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ABSTRACT

This study traces the efforts of British Columbia teachers as they endeavour to have increasing input into the educational policies of the Department of Education. It is grounded in a study of primary archival records and written in the form of an historical narrative. Primarily, I focus on the English Teachers’ Association in B.C.: I trace its growth as a professional organization and follow its increasingly strident attempts to address the growing professional interests of English/Language Arts teachers in response to government policies, especially those affecting curriculum. Three main interrelated themes permeate the study: the professionalization of B.C. English/Language Arts teachers, the growth in the political power of teacher associations in B.C., and the effects of the B.C. government’s changing educational policies in English/Language Arts classrooms.

My study follows the English teachers’ association from its beginning in 1959 when it was known as S.A.T.E., the Secondary Association of Teachers of English; during the years of 1971-1994 when it was called B.C.E.T.A., the British Columbia English Teachers’ Association; to its later years as B.C.T.E.L.A., the British Columbia Teachers of English Language Arts. The study reveals that as the decades pass, the association becomes increasingly persistent in its efforts not only to further the professional interests of English teachers but also to provide input to the government on curricular decisions affecting English/Language Arts classrooms. It also becomes increasingly persistent in its dealings with the government as their philosophies of education become more diverse.

Keywords: education history; B.C. education; English teachers; teacher organizations; teacher professionalization; B.C. curriculum
This work is dedicated to three great men:

to Geoff Madoc-Jones, my university mentor,
to Lorne Cope, my school mentor,
and especially
to Claude Saltel, my life mentor.
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1: INTRODUCTION

Canada’s education system is rather unique. Whereas in most Western nations education is a federal responsibility, in Canada it is not.

Canada marks its beginning as a country when the British North American (BNA) Act came into effect on July 1, 1867. The BNA Act not only created Canada as a federal dominion and outlined its governance, justice system, and taxation system, but it also distinguished federal and provincial responsibilities: education was a provincial responsibility. Canada is unique in that each province’s education system therefore developed independently, although there were certainly some commonalities amongst the provinces, especially those that were in close proximity geographically. In the early 1800s, however, the British colony of New Caledonia was developing its education system rather independently on the far west coast of British North America.

The BNA Act further determined that some facets of education were to be centralized, as provinces were to have a Department of Education, while some were to be decentralized, as individual communities were to have local school boards. According to Fleming and Hutton (1997), the BNA Act thus set the groundwork for a system of education which not only allowed local communities to start their own schools in the new dominion, but which also “embodied the idea that only a strong, central, and secular authority could provide the vision and control necessary to establish a school system in a vast territory with a diverse population and uncertain economic prospects” (Fleming and Hutton, 1997, n.p.). This notion certainly seemed applicable to the sparsely-populated
and scattered population of New Caledonia when they joined the Dominion of Canada as British Columbia in 1871. The stage was thus set in B.C. for an education system in which local and Departmental concerns were often in conflict.

My study traces the efforts of teachers in this province for over a century as they endeavour to have increasing input into the educational policies of the Department of Education. Specifically, I focus on the efforts of the English Teachers’ Association in B.C., (which underwent three name changes in its history). I trace its growth as a professional organization and follow its increasingly strident attempts to address the growing professional interests of secondary English/Language Arts teachers in response to government policies, especially those affecting curriculum. My study follows this association from its beginning in 1959 when it was known as S.A.T.E., the Secondary Association of Teachers of English; during the years of 1971-1994 when it was called B.C.E.T.A., the British Columbia English Teachers’ Association; to its later years as B.C.T.E.L.A., the British Columbia Teachers of English Language Arts. The study reveals that as the decades pass, the association becomes increasingly persistent in its efforts to provide input to the government on curricular decisions affecting secondary English/Language Arts classrooms. It also becomes increasingly persistent in its dealings with the government as their philosophies of education become more diverse.

Three main interrelated themes permeate the study: the professionalization of B.C. English/Language Arts teachers, the growth in the political power of teacher associations in B.C., and the effects of the B.C. government’s changing educational policies in English/Language Arts classrooms. Although a significant amount of scholarly research exists on the topic of teacher professionalism, little of it specifically
addresses B.C. There are very few published studies on the impact of teacher associations affecting curriculum in Canada, and even fewer pertaining to B.C., Rowell and Gaskell’s being an exception (see Rowell & Gaskell, 1987). Similarly, there are very few studies on the relationships between teacher associations and governments pertaining to education policy initiatives; those that do exist cite provincial generalists’ associations and not provincial specialists’ associations such as the English Teachers’ Association. This gap in the research needs to be addressed, as during the latter half of the twentieth century, teachers’ associations, both generalist and specialist, had increasingly more impact on curriculum in B.C. schools. This study will help to fill this gap in the research as it applies to B.C. English/Language Arts teachers.

Chapter one identifies the research problem, purpose, significance, and design of my study. Chapter two is a review of literature on three topics: the professionalization of teachers, teacher associations in Canada and B.C., and B.C. government educational policy. Chapter three provides an historical and philosophical background to education in B.C. Chapter four outlines the history of the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation (B.C.T.F.), the provincial association for B.C. teachers, from 1917 until 1959, when the English Teachers’ Association was formed. This chapter comments on the B.C.T.F.’s duality of purpose: to be both a professional organization and a union. Chapter five discusses the year 1959, when the English Teachers Association (S.A.T.E.) was formed, and the decade of the 1960s. The chapter begins with a discussion of the activities of the B.C.T.F., then focuses on S.A.T.E. Chapter six discusses the decade of the 1970s, starting with the B.C.T.F., then focusing on the English Teachers’ Association, now called the B.C.E.T.A. Chapter seven follows the B.C.T.F. and particularly the B.C.E.T.A. through
the 1980s and chapter eight, through the 1990s, during which time the B.C.E.T.A. changed its name to B.C.T.E.L.A. My conclusions follow chapter eight.

