolution, such as the French or the Russian, seems inconsequential--a shift in the base of power . . .<sup>1</sup>

While changes were going on all around, and in spite of this forceful trend for new ideas that was prevalent all over North America

Socred politicians seemed to remain in the same old mold. How could the teachers support Socred M.L.A. Don Campbell, who was reported on March 2, 1972, in the Vancouver Province to have said in the Legislature, "The man in the street is fed up with professional people in the school system--all those tippy-tap people running about planning music and art and all that baloney"? Clearly, the Social Credit government, while following what it saw as the taxpayers' concern with the increase in the cost of education, failed to take into consideration other, equally important trends in society. If ever there was a cult of youth, now was the time--a new consciousness was developing, thought Charles Reich: one that was young, enlightened, surely more humanitarian than the old consciousness:

For this same reason, more and more of the older generation will change allegiance from the forces of repression to the forces of change. Every new consciousness person becomes an evangelist seeking new converts. Many young people have already succeeded in converting one or both of their parents or older brothers and sisters, and a growing number of older people have<sup>2</sup> experienced a change of consciousness on their own.

While this "new consciousness" seemed to be sweeping the North American continent, Bennett's government continued with the old way of doing things. The forces of change did not seem to be penetrating the cabinet; Bennett himself still felt he knew what was best for the people of B.C. For example, when a campaign was held in Kelowna (the Premier's own riding) to protest overcrowding in the schools and the

subsequent institution of shifts, Bennett claimed that "the school situation in and around Kelowna was not serious at all" and blamed the school board for failing to convey governmental policy to the people. When questioned about the effects of shifts on family life, Premier Bennett said that people will just "have to learn to adapt to shifting."<sup>3</sup> There were several groups participating in the campaign for more school construction in School District No. 23 at the time; the city council, the school board, P.T.A. groups, Kelowna's Chamber of Commerce, and the Citizens' Action for Education Committee. That the public was behind the need for an increase in school spending is evidenced by the fact that a few days after the Premier's visit to them, a capital referendum for schools was passed with an 81% majority in District 23. Four out of the district's six secondary schools were to be on shift that fall (1970), and a new secondary school was being built without a gymnasium. Bennett's hard line on school spending and his apparent paternalism in the matter of public dissatisfaction due to those policies, indicated that he was out of tune with the times; the old well-established ties to the grass roots which were so important to the Socreds during their rise to power and their long tenure in that position, seemed to be breaking down.

Those groups in Kelowna who lobbied Bennett were not the only disaffected groups in B.C. By 1972 all public sector employees seemed determined to get a better deal for themselves. The government, rather than giving in a little, assumed a combative stance, just as it had done

with the teachers. When the doctors asked for permission to raise fees on their fee guide, the government had their gross salaries before expenses published in the newspapers. This gave the public the idea that the doctors were rapacious in their demands; and it alienated the doctors from the government and much of the public. A hard line on salary increases for other sectors of public employees and the introduction of Bill 3 in 1972 brought together most of the groups who felt let down by the Socred government. The Collective Bargaining Defence Committee, made up of members of the B.C.T.F., the B.C. Government Employees' Union, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Hospital Employees' Union, the Psychiatric Nurses' Association of B.C., and the College Faculty Association, provided a rallying point for other trade union members as well, and served to bring the attention of the public to their demands and their impatience with the old Socred government. The rally in the P.N.E. Garden Auditorium on March 9, 1972, with its 3,500 in attendance and the pledge of 155,000 members of the B.C. Federation of Labor to support the teachers in their fight, should have been a warning to the Socred administration that they had lost touch with a dangerously large section of the public. Instead, Bill 3 was passed a few weeks after the Rally, on March 27.<sup>4</sup>

The Social Credit government, after having served the province for 20 years, retained many of the same personnel who had been with the original group in the 1950's. In 1972, out of 17 cabinet ministers,



5 had been with the original Socred government when it attained power in 1952, and 3 more had joined in 1953; the average length of cabinet experience was 15 years, and the average age of the cabinet ministers was 55. Bennett himself, while claiming to be ten years younger than his chronological age because he neither smoked nor drank, at 72 was visibly beginning to age. Many predicted that he would soon have to step down as leader of the Socreds, and some feared that Phil Gaglardi, colorful renegade, would be the next leader. This fear did much to shake the confidence of the public in the old Socred administration. For a society trying to "look young" the Socred cabinet, with its youngest member Pat Jordan at 41, and its oldest William Chant at 77, seemed out of step. The Socreds were beginning to look old and tired. It seemed to be time for a change.