References


2: CHAPTER ONE: THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The Research Problem

How did the English Teachers' Association in British Columbia develop as a professional organization from 1959-2000, and how did it address the growing professional interests of English/Language Arts teachers in response to government policies? In order to address these questions, an understanding of "professional" is needed. Although there have been various definitions in literature (see Chapter Two for a more thorough discussion), Hoyle (2004) contends that a common set of criteria has emerged over the years that define whether or not a group is considered "professional": "the provision of an essential social service, intellectual techniques, lengthy specialized training, practitioner and group autonomy, personal responsibility for judgments, an emphasis on service, and a self-governing body" (Hoyle, 2004, pg. 15473). Goodson and Hargreaves also outline a set of "guiding principles" which articulate teachers' perceptions of professionalization: discretionary judgement over teaching, curriculum, and care; an opportunity to "engage with the moral and social purposes" of what is taught; a culture of collaboration; "occupational heteronomy rather than self-protective autonomy"; care for students, not just service to them; continuous learning rather than continuous adaptation to constant changes put upon teachers; "creation and recognition of high task complexity, with levels of status and reward appropriate to such complexity" (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996, pg. 21). As we follow the English Teachers' Association for forty-one years, we will see to what extent they meet each of these criterion.
**Purpose of the Study**

During the years 1959-2000, the world was changing quickly: “modern” world views on science, economics, human rights, and education were changing. As a result, B.C. teachers were witness not only to shifting philosophies in the Western world, but also to worldwide educational reforms, economic recession, countless policy changes in education, two Royal Commissions on education, massive and unprecedented labour unrest in B.C., the granting of professional status to B.C. teachers, the change to an instrumentalist/economic education philosophy, the individualization of educational programs, and the “deprofessionalization” of teachers. This list is far from exhaustive. The purpose of my study is to trace the development of the English teachers’ association in B.C. as it struggled to keep up with all of these changes, and to protect the interests of secondary English teachers and students in B.C. during these turbulent times.

**Significance of the Study**

Although many B.C. English/Language Arts teachers are aware that there is a provincial specialists’ association devoted to addressing their concerns, I believe that few teachers appreciate the scope of the work they do. Most teachers are aware of the yearly conventions the English teachers’ association puts on; some teachers are aware of the journal it produces; few are aware of the degree to which the association advocates on their behalf for input into the English/Language Arts curriculum.

Part of the reason for teachers’ ignorance may be that the English teachers’ specialists association was not created in 1959 to be an advocacy group per se; it undoubtedly did not expect to become a militant political force. In its first few years, the association was an informal group of teachers, “more of a social club” as one of the early
members has described it to me (Klemovich, 2007). Apparently, meeting minutes were not always kept; there was little need for such formalities. It was an association of English teachers who met on their own to discuss solutions to some of the problems teachers saw in English/Language Arts classrooms. Unfortunately, few records remain from their first few years.

As the years passed, its numbers grew, and its attempts to influence government decisions increased; however, there were still many English teachers who were largely unaware of the association’s activities. The reasons for this need to be studied and the story of its influence needs to be told if one is to better understand B.C.’s ever-changing English/Language Arts curriculum, and the interplay between the association and the government in shaping that curriculum.

**Research Design**

My research on the B.C. English teachers’ association is grounded in a study of primary archival records. I found and organized documents created by the association of B.C. English teachers over the years. Although there are certainly references to the English teachers’ association in some publications, there is no published work about the association: its formation, growth, goals, activities, philosophy. All that exists is a collection of its publications and the minutes of some of its meetings. The majority of these are preserved on microfilm in the library of the British Columbia Teachers’ Association, its parent organization; some later documents are photocopied and arranged chronologically in binders. I also used various other sources, both online and hardcopy, in order to provide background, context, and commentary on my research. These include
books, articles, government documents, newsletters, newspapers, websites, and on-line sources through SFU and UBC libraries.

References


3: CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Very little research has been done on the topic of British Columbia teacher associations trying to effect curricular changes in education. In doing my own research on the Provincial Specialists Association of B.C. English teachers (who have had several name changes in their history), I have found that four themes recur in the scholarly literature around this topic: the professionalization of teachers, the growth in power of teacher associations in Canada and in B.C., and B.C. politics. It soon becomes obvious that these three themes are inextricably bound. Teacher associations in B.C. have always considered the raising of their teachers’ professional status as one of their goals, and as their numbers grew, they have endeavoured to assert their status by having more control in the government’s educational policies. While ever-cognizant of the themes’ interconnectedness, I have endeavoured to review the literature on each separately, in the hopes of bringing some clarity to a very complicated relationship.

Professionalization of Teachers

Neither the concept of “profession” nor the idea of “professionalization” is new. Perkin (1989) differentiates between “early professionalization” when some “elite” groups established their status and “late professionalization” beginning in the late 1800s “with the rise of professional society” (as quoted in Hoyle, 2004, pg. 15473). According to Hoyle (2004), “teaching was in the process of professionalization from the mid-1870s to the mid-1970s, increasingly so after World War II” (Hoyle, 2004, pg. 15473). In order
to understand exactly what this means, the concepts of “profession” and “professionalization” need to be defined.

The concept of “profession” has been variously defined in the literature over many decades. Siegrist (2004) identifies two general perspectives in the literature: “individualizing historical perspectives and systematic social science perspectives” (Siegrist, 2004, pg. 15156). The former perspective focuses on individual professions and their attempts to define themselves and sometimes to justify their existence when they feel threatened. The latter focuses on “general features and tendencies” (Siegrist, 2004, pg. 15156) which unfortunately is rather vague.