B.C. was not the only province to sweep out an old government and vote in a new one. Within the space of 3 years, virtually every Western province changed its government. In Manitoba in 1969, the Conservatives were voted out after 11 years and the province's first N.D.P. government took office. In Saskatchewan, in 1971 the 7-year Liberal government was voted out in favor of the N.D.P. In Alberta, the Socreds lost their 36-year grip on the electorate and a Conservative government was voted into power in 1971. B.C. was the last in the West to try a new administration, with the rejection of the Socreds and the espousal of the dreaded Socialists in 1972.

While the Socred government in B.C. in the early 1970's seemed unable to appreciate the importance of the "new consciousness" as Reich described it, it did become very sensitive to what it perceived to be the beginning of a revolt of taxpayers against the escalating costs of education. Donald Brothers, speaking on the nefarious Bill 3, began his speech thus:

The 7th Annual Report of the Economic Council of Canada says: "If the costs of education and health services continue to rise at the rate they have for the last five years (nine percent per year real growth, not counting inflation) they threaten to absorb the whole of the gross national product by the end of the century. . . ."5

Using this introduction and making it sound legitimate with the quote from the Economic Council of Canada, Brothers predicted that the budget for education, health and social services at an increase of 15% per year, would before 1980, surpass the total budget.<sup>6</sup> He said, "In short, if present cost increases are allowed to continue, there will be no funds left for all the other Provincial services. This is the same warning for British Columbia that was given to Canada by the Economic Council of Canada."

There was a trend at this time for governments all across Canada and the United States to re-examine school costs and to attempt to control them. The 1960's had been a time of expansion in school costs, largely at the post-secondary level as junior colleges were built and universities expanded to take care of the spiralling enrollment.

For example, in 1950, the total number of university students in Canada was 68,306. By 1958, the number had increased to 94,994; but by 1964, the number was 178,238. A study done by Dr. E.F. Sheffield for the Dominion Bureau of Statistics projected an even greater increase in the years from 1965 - 1970-71 of from 178,238 to 340,400. By 1974-1975, he expected the enrollment to be 461,000.<sup>7</sup> Even at these fantastic rates of increase, he underestimated, because actual enrollment in 1969-70 was 474,418.<sup>8</sup> Governments were having difficulty controlling education spending, and the dialogue between teachers and governments became very forceful as governments tried to impose ceilings on school board budgets. In his speech in the Legislature over Bill 3 in March, 1972, Education Minister Donald Brothers mentioned cutbacks elsewhere: "Other provinces in Canada have also taken steps to restrain the rate at which their teachers' salaries are allowed to increase each year. Nova Scotia has a 5 percent ceiling on teachers' pay increases, while Alberta has a 6.6 percent guideline. Recently I have been advised that the Province of Quebec has also fixed a 5 percent ceiling on teachers' salaries for this year."<sup>9</sup> So while the Socreds may have been out of tune with the times in other matters, they were more than willing to institute budget restraints they observed elsewhere!

While these limits were being placed on education spending and teachers' salaries, the teachers nowhere took the circumstances lying down. In This Magazine is about Schools (Fall 1972) it was reported,

1972 has been a year of confrontation between teachers' organizations and provincial governments across the nation.

In Nova Scotia, teachers have held demonstrations, walkouts, work-to-rule campaigns and a strike vote in their fight with Finance and Education Minister Peter Nicholson over a 5 per-cent wage-increase ceiling. . . .

In Quebec, teachers joined workers' unions in negotiating with the government on common demands, and their leaders went to jail with C.N.T.U. and Q.F.L. leaders. . . .

In Toronto and near-by municipalities the proposed cuts in the education budget brought a storm of protest from teachers. After a number of rallies, demonstrations and work stoppages, the provincial government backed down sufficiently to cool out the situation.

Both in Saskatchewan and Newfoundland hundreds of teachers campaign actively to defeat governments notorious for their anti-education policies.<sup>10</sup>

The teachers in Quebec were particularly militant and, in 1971 joined with other unions in the public sector to present a common front. The Quebec Teachers' Union (C.E.Q.) had become radicalized; in an article about the growth of the C.E.Q., it was said, "Barely three years ago the idea of a common front in the public service would have been a joke to the majority of teachers. Today, it is a fait accompli. In itself, such a common front has the initial advantage of bringing teachers much closer to all Quebec unionists. And for many, it will logically open the way, some time in the future, for one further necessity; the establishment of a new socio-economic system, where the possessing class will cease to dominate everything, including the government."<sup>11</sup> Yvon Charbonneau, who was president of the C.E.Q. in 1970 and 1971, had been an influence on Jim MacFarlan, according to

MacFarlan himself.

Given the cutbacks on education spending in the rest of Canada and the militant responses of the teachers involved, the actions of the B.C. Teachers' Federation can be viewed as right in step with the times; the revolutionary times, the end of teacher apathy and the beginning of teacher militancy. In 1971, the C.E.Q. developed a "White Paper", discussed it at its 25th Anniversary, and, with only an amendment to its major recommendation, adopted its other six recommendations. The major recommendation was, "The C.E.Q. takes as its principle and as its general line of action, that its organization as a union--the struggles it pursues and the interests it defends--to be placed at the centre of the workers' movement, whose goal is a profound transformation of the present economic, social and political organization. (of society sic)"<sup>12</sup> This is similar in tune to MacFarlan's pronouncements in his retiring speech to the B.C.T.F. in 1975--"I believe our Federation is now permanently and unalterably committed to the idea that we have a collective social responsibility. This means we are obliged to become involved in the political processes in our society . . . . Our Federation can become, and in fact, has become an agency for social change."<sup>13</sup> The whole idea of a change in the socio-economic structure of society, participated in and perhaps led by militant teachers, had become acceptable to radical teachers' groups in the late 1960's and early 1970's.

The radicalization of the B.C.T.F. was part of a trend being experienced across Canada. The questioning and rejection of old values and old ways of doing things contributed to the idea of teachers that they should no longer accept government decisions at face value. "However, the provincial governments are also discovering that the teacher in the seventies is no longer the meek creature of the hungry thirties and patriotic forties, used to going cap-in-hand to the local school board, pleading for a raise. Better paid and better educated than his colleagues of an earlier era, he is not taking a reduction either in his standard of living or in his democratic rights lying down."<sup>14</sup>

To no little extent, then, the changes in the B.C.T.F. were the result of influences from society at the time--including influences from other groups in the public sector and influences from teachers' groups across the country. The other Western provinces changed governments in an attempt to find new solutions to old questions, and B.C. followed suit. The B.C. Teachers' Federation, like its radical counterpart in Quebec, gave up non-partisanship and took a militant stance against a government it felt to be no longer adequate.

#### CHAPTER FOUR - FOOTNOTES

1. C.A. Reich, The Greening of America, New York, Bantam Books, 1970, p. 380.
2. Ibid., p. 338.
3. "School Shifts 'Acceptable' - Bennett", British Columbia Teachers' Federation Newsletter, Vol. 9 No. 11, May 1970, p. 1.
4. "Bill 3 - Teachers' Pearl Harbour", British Columbia Teachers' Federation Newsletter, Vol. 11 No. 13, April 1972, p. 1.
5. Donald Brothers "Speech to the Legislature on Bill 3", p. 1.
6. Ibid., pp. 11-15.
7. Bladen et al, Commission on the Financing of Higher Education in Canada, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1965, p. 16;  
and S.G. Peitchinins, Financing Post Secondary Education in Canada, University of Calgary, 1971, p. 94.
8. Loc. cit.
9. Donald Brothers "Speech to the Legislature on Bill 3", p. 5.
10. Satu Repo, "B.C. Teachers Turn Political," This Magazine is about Schools, Vol. 6 No. 3, Fall, 1972, p. 22
11. J. LeBlanc, "Becoming Political: The Growth of the Quebec Teachers Union," This Magazine is about Schools, Vol. 6 No. 1 Spring 1972, p. 22.
12. Ibid., p. 20.
13. J. MacFarlan, "Report of the President to the 1975 Annual General Meeting", Vancouver, 27 March 1975, p. 14.
14. J. LeBlanc, op. cit., p. 23.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## DEPARTMENTAL INFLUENCES ON THE B.C.T.F.