Englund (1996) suggests that the process of professionalization is complex and that it must be studied in both an historical and a social context. Englund summarizes the work of Durkheim (1992, 1986) who states that throughout history, there has always been a conflict between professions demanding autonomy and the state imposing its will; he also suggests that it is impossible to draw a clear line between the politicians’ and the professionals’ fields of decision-making. Englund then discusses the seminal work by Lortie (1975) who was critical of the professionalism of American teachers, suggesting that their profession was characterized by “conservatism, individualism, and presentism,” that teachers never become “bearers of collective knowledge,” that they develop on a personal basis and “fail to create any kind of professionalism” (as quoted in Englund, 1996, pg. 77).

Gitlin and Labaree (1996) similarly describe how both historical and social forces have shaped teacher professionalization in the United States. They discuss how the American market economy valued quantity over quality and suggest that teacher
education was concerned with the number of credentials teachers earned rather than the depth of their professional knowledge. Similarly, with the high demand for teachers in the late 1800s, the admission requirements for normal schools were lessened and the curriculum content was watered down so that more future teachers would be successful. Given that professional status was accorded to those with specialized knowledge, the professionalism of teachers was debatable. This historical and social reality was combined with the patriarchal notion that women, who made up the majority of teachers, were not as academically adept as men. Gitlin and Labaree contend that these questions about the professionalism of educators are still with us today, and claim that teacher education programs occupy the lowest rung in universities and are used as places to park below-average students (Gitlin & Labaree, 1996), a claim they may have trouble defending in a Canadian context.

Hoyle (2004) suggests that the concept of “profession” is a “much-disputed sociological concept” that has been “strongly contested” over the years (Hoyle, 2004, pg. 15472). He further suggests that, like the concept of “profession,” the concept of “professionalization” is divided into two strands: one involving improving status and one with the improvement of the group’s ability to provide better service (Hoyle, 2004).

Not unlike Siegrist, Hoyle distinguishes between an early “functionalist” perspective and a newer “power perspective” in the literature on professions. The functionalist perspective defines groups as “professions” if they meet a list of criteria. Although proponents of the functionalist perspective often suggested diverse lists of criteria (Millerson, 1964), Hoyle suggests that there were commonalities among the lists, and he credits Lieberman (1956) with applying the “core criteria” to teachers. Hoyle
summarizes Lieberman's criteria as "the provision of an essential social service, intellectual techniques, lengthy specialized training, practitioner and group autonomy, personal responsibility for judgments, an emphasis on service, and a self-governing body" (Hoyle, 2004, pg. 15473).

Hoyle also summarizes two newer "power" perspectives which are critical of the functionalist approach. One of the power perspectives suggests that the concept of "profession" was not developed to improve practice amongst a group, but was "the theorization of a self-interested ideology developed historically by a small group of elite occupations characterized by independent practitioners (e.g. lawyers, doctors) offering a service for fee" (Hoyle, 2004, pg. 15473). A second power perspective focuses on the concept of "profession" as elitism, whereby the professions gain status by being exclusive and thereby elevating their social position.

Popkewitz, for example, discusses teaching partially through a power perspective. Although Popkewitz (1994) primarily views professional practices as social practices, he describes teachers functioning in "dual worlds": "one of these worlds is the institutional patterns by which schooling is produced. The other context is the larger struggles and power relations of the world which include the intellectual production of knowledge and the development of expert-mediated systems of ideas" (Popkewitz, 1994, pg. 13). He believes that teachers must "develop a skepticism" towards accepting any concept, including teacher autonomy, as unambiguous and sacred. He cautions that many notions of professional practice are inextricably bound to power relations. He believes that recent concepts of educational professionalism are linked to producing immediate results. Because of this, "Obscured are the historical conditions in which systems of ideas are
developed and the complex sets of debates, tensions and struggles that underlie the production of knowledge and power” (Popkewitz, 1994, pg. 14).

Another common theme in the literature is that the changing definition of teacher professionalization over the years is a result of a shift from a modern to a postmodern perspective. Several critics suggest that education and teacher training were established with the modern belief that scientific understanding was going to lead to social and economic progress. Views on the professionalization of teachers have similarly been influenced over the years by changes in society’s beliefs about the purposes and value of education, which were often tied to notions of society’s economic and social progress.

Robertson (1996), for example, states that in the 1940s, “Western” education was based on a “Fordist” development model, which was based on Taylorist principles of scientific management (Robertson, 1996). The purpose of schools was to “produce future workers and consumers for mass-consumption society” (Robertson, 1996, pg. 33). The continuing professionalization of teachers was not questioned, as society still believed that education would lead to a better world (Robertson, 1996).

According to Hinings (2004), in the 1950s and 1960s, it was considered a “natural process” for occupations to develop into professions with increasing autonomy (although I suggest this may be an over-simplification, and Hinings offers little explanation for this assertion). The “deification” of science reached its peak in the early 1960s after the Russians launched Sputnik; science and its methodology were going to help the Western world “compete with the Russians in space, defeat the communists in Vietnam, eliminate poverty and improve health care at home, and increase the knowledge base of young people” (Doll, 1993, pg. 2). Some people believed that teachers were valued for their
professionalism and expert knowledge, as they were to implement the scientific principles of learning in schools. MacKinnon (1960), for example, believed that the answer to education’s ills was that teachers should become true professionals and be self-regulating much like Canadian doctors, engineers, and lawyers; he further noted that teaching was the only profession in which the government controlled both training and licensing (MacKinnon, 1960).

Some critics, however, believed that the Russians’ winning the space race was a result of diminishing standards in Canadian schools. Critiques of the Canadian education system, such as Hilda Neatby’s So Little for the Mind (1953), had begun to appear before the launch of Sputnik, suggesting that our education system had deteriorated, and the notion that teachers could not be trusted to make curriculum decisions gained momentum with Sputnik’s launch. Although the greatest reaction was in the United States, with massive educational reforms focusing on math and science underway, there is little doubt that Canadian critics of education were sympathetic to some of the Americans’ concerns. For example, the Chant Report (Report, 1960) which will be discussed in more depth later, addresses the concern that B.C. schools had become too progressive and makes several recommendations for a return to a more traditional academic approach.