While it would be difficult to say that actual Education Department incompetence contributed to the change in the B.C.T.F., there was plenty of evidence that relations between the two were not good. Soon after Donald Brothers became Education Minister in May of 1968, there seemed to be a breakdown in communications between the teachers and the Minister. A combative stance was adopted by the Minister in his dealings with the B.C.T.F. At his first meeting with the Representative Assembly, Brothers established his confrontative attitude, declaring that he believed in "eyeball to eyeball confrontation". By the time of the B.C.T.F. Annual General Meeting in March, 1970, Brothers was jeered openly by the delegates as he gave his annual speech.

If the Education Minister had introduced cutbacks on school costs with a velvet glove and not done unnecessary things to antagonize the teachers, it is quite possible that they would not have become so militant and turned so definitely against the Social Credit government. For example, Brothers' introduction of the proposed amendment to the Public Schools Act in the spring of 1971 preventing teachers from running for school boards in the districts they taught in was unwise. It made the teachers feel as if they were being singled out as a group and denied their democratic right to run for public office. They received



sympathy from the general public over it. One reporter wrote,

"Brothers Keeper - The provincial government appears to have little faith in the democratic process insofar as election of school trustees is concerned. To disallow school teachers from running for seats on school boards, even outside of the districts in which they teach, is a retrograde move. . . Teachers have good reason to be upset over the government's action. It indicates a lack of faith in the integrity of the profession. Some will look upon it as a childish move - and who better than they understand the ways of the immature?"<sup>1</sup>

Later, Brothers withdrew that section of the amendment after pressure from the public. But in the meantime, he antagonized teachers unduly in his attempt to exclude them from running for school board.

Another unpopular move, and one which surely was not in the interest of directly saving the province money on education, was the removal by legislation of the automatic membership provisions in the B.C.T.F. This was the removal of a right which the teachers had held for 24 years, and which most saw as essential to the ability of the teachers to police themselves--because removal of membership had, until that time, meant removal of a teacher from his job. The removal of automatic B.C.T.F. membership was a move by the Minister to destroy the unity of the Federation, and as such it antagonized the teachers, but it did not accomplish its goal. Only 69 teachers of the membership of over 22,000 chose not to renew their memberships in the B.C.T.F.<sup>2</sup> The rest continued to pay their dues and the main reaction to the Minister's

amendment was anger--anger which was later transferred into militancy as other measures were taken to alienate the teachers. Some felt that the threat posed by the amendment served to unify the Federation more than ever.

When the Education Minister introduced Bill 3 early in 1972, it seemed to the teachers again that they were being singled out as a group and submitted to treatment afforded no other group of public employees. This assessment was accurate, because provisions of Bill 3 were that teachers' salary increases above the basic minimum set by the Department of Education would go to referendum. To make matters worse, when Bill 3 was introduced in the legislature, there was no warning beforehand that it would be introduced. Adam Robertson, President of the B.C.T.F. at the time, said, "At six o'clock on January 28, the Minister told me that the Bill had been presented in the legislature. The government's attitude toward teachers was made clear--they don't care what we think." <sup>3</sup> While Bill 3 probably would have saved the government money if it had been implemented (the government fell before it was), the teachers were incensed over the implications. As Adam Robertson said,

Section 15, 16 of Bill 3, an Act to amend the Public Schools Act now before the legislature, give the government the power to limit by regulation the percentage increase that will apply to teachers' salaries.

Any excess granted by negotiation or arbitration would not be binding upon school boards or teachers unless assented to by the owner electors through referendum.

The amendment takes away from teachers their collective bargaining rights. It denies trustees, as duly elected representatives of the people, the authority to exercise responsibility accorded to them in law of acting as employers of teachers.<sup>4</sup>

In Brothers' speech to the legislature on the Second Reading of Bill 3 in March, 1972, he said,

The B.C. Teachers' Federation has expressed opposition to the proposed amendment which allows the local taxpayers to have a voice in salary increases granted annually to teachers. The Federation's complaint applies to two areas; first, they allege that teachers are being discriminated against and are being singled out for punitive restriction on salaries; and, second, they suggest that the local taxpayers will never approve salary increases in excess of the guidelines set out in regulations under the Act . . . The Federation's complaint that teachers are being singled out--when the same approach is not being made with respect to all wage and salary earners--is not factual. The Government is moving on several fronts to reduce the rapid rate of salary increases. We want the people of the Province to know that as a Government we are showing leadership, and we are willing to take the first steps to restrain the inflationary trend of recent years in the hope that private enterprise will follow their example . . . . It is very easy for those who wish unlimited spending for education to say that the Government should provide more funds and the problem of education costs would cease to exist. To this assertion I would answer that education is only one of many services which a Government has to provide with the money it receives from the taxpayers.<sup>5</sup>