In the 1970s, education would again change because of world events. According to Hargreaves (1994), Western economies were collapsing and economic policies were being re-evaluated. As people were out of work, education came to be seen as an “expensive luxur[y] that taxpayers could no longer afford”; in addition, schools did not seem to be doing their jobs when the country was plunged into recession (Hargreaves,
1994, pg. 32). As the “Fordist” system collapsed (Robertson, 1996), the entire education system, including the education of teachers, was put

...under the political microscope. Critics launched successively more vicious attacks on teachers’ competence, while teachers’ vulnerability over their alleged failure to be more scientific, and therefore professional, was exploited. A profession which could not make explicit the scientific basis of its knowledge and practices was no profession at all! (Robertson, 1996, pg. 37).

Indeed, education critics were charging that professions were defined less by their values and commitment to their vocations, and more by the power and prestige accorded them along with their professional status. (Hinings, 2004).

New notions of professionalization coincided with a worldwide education reform movement which began in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The reforms were characterized in part by the centralization of educational policy, accountability, and increased expectations on schools (Hoyle, 2004). As a result, the role of teaching changed, as did perceptions on the professionalization of teachers. Three new terms describing the work of teachers have emerged in recent literature: proletarianization, deprofessionalization, and new professionalism (Hoyle, 2004). The proletarianization perspective suggests that teachers are becoming deskilled as they carry out formulaic programs they did not develop, as the amount of their work is intensified, and as they are expected to carry out more managerial tasks. The deprofessionalization perspective is that teachers are no longer able to meet some of the traditional criteria for professions as their range of knowledge is lowered, teacher autonomy is lessened, and teacher groups have less impact on policy than in the past. The new professionalism perspective redefines the concept of a professional as one who is accountable for competently and skilfully delivering a service to the public. Hoyle characterizes the shift from
professionalization to the newer perspectives as a shift “from a concern with status to a concern with the quality of service” (Hoyle, 2004, pg. 15476).

Goodson and Hargreaves, both of whom have written extensively on the topic of the professionalization of teachers, discuss the “seeming paradoxes of teacher professionalization” (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996, pg. 3). They believe that some jurisdictions seem to promote teacher professionalization as they actually dismantle it, and that there are three ways to interpret this phenomenon. One is that there is a difference “between rhetoric and reality”; the government says teachers are professionals while cutting wages, reducing resources and restructuring teachers’ work. A second interpretation is that some of the teachers’ work is being “reprofessionalized” as teachers have more complex tasks, sophisticated judgement, and collective decision-making; while some of their work is becoming “deprofessionalized” as they implement detailed learning outcomes and work toward educational goals determined by others (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996, pg. 3). A third interpretation is that professionalization is being increasingly defined as self-regulation, which may be a practice more economic than educational: teachers take on many administrative tasks once provided by the government for free, such as licensing teachers, handling disciplinary matters, etc. In an earlier book, Hargreaves leaves the reader with some questions:

The theoretical debates between professionalization on the one hand, and intensification and deskilling on the other are not just matters of academic curiosity. They pose absolutely fundamental questions about the nature of teachers’ work and how it is changing. Is it getting better or worse, more skilled or less skilled, more professionalized or less so? (Hargreaves, 1994, pg. 14-15).

Similar to Goodson and Hargreaves’s “seeming paradoxes,” Cochran-Smith and Fries (2001) discuss two competing “national agendas” in the United States: “the agenda
to professionalize teachers and teacher education” and “the movement to deregulate teacher preparation, which aims to dismantle teacher education institutions and break up the monopoly of the profession” (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2001, abstract). Unlike Goodson and Hargreaves, Cochran-Smith and Fries do not try to reconcile the two, but explain them as two competing agendas which are backed by some high-powered interest groups such as the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education and the Carnegie Corporation. Their competing ideologies about education and teachers are explored and Cochran-Smith and Fries explain how both agendas consider their approach to be “common sense.” They conclude that “unless underlying ideologies and values are debated...we will make little progress in understanding the discourse of reform and the competing agendas that currently dominate the politics of teacher education” (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2001, pg. 15).

In the 1990s as teachers are often viewed as skilled implementers of others’ policies, some critics believe that teachers have lost some of their hard-won professional status. Harris (1994), for example, does not believe that recent changes in teachers’ work have been positive. He believes that by the 1980s teachers

...had become a body of people who were highly knowledgeable with regard to educational theory and practice, sociology, social theory, child psychology, learning theory, and so on. They had become experts in their subject content; they had won the right, as a professional body, to be centrally involved in the determination and development of curriculum content, schooling practices and educational policy in general (as quoted in Robertson, 1996, pg. 28)

but that “[b]y 1995 they are likely to have lost, in a single decade, most of the gains made in a single century” (as quoted in Robertson, 1996, pg. 28).
It has become clear, therefore, that the work of teachers has changed over the past fifty years. Goodson and Hargreaves outline six different conceptions of teacher professionalization that have emerged in the literature over the years: classical, flexible, practical, extended, complex, and postmodern (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996). At the risk of over-simplification, I will briefly summarize each. “Classical” refers to the traditional, historical definition of meeting set criteria similar to that in law or medicine: specialized knowledge, strong service ethic, self-regulation, collegial control, codes of ethics, etc. “Flexible” refers to the recent shift toward localized education, professional development, and professional learning communities situated in a particular local context. “Practical” refers to elevating the “dignity and status” of the practical aspects of teaching; for example, reflecting on one’s craft rather than contemplating “ivory-towered” truths about education (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996, pg. 12). “Extended” refers to teaching as a marriage between theory and experience, in which teaching is rational as opposed to intuitive. “Complex” suggests that professions should be defined by the complexity of their work, and that teaching is highly complex. “Postmodern” is defined by Goodson and Hargreaves as “what teacher professionalization should also mean in a complex, postmodern age” (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996, pg. 20), a rather circular definition. They do outline seven guiding principles: discretionary judgement over teaching, curriculum, and care; an opportunity to “engage with the moral and social purposes” of what is taught; a culture of collaboration; “occupational heteronomy rather than self-protective autonomy,” which means that teachers work openly and collaboratively with others including parents and the community; care for students, not just service to them; continuous learning rather than continuous adaptation to constant changes put upon
teachers; "creation and recognition of high task complexity, with levels of status and reward appropriate to such complexity" (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996, pg. 21).