Brothers was not a popular minister as far as the teachers were concerned. Even some school trustees felt a certain antagonism toward him. While one trustee told the author he felt Brothers was too

weak to stand up against Premier Bennett and felt that he was simply a mouthpiece for the Premier when it came to school policies, another trustee of that period (who didn't want to be quoted) in an interview, refused to say anything about Brothers except, "It was a lovely morning until you mentioned his name. I'd rather not talk about him at all." The author and a friend, who obtained a meeting with Brothers in 1970 after conducting a protest movement against the freeze on school construction, were shouted at in his office. When questioned on the education policies of the government, he yelled, "Don't talk to me like that! I'm a lawyer!"<sup>6</sup>

Education Minister Donald Brothers may or may not have been a competent minister, but his skills in dealing with the teachers, the B.C.T.F. and others in the education field seemed to be lacking. While the B.C.T.F. may have antagonized him, Brothers' belligerent attitude did not alleviate matters. It did not help that he introduced measures which were seen by the teachers as discriminatory against them as a group. Some of those measures, such as amendments to the Public Schools Act to prevent them from running for the school boards, the removal of automatic membership, and finally Bill 3, were not really necessary if the object was to cut back on school costs. If the rationale behind those measures was to undermine the strength of the B.C.T.F. and cow the teachers, the result was the opposite. Faced with those measures, the B.C.T.F. and its militant executive took strong

action against the government itself, and helped in 1972 to defeat it. In this case, the old adage that nothing draws a people together faster than attack from the outside, was a reality. Nor did the teachers give up their campaign against the government even when a Supreme Court injunction was brought against them using their one-day levy for political action. The creation of T.P.A.C. was proof that the teachers were not to be easily defeated in their determination to bring about a change in administration.

In 1965, a new Deputy Minister of Education was appointed; Dr. G.N. Perry. He was the first Deputy Education Minister who had never been a teacher. During his time in office (until 1970 when he resigned) he was kept very busy implementing the recommendations of the Macdonald Report on Education of 1962. An amendment to the Public Schools Act in 1963 called for the establishment of district and regional colleges. From July, 1965 until September 1970, 8 new colleges were opened up in B.C.:

Vancouver City	- July, 1965
Selkirk	- September, 1965
Okanagan	- September, 1968
Malaspina	- September, 1969
Douglas	- September, 1970
College of New Caledonia	- September, 1969
Cariboo	- September, 1970
Capilano	- September, 1968 <sup>7</sup>

As well, two new universities were instituted--Simon Fraser and the University of Victoria during that period.

With the proliferation of regional colleges and the enormous increase in university students (1961 - 62 enrolment at U.B.C. - 12,649; 1970-71 it was 20,157) it was natural that a great deal of the Deputy Minister's time and efforts were taken up with post-secondary education; this was time and money that might have gone to public schools if there had not been such an increase in attendance at the post-secondary level. According to Statistics Canada, the cost of post-secondary education in B.C. went from \$19,192,000 in 1960 to \$109,476,000 in 1969.<sup>8</sup> The percentage of the total education budget earmarked for elementary and secondary education dropped from 81.9% in 1960-61 to 68.9% in 1969-70. Some felt that Dr. G.N. Perry was dealing with the new colleges at the expense of the public schools. Interviews conducted by the author in 1979 indicated that it was felt by public school teachers and their spokesmen that Perry was not dedicated to public education below the post-secondary level; that he was concerned almost completely with the post-secondary level--that is, with the new junior colleges, and Simon Fraser University, which was coming into being at that time. Ex-B.C.T.F. President Bob Buzza went so far as to say that Perry didn't seem committed to dealing with the public school system, which he felt he had no prior commitment to and that he wasn't really a public spokesman for.

In 1970, both the Deputy Education Minister and the Superintendent of Education, Mr. F.P. Levirs, resigned. After that, Education

Minister Brothers re-organized the Department. The position of Superintendent of Education was eliminated, and those duties transferred to seven assistant superintendents, the Deputy Minister and the Minister himself. Teachers saw this as a move to centralize power in the hands of the Minister. General Secretary C.D. Ovens criticized the move:

The Department of Education bureaucracy is to be restructured. . . . Consider some of the interesting functions the Minister now acquires. Legislation miraculously transforms him from a political figure to a professional educator. By statute, not by expertise, he is competent to control issuance of textbooks and courses of study, to hold district superintendents directly responsible to him for attaining the standard of education he requires, to recommend a reeducation in grant to a school district if its program of studies or quality of instruction is not satisfactory and to make the final decision on dismissal of principals and supervisory personnel.<sup>10</sup>

The re-organization of the Department, the Minister's antagonistic attitude toward the teachers, and the Deputy Minister's preoccupation with post-secondary education had by 1970, alienated the teachers and sowed the seeds of militancy. The government could have avoided some of those things which troubled the teachers, if there had been better communication between them. Brothers could have discussed impending legislation with the B.C.T.F., as former Deputy Minister J.F.K. English and former Education Minister Leslie Peterson had done. Legislation which seemed calculated to destroy

the unity of the teachers was not necessary; it served only to unite the teachers and to make them more determined. The problem of the increase in emphasis on post-secondary education at the expense of public schools was a difficult one to deal with, but perhaps it was unrealistic of the government to expect to keep education costs down to less than 30% of the budget (see Chapter Five) when no other province in Canada was able to do so. This was an especially harsh budget restraint when the increase in pupil enrollment at the public school level alone increased 60% in the ten years from 1962-1972.<sup>11</sup> It necessitated desperate measures, such as the institution of shifts in schools lacking adequate physical accommodation. With all the other difficulties faced in the public school system, this was bound to have the effect of causing an explosion; and in this case it was the teachers, through their organization and its new militant executive who blew up.



CHAPTER FIVE - FOOTNOTES

1. "Brothers Keeper". Victoria Daily Colonist, 3 March, 1971, p. 2.
2. B.C. Teachers' Federation, Members' Guide to the B.C.T.F. 1978/79, p. 75.
3. A. Robertson, "We Won't Live With It", British Columbia Teachers' Federation Newsletter, Vol. 11 No. 9 Special Edition, February 1972, p. 1.
4. Loc. cit.
5. D. Brothers, "Speech to the Legislature on Bill 3:", pp. 4, 5 & 6.
6. J. Smedley et al, interviews with the writer, March 1979.
7. Statistics Canada, Century of Education in British Columbia 1871-1971, Ottawa, Queen's Printer, 1971, p. 51.
8. "Government Story Not Complete," British Columbia Teachers' Federation Newsletter, Crisis #2, 17 March, 1972, p. 1.
9. Statistics Canada, op. cit., p. 70.
10. C.D. Ovans, "Over-Reaction - Or Something More Sinister?" British Columbia Teachers' Federation Newsletter, Vol. 10 No. 9 Special Edition, March, 1971, p. 2.
11. "Government Story Not complete," British Columbia Teachers' Federation Newsletter, Crisis #2, 17 March, 1972, p. 1.

## CHAPTER SIX

## CONCLUSION

During the 1960's and the early 1970's, the B.C. Teachers' Federation changed from an ordinary interest group into a militant, partisan, anti-Socred organization. In spite of the general belief that the change was simply the result of punitive actions taken by the government against the teachers, there were also other factors which contributed to the change in the B.C.T.F.: in the first place, the B.C.T.F. increased its full-time staff, and became bureaucratized, better organized, and wealthier. The resulting increase in expertise made the organization more powerful, more viable, and better able to communicate with the teachers and the public at large. With strength came both the optimism that things could be changed, and the morale necessary to carry on, even when levy funds raised for political action were frozen. With such a powerful organization behind them, teachers no longer felt in a weak position. Now they could take concerted action against deficiencies they saw in the government's education policies.

The fact that most of the teachers remained part of the B.C.T.F. after the government took away their automatic membership provisions, indicated that they thought it was a worthwhile organization. The insistence by the Minister of Education and other members of the

government, that members of the organization were uncomfortable with the militancy of the B.C.T.F. and no longer wanted to be members, does not seem borne out by the facts, for after the automatic membership provisions were removed, only 69 out of over 22,000 teachers did not renew their memberships.

The paid staff and the Executive of the organization played a significant role in the radicalization of the members. When interviewed in 1979, executive members claimed that it had been a difficult task to get teachers to complain about things like overcrowded classrooms and pension plan inadequacies. Clearly, the B.C.T.F. Executive took the initiative. However, without an adequate supply of funds for research, full time off from teaching duties, and professional help in the B.C.T.F. offices, as well as the monthly newsletter, which provided the Executive with an excellent opportunity to politicize the members, it would have been more difficult to spur the teachers to action.