However one defines it, views on the professionalization of teachers in British Columbia have been the subject of debate for over a hundred years. In our earliest years, however, there was little discussion as to whether or not teachers were professionals; they were not, by any definition. In 1886, for example, the railway had been extended to B.C. and our student population was swelling: in the twenty year period between 1882 and 1902, the number of students attending B.C. schools increased from 1383 to 16,357 (Johnson, 1964). The demand for teachers was high, and therefore the requirements to become a teacher were low. Prospective teachers needed to score only thirty percent on an examination comprised of high school content in order to qualify for a one-year teaching certificate (Sheehan & Wilson, 1994). Most teachers were young women who taught for a year or two before getting married; the men who taught did so as a stepping-stone to a "real" career in medicine or law (Sheehan & Wilson, 1994). Teachers were not considered professionals.

In 1901, B.C. teachers made some advances towards professionalization when school became mandatory for "urban children": the first Normal School opened, and the province took over the task of licensing teachers (Sheehan & Wilson, 1994). As our population continued to grow, however, the requirement to teach was still very low—high school graduation plus four months of normal school—but by the 1910s teachers had begun to organize teacher institutes in order to air grievances about their working conditions and pay, and to "discuss professional and curriculum concerns" ("History,"
2008, n.p.). However, "teachers played no part in the management of schools or in the formulation of educational policy" ("History," 2008, n.p.).

The first major step taken by B.C. teachers to become professional was to form a union, a step some critics (see Sheehan & Wilson, 1994) describe as "ironic." Indeed, the history of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (B.C.T.F.) is that of an organization trying to be both a trade union and a professional organization (Sheehan & Wilson, 1994). The first meeting of the B.C.T.F. was in January, 1917. Shortly thereafter, Victoria held the first teachers' strike in 1919 and the government introduced arbitration for "resolving teacher-board salary disputes" (Novakowski, 1999, pg. 1). According to recent B.C.T.F. literature, the goal of the early B.C.T.F. was to "achieve professional recognition [for teachers] by identifying and promoting the expertise that sets teaching apart from other tasks in society" and to work toward "professional goals" such as improved qualifications, continuous professional development, and autonomy (ibid).

By 1925, teachers had been trying to win professional status for over two decades, but had only recently become organized. The first thorough assessment of the B.C. school system was carried out by Dr. George M. Weir and Dr. J. Harold Putman. "Both men were professional educators, both had earned doctoral degrees (D. Paed.) in education in Ontario and both were definitely liberal or progressive in their educational thought" (Johnson, 1964). Their report was published in 1925 (Putman & Weir, 1925) and it was very critical of the professionalism of B.C. teachers. Among the criticisms,

...too many unmarried male teachers; the immaturity of the teachers, especially in rural schools; lack of vision and professional pride; deficient academic and professional qualifications; unwillingness to take additional professional training beyond the legal minimum; lack of experience; inability adequately to profit from experience; tendency to
change schools too frequently (as quoted in Sheehan & Wilson, 1994, pg. 3).

Clearly, B.C. teachers had not yet attained professional status. As the decades passed, they continued their quest for both union rights and professional status, primarily through their teacher association, the B.C.T.F. Teacher associations have played an important role in these quests not only in B.C., but throughout Canada.

**Growth in Power of Teacher Organizations in Canada**

Although there is not an abundance of scholarly work devoted to studying teacher organizations in Canada, some researchers have done work on the concept of interest groups (Puhle, 2008), the apparent dual role of Western teacher unions (Naylor, 2002), the history of early teacher associations (Johnson, 1964; Gilliss, 2008; Smaller, 1998), the history of labour relations in Canada (Grant, 1992); and the relationship between more modern teacher associations and their governments (Ungerleider, 2003).

The concept of teachers’ organizations is a rather recent historical development; the concept of organized “interest groups” fighting for influence and power, however, has been around for several hundred years (Puhle, 2008). Puhle traces this concept back to a time when “the notion of ‘interests’ was first narrowed down by enlightened philosophers from Machiavelli to Montesquieu to material and rational interests, as opposed to and counteracting the ‘passions’” (Puhle, 2008, pg. 1). He then jumps several hundred years and states that interest groups did not begin to proliferate in the Western world until the beginning of the nineteenth century, following the French and American revolutions. He suggests that their development had two main causes: the dissociation of governing parties from the general public’s interests, and “the unequal progress of industrialization
in different parts of Europe” both which encouraged people to advocate for their interests (Puhle, 2008, pg. 2). He defines a modern interest group as “a voluntary association of individuals, firms, or smaller groups uniting in order to defend or fight for a common interest, with the intention of influencing and intervening in the political process, but without ambition to form a political party (exceptions notwithstanding)” (ibid). He then outlines six types of interest groups, professional associations and labour unions being two of them; he further states that “the organization of less professionalized groups such as teachers or employees in trade and commerce has often followed the lines of professional associations, if they did not unionize in the labor ranks…” (Puhle, 2008, pg. 3).

Puhle’s comments are interesting, especially since teachers’ associations in the Canadian West, such as the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation (B.C.T.F.) have often fulfilled both professional and union roles. Some critics such as Charlie Naylor, however, feel that conceiving these roles as a duality of purpose is outdated and that the role of teachers’ organizations is more complex (Naylor, 2002). Naylor suggests that North American teachers’ unions focus on many areas and that in order to understand their various functions, one must study the range, the nature and extent, and the utility of their foci. Naylor goes on to suggest several directions that he believes unions should “consider and discuss”: in summary, unions should be less reactive, they should increase collaboration with other groups, they should not subordinate professional concerns to union concerns, and they should have a professional focus. Naylor’s suggestion that there is a need for further study of North American teacher unions is appropriate, especially given the lack of Canadian work in this area.
According to Andrew Spaull, when worldwide education reforms started in the late 1960s and continued throughout the 1970s, there was "a worldwide revival in the historical study of teachers' unions" (Spaull, 1991, pg. 21). Bruce Cooper's book on labour relations (1992) for example, has chapters devoted to Australia, Canada, China, England and Wales, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Israel, Italy, Mexico, New Zealand, Sweden, and the U.S.A. (Cooper, 1992). Many other books were published in or after the late 1980s that attempted to contextualize the relationship between teachers and their governments in several countries: Great Britain (Seifert, 1987; Barber, 1992), Australia (O'Brien, 1987), The United States (Berube, 1988; Murphy, 1990; Bascia, 1994; Brimelow, 2003), Japan (Aspinall, 2001), Asia (Synott, 2002). Unfortunately, there is a paucity of scholarly literature written specifically about provincial teacher unions or associations in Canada. What does exist, according to Spaull, is insufficient: "while the interest in the history of Canadian organizations has persisted, the overall quality of the work has been uninspiring and little of it has been published" (Spaull, 1991, pg. 21). Most literature that does exist tends to discuss early union formation in Eastern and Central Canada, and more specifically in Ontario and Quebec.

Two researchers who have done scholarly work on these early teacher associations are Geraldine Gilliss and F. Henry Johnson. The earliest teacher associations in Canada were the Teachers' Institutes established in Eastern Canada in the 1850s (Johnson, 1964). These institutes were sponsored by the Departments of Education and were "dominated by Department of Education officials, inspectors, clergymen and influential laymen" (Gilliss, 2008, n.p.). They were primarily concerned with "inspirational addresses or discussions of teaching methods" (ibid), and with
providing in-service training to teachers, most of whom had little or no professional training (Johnson, 1964). They did not address salaries, teaching conditions, or tenure (ibid) nor did they address any other concerns about the living and working conditions of teachers, which were often very poor (Gilliss, 2008).

Teacher organizations which were developed by teachers and which addressed the concerns of teachers began to proliferate in Canada during and immediately after World War I, when teachers’ salaries had not kept up to the cost of living, and when their working conditions were still often primitive (Gilliss, 2008). By the time the Canadian Teachers’ Federation (C.T.F.) was founded in 1920, every province had at least one teachers’ association, most of which met in secret because of the public’s hostility towards unions (ibid). Some early concerns of the C.T.F. were salary increases and pensions. However, teacher associations throughout Canada were also working towards establishing teaching as a profession similar to law and medicine: across Canada teachers were fighting for “compulsory membership in their association, a code of ethics, the power to discipline members who did not abide by the code, and for control over standards of entrance to the profession” (Gilliss, 2008, n.p.). By 1960 every province had attained compulsory membership and some disciplinary powers, and all but Quebec had adopted a code of ethics (Gilliss, 2008). The length of formal education and training required to become a teacher, which was a concern to Canadian teachers, continued to increase: whereas in 1950, only ten percent of teachers had university degrees; by the end of the 1970s all Canadian public school teachers were university-trained; by 1992, eighty-four percent of Canadian public school teachers had university degrees (ibid).
Some critics, such as Harry Smaller, charge that the early teacher associations were created “for the express purpose of promoting all aspects of the ‘one best system’—centralized, bureaucratized, professionalized, patriarchal and socially stratified” (Smaller, 1998, pg. 1) and that the Department’s interest in the teacher was only “to develop the teacher as ‘proper subject’” (Smaller, 1998, pg. 2). He quotes Egerton Ryerson, Ontario’s first superintendent, who in an 1850 circular to teachers states that teachers “must exude loyalty to the Queen, the country and to ‘manly virtue’” (as quoted in Smaller, 1998, pg. 2).

As teacher associations developed across Canada during the 1920s and 1930s, the perception was that teachers and governments were both working towards the common goal of “furthering the interests of education,” and the leaders of teacher organizations and government were usually “congenial,” at least in Eastern Canada. (Smaller, 1998, pg. 2). However, in Western Canada the situation was different: in addition to the B.C. and Saskatchewan teacher associations strengthening their labour affiliations, there were “court cases, strike funds, letters and petitions, mass meetings, boycotting local boards of education and demonstrations” (ibid) in B.C., Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, with the result that teachers in these provinces made significantly more gains than their Eastern colleagues.

By the 1960s, Canadian teachers had intensified their demands for bargaining rights. Michel Grant (1992) has traced the history of Canadian labour laws and states that the history of public sector bargaining in Canada is “varied, extensive, and complex” and that the “diversity is incredible, with both centralized provincial bargaining and decentralized arrangements depending on the laws of the ten provinces”; it involves
"thousands of separate bargaining units" (Grant, 1992, pg. 33). In its early days, "Canadian labour legislation during the postwar period initially favored union rights in the manufacturing sector but often excluded bargaining for public sector workers" (Grant, 1992, pg. 32). Suffice it to say that as government services expanded during the 1960s, so did public sector employee unions' championing the cause that their members had fewer rights than private sector workers; and teachers' associations were no exception. "Greater expansion of employment [of public school teachers] during the 1960s and 1970s and more liberal policies toward collective bargaining favored union penetration" (Grant, 1992, pg. 33). By the end of the 1960s, however, only Quebec teachers had won the right of collective bargaining, as they simply adopted their province's private sector procedure (Grant, 1992).

By the 1970s, Canadian teachers were becoming more militant about bargaining rights as the economy was entering into a recession. In Ontario, for example, a province-wide education strike in December, 1973, led to their winning collective bargaining rights (ibid). Similarly, teachers across Canada saw their salaries, benefits, and working conditions improve dramatically during the 1970s, mostly as a result of collective bargaining and union expansion.

During the 1980s, however, the recession prompted the federal government of Canada to implement a two-year wage-control program for employees at the national level, and many provincial governments followed suit (ibid). In both Quebec and B.C., for example, there were significant wage and funding cutbacks in the public sector. The governments' attitudes towards public sector unions changed from "tacitly supporting the unionization of employees" in the 1960s to being "openly hostile towards the public
sector unions and to the exercise of the bargaining rights of public employees” in the early 1980s (Calvert, as quoted in Grant, 1992, pp. 34-35).

During the 1980s, education reform was underway, and Canadian teacher associations became increasingly active and politically-involved. Several conservative, “back-to-basics” governments were in power across Canada, such as the Social Credit Party in B.C. In order to restore financial stability, governments across Canada introduced unprecedented cutbacks in public sector spending in which they were heavily invested; some of the rights Canadian teachers had won through collective bargaining were being stripped, and the control of education was becoming increasingly centralized. Work-to-rule campaigns and strikes by teachers were common across Canada (Grant, 1992), such as the “Solidarity” movement in B.C., which will be discussed later in this paper.

In the midst of the turmoil of the late 1980s, the British Columbia government created a College of Teachers; a similar college would be introduced in Ontario in 1994. There has been much debate in the literature as to whether or not the establishment of the Colleges marked the achievement of full professional status for which Canadian teachers had so long fought, or whether the Colleges were simply a convenient way for the governments to defray some education costs onto the teachers themselves, while the government retained control over them. In both B.C. and Ontario, the teachers’ associations opposed the colleges, perhaps in part because when the colleges were created, compulsory membership in the provincial teachers’ association was eliminated (Sheehan & Wilson, 1994; Fleming, 2003; Ungerleider, 2003).
In any case, one effect of Canadian teachers’ increasingly vocal protests during the 1980s and the 1990s may have been a loss of support from the public. According to Charles Ungerleider, whose work will be discussed in more detail in the next section of this paper, teachers’ resistance to the colleges in B.C. and Ontario “could be interpreted to mean that they are opposed to the regulation of their profession” (Ungerleider, 2003, pg. 164); teachers’ opposition to increasingly imposed schemes of accountability during the 1990s may suggest to the public that teachers’ work cannot bear scrutiny; and when...

...the Ontario and British Columbia governments declared war on teachers, teachers’ unions withdrew their support for extracurricular trips, student clubs, athletics, music performances, and the like. Although the frustration and anger were understandable, teachers’ actions were not strategic. Limited in the options available to them, teachers seemed to attack their natural allies: students and parents (Ungerleider, 2003, pg. 171).

The professionalism of Canada’s teachers was again being questioned by some critics.

The confrontations between teacher associations and governments in Canada are not unique. Just as education reforms were common during the 1970s, so too was the expansion of teacher unions; so too was the experience of teachers in conflict with their governments over both union and professional issues. It is in this context that the B.C.T.F. worked to improve both the welfare and professional status of its teachers.

**Growth in Power of Teacher Organizations in B.C.**

In B.C., the B.C.T.F. defines itself as the “union of professionals” that has represented B.C. teachers since its inception as a “benevolent society” in 1919 (“History,” 2008, n.p.). Although there are literally thousands of references to the B.C.T.F. in scholarly research on B.C. education (as well as in local news pieces), few
scholars have published works specifically dealing with the B.C.T.F. A review of the literature yields three types of work, all of which will be reviewed here.

The first type is literature discussing the B.C.T.F. in relation to other associations, and includes some interesting work by P. James Gaskell and Patricia Rowell (1993). The second, and most common type of work found in the literature is that produced by the union itself. Often union pieces “are written for the membership of a union to celebrate its development in terms of its leadership, policies, and institutional achievements” (Spauld, 1991, pg. 21) and the B.C.T.F. is no exception. The third and rarest type of scholarly work is that which focuses solely on the B.C.T.F. Those who have done work of this type are Charles Ungerleider (1996, 2003), Thomas Fleming (1986, 1997, 2003), and Nancy Sheehan and J. Donald Wilson (1994).

Few published works discuss the efforts of teacher associations to affect curriculum decisions. P. James Gaskell and Patricia Rowell wrote one such study on B.C. Physics teachers (see Rowell & Gaskell, 1987) and in a later work (Gaskell & Rowell, 1993) cite only two other examples of such research: one from Ontario (see Goodson & Dowbiggin, 1991) and one from England (see Layton, 1984). They suggest that even works devoted to curriculum change often neglect to discuss the input of teacher organizations, citing one Canadian example:

Tomkins, in his major study of the history of Canadian curriculum, [see Tomkins, 1986] comments only briefly at the end that teachers’ federations had a direct input to curriculum policy-making, mainly through the representatives of their provincial subject-specialist organizations on provincial committees, and that, less formally, they sought to influence the curriculum through professional development programmes (Gaskell & Rowell, 1993, pg. 69).
In Gaskell and Rowell’s 1993 work, they extend the focus of their earlier work on B.C. Physics teachers and contrast the different approaches to curriculum policy taken by the British Columbia Science Teachers’ Association (BCScTA), a “subject-specialist organization” and the B.C.T.F., a “generalist teachers’ organization” (ibid). Subject-specialist organizations in B.C. represent the interests of teachers of a particular subject, such as science or English; their umbrella group is the B.C.T.F., an organization that represents all teachers in B.C., and is therefore a “generalist” teachers’ organization. Gaskell and Rowell conclude that the BCScTA and the B.C.T.F. employ two different strategies for affecting curriculum control: the BCScTA “emphasizes collective control by teachers over the content and methods of the curriculum” while the B.C.T.F. “emphasizes control of the curriculum by individual teachers making judgements in the context of a particular community and students” (Gaskell & Rowell, 1993, pg. 70). They generalize these findings to suggest that specialist organizations are “likely to be more open to emphasizing collective control” while generalist associations are “more likely to be open to emphasizing the individual autonomy of teachers” (Gaskell & Rowell, 1993, pp. 70-71) and conclude with the comment that more research is needed to study the role of teachers’ organizations in affecting curriculum policy.

Little scholarship, for example, has been devoted solely to the study of the B.C.T.F.; the producer of most of this literature is the B.C.T.F. itself. Its official website contains links to hundreds of items related to its history, its publications, etc. Most other literature on the B.C.T.F. tends to focus on one or two themes: its seemingly dual role of being both a union and a professional association, and its ideological conflicts with
successive B.C. governments. For this reason, and in the interests of brevity, the review of the B.C.T.F. literature will be restricted to these two themes.

The B.C.T.F. divides its history into four distinctive periods: the infancy phase (1919-1926), the adolescent phase (1926-1947), the early maturity phase (1947-1971), and the full maturity phase (1971-present) ("History," 2008). From its inception in 1919 to today, the B.C.T.F. sees itself as having "intertwining goals": "to foster and promote the cause of education in B.C., to raise the status of the teaching profession in B.C. and to promote the welfare of the teachers of B.C." ("History," 2008, n.p.). The B.C.T.F. website states that "every provincial teachers' organization in Canada...has been modelled on the intertwining goals of the economic welfare and the professional concerns of teachers" (ibid). Unfortunately, nowhere on their official website does the B.C.T.F. define "profession" or "professional concerns." Under the heading of "Professional Rights and Responsibility" the website states that "current government directions in education have eroded the professional rights and voices of teachers. The BCTF has developed a model for a PD day to promote professional leadership" (BC Teachers, 2009, n.p.) but no explanation follows; there is simply a link to a proposed outline for a professional development day on the topic of "professional rights and responsibilities" in which teachers are to discuss and determine what these may be.

The B.C.T.F. website also has a link to its code of ethics, which primarily prescribes appropriate behaviours for teachers; one may infer this code outlines the B.C.T.F.'s notion of what "professional" means, at least in behavioural if not philosophical terms. Other links under the heading of "Professional Rights and Responsibility" are "B.C.T.F.-endorsed candidates," "freedom of speech," and two links
to case studies in which teachers’ rights to freedom of speech were challenged. None of these links provides a definition of “professional.”

The one link which does provide some information is to the website of the B.C. College of Teachers. The College does a marginally better job of articulating its notion of professionalism, in that it lists eight “current standards” for teachers which deal with both behavioural and philosophical issues. However, it does not use the word “professional” or any of its variations, even in the “definition” section that follows: words that are defined are very general, such as “authority,” “community,” “conduct,” and “student” (BC College, 2009, n.p.). The College’s website does contain the promising heading of “Professional Conduct,” but the subject matter is almost solely based on complaints, investigations, and discipline decisions, and not with a clearly-articulated definition of what it means to be a teaching professional.

In some of the B.C.T.F.’s own literature, however, it does separate its activities into “union” or “welfare” concerns, and “professional” concerns. Occasionally, it articulates two or three “professional” concerns of teachers that it addresses. In these ways, we can infer the B.C.T.F.’s notion of what it means for teachers to attain “professional status” in B.C.

During its first decade, the B.C.T.F. worked on such “welfare” concerns as improving teachers’ salaries and pensions; and such “professional” concerns as advocating for more teacher training and for more autonomy for teachers concerning classroom materials and curriculum. Conflicts with the government were more concerned with the working conditions of teachers than with ideological differences about education.
From the mid-1920s through the 1940s, the B.C.T.F. continued to work on welfare issues such as continuing contracts for teachers, creating a salary indemnity plan, and improving pensions; its professional concerns were advocating for teacher representation on curriculum committees and participating in the King Commission in 1935 and the Cameron Commission in 1945. Through their ties with organized labour, they were also successful in making membership in the B.C.T.F. compulsory in order “to ensure that teachers followed an ethical standard of conduct” (ibid). Any ideological conflicts with the government were not yet articulated; however, one may assume that the B.C.T.F.’s interest in having teachers on curriculum committees suggests that they felt teachers should be given more of a voice in education.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the B.C.T.F. justified the “major economic advances” made by B.C. teachers in both salaries and pensions as teachers were becoming more highly-trained and professional. The B.C.T.F. lists “major efforts” it made in the “professional development aspects of its work” during this phase (“History,” 2008, n.p.):

...teacher-preparation programs in the universities, in-service education, curriculum development, continuous progress for students, learning conditions for students and teaching conditions for teachers, obtaining adequate resources for new programs, obtaining special attention for students with emotional problems, the activities of provincial specialist associations, the expansion of the Lesson Aids service, and advice to ministerial authorities and school boards on the design of school buildings (“History,” 2008, n.p.)

Although ideological differences are not stated, teachers took part in the first ever B.C.-wide teachers’ strike on March 19, 1971, when the government would not extend better pension benefits to retired teachers.
From the 1970s onwards, major changes were taking place in B.C. education. The B.C.T.F. was concerned with the welfare of teachers as B.C. public sector workers in general and teachers in particular were under funding restraints imposed by the government. Membership in the B.C.T.F. was no longer compulsory; bargaining was localized for a time; contracts were re-written. B.C. teachers joined other union members in a three-day province-wide strike opposing the government’s policies. At the height of the teachers’ conflicts with the government, the Social Credit government (Socreds) conferred professional status on B.C. teachers by creating the College of Teachers in 1987, a topic which will be discussed later in more detail. The relationship between the government and the B.C.T.F. had become increasingly strained during these years. The B.C.T.F. literature refers to the government’s “poor education policies”; to their “attacking the basic rights of unionized workers” and “the human rights of large numbers of British Columbians”; and to their “legislative onslaught on the BCTF” (“History,” 2008, n.p.). Although they again do not articulate a particular ideology, their concern with human rights over economics is indicative