The militancy of the B.C.T.F. in the 1972 election campaign did not simply appear out of the blue. The potential was there all along: to quote Jim MacFarlan, radicalism was "dormant but not dead." The fact that the B.C.T.F. took radical action against the Socred government in 1972 did not necessarily mean that the majority of teachers had suddenly become radical. They remained as conservative as ever, according to former Executive members. The difference was,

however, that now they were willing to allow their executive to take strong action when they saw that all else had failed; besides, it was a time when all kinds of groups were taking political action; it was the style to protest. Therefore they voted for those candidates who seemed most likely to take strong action against the government, regardless of the leftist ideologies of some of them. The strong leftist and radical members who got themselves into positions of power within the organization had a long history of radical political commitment. They did not hide their radicalism, and they were voted into power democratically. So, while the stance taken by the B.C.T.F. against the government and the apparent politicization of the teachers was partly the result of the strong leadership of the left-wing radicals who had taken over the organization, they cannot be faulted for taking the stance they did; they had the authorization of the general membership because they were elected as the legitimate spokesmen of the organization. As well, the teachers voted for the one-day levy for political action. They supported T.P.A.C. when the Supreme Court injunction was obtained against their collected fund. They made it possible for the radicals within the organization to take strong action during the election campaign to defeat the Socreds.

In an era when a new consciousness was developing, when there was a great re-examination of society and a renewed emphasis on education, the Socred government seemed out of date and anachronistic.

The sense of honesty and openness being advocated everywhere did not fit in with the old Socred ways of doing things. When Brothers said that B.C. had the most equitable education finance formula to be found anywhere in North America and the teachers could easily prove him wrong, he lost his credibility. When a cabinet member called art and music "baloney", the Socreds showed that they were out of tune with the times. When youth seemed to be taking over the reigns of influence from the older generation, the old government of W.A.C. Bennett seemed inadequate. The teachers were not the only ones to turn militant. The government had antagonized many groups in B.C. society, but especially the public employees. They were tired of the tired old government. When even the people of Kelowna, the Premier's own riding, protested and demanded a better deal for their school district, surely it must have looked ominous to the members of the government. Yet Finance Minister-Premier W.A.C. Bennett did not loosen the purse strings. While the Socreds had once been held in power by the grass roots participation of the people of B.C., now they were looked upon as the establishment, and the establishment at that point in time in North America was suspect.

So, the trend of the times also had a part to play in the increasing politicization of the teachers. It was the right time and the right place to take action against the government.

The inability of the Minister of Education and perhaps also his

Deputy to cope with the new, changed era and the bolder teachers while holding the line on education costs, made for animosity. But the fact that the Minister seemed to look upon the teachers as "the enemy" did not cause them to back off; and his actions in taking away their automatic membership provisions only served to strengthen their resolve to take political action. For years, the B.C.T.F. had tried to change the government's education policies. Not only were they largely unsuccessful, but the government seemed more determined than ever to take a tough stand against the teachers. Instead of the teachers changing the policies of the government, the government tried to change the teachers, and attempted to "break their union." In the face of such opposition, the teachers chose a route they had never chosen before; that of militancy and overt opposition to the government itself. After years and years of insisting that they were non-partisan, they became partisan. With the passage of Bill 3 that would make collective bargaining meaningless and make it necessary in some cases to submit salary increases to referendum, the teachers decided it was "destroy or be destroyed." And so they launched their campaign against the Socreds, taking with them as many other disaffected groups as they could find.

Premier W.A.C. Bennett was well-known for not allowing groups to influence or coerce him. He is reported to have said in the legislature, "I've opposed lumber barons, and the press barons, teachers, doctors and then the labor bosses and all the others when

they've tried to pressure the democratically elected government of the people. And I always will."<sup>1</sup> Edwin Black elaborated on this aspect of Bennett's government:

If, for example, your group fails to make the right impression on a legislative committee (or you cannot even get a hearing), it goes to work on individual members of the legislature, or puts pressure on the civil service, or works through the press, or "wines and dines" leading members of the government, and so on. This kind of political operation assumes the existence of a representative legislature that exerts real and observable influence on government decisions and policy-making, as well as government leaders respectful of, and responsive to, spokesmen for the established social groupings in the polity. But these assumptions, so far as they apply to British Columbia, are not valid. The present government represents an institutionalized protest against established social elites of all kinds. The inability of such groups to secure the desired hearing and appropriate action accounts for the frequent charges that Mr. Bennett is "undemocratic"; the charges are characteristically made by members of the Union of British Columbia Municipalities, the Teachers' Federation, the Chambers of Commerce, the university community, the wildlife federations and labour groups.<sup>2</sup>

The B.C.T.F used old and time-tried methods to lobby the government for many years. Tactics used in the 1966 provincial election and later in the Apple Campaign of 1969, were based on methods in use by pressure groups in Canada for more than half a century. In urging the public to vote for the candidates who supported the teachers, the B.C.T.F. was acting much like the Canadian Manufacturers' Association long ago - "In the election campaign of 1904, the C.M.A. recommended that members 'support those candidates, irrespective of party, who

announce themselves publicly in favour of an immediate tariff revision.' "<sup>3</sup>

In the face of an entrenched anti-group party like the Socreds, who seemed more determined than ever to go against organized interest groups, the old methods were no longer useful. The teachers had to fight fire with fire.

Donald Smiley, writing in his article, "Canada's Poujadists: a New Look at Social Credit," said,

An essential difference between Social Credit and other political parties in Canada is that its strategy is based on what I shall call "electoral politics" as opposed to "group politics." . . . Characteristically then, the political universe of the traditional politicians is one of groups, a universe to be approached through the circumspect treatment of representatives of particular organized interests. The "electoral politics" of Social Credit is a less complicated business. The movement has drawn its leaders for the most part from persons of lower educational attainment and status than the other parties . . . chiropractors and evangelists have been prominent - and it is difficult to name a prominent Social Creditor who has attained a position of eminence in any other field than politics. These men have got where they are through the electorate alone and they thus pursue the voters' support in a most direct and uninhibited way without the deference to centres of influence and the complex balancing of group interests which is characteristic of other politicians. Because Social Credit leaders have shared relatively little in the rewards of status or organizational position outside of politics, they are able to identify themselves closely with the voters' attitudes, particularly as these attitudes embody resentments against the existing order - resentments of the educated by the uneducated, of metropolitan interests and attitudes by rural and semi-frontier areas, of the denominations by the sects, of the private and public bureaucracies by the small entrepreneur, of the fabric of legality by those who regard law as not wholly beneficent.<sup>4</sup>



The remarks of Education Minister Donald Brothers in his speech to the legislature on Bill 3 demonstrate the "electoral politics" of the Socreds: "The Honourable Members are very well aware that the taxpayers in this Province are becoming increasingly alarmed about the continuing upward spiral in the cost of providing educational services. Also, they are aware of the resentment of the taxpayers in the annual increase in their school taxes."<sup>5</sup>

The B.C.T.F.'s switch from a non-partisan stance to an anti-government one in 1972 seemed an inevitable response to continued government intransigence. Then, when other circumstances were present, such as B.C.T.F. wealth and expertise, the acceptance of radicalism by the general public, militant actions by teachers in other provinces, Department of Education inadequacies, and radical leadership in the B.C.T.F., the time was ripe to take concrete anti-government action. It is possible that the stresses and strains elicited by a strong anti-group government would have inevitably brought forth interest groups so strong that they imperiled the government itself. In a sense, perhaps, the very strength of the government became its weakness. In response to strong government measures, the B.C.T.F. became strong--strong enough to provide leadership to other discontented groups in B.C. society, who came together in a concerted effort to help to defeat the Social Credit government.

CHAPTER SIX - FOOTNOTES

1. J. Hardy, "Comment", British Columbia Teachers' Federation Newsletter, Vol. 11 No. 10, March 1972, p. 2.
2. E. Black, "B.C.: The Politics of Exploitation," Party Politics in Canada, Hugh Thorburn, ed., Scarborough, Prentice-Hall of Canada Ltd., 1972, p. 230.
3. F. Engelmann & M. Schwarz, Political Parties and the Canadian Social Structure, Scarborough, Prentice-Hall of Canada Ltd., 1967, p. 112.
4. D.V. Smiley, "Canada's Poujadists: A New Look at Social Credit," Canadian Forum, September 1962, p. 123.
5. D. Brothers, "Speech to the Legislature on Bill 3", p. 1.

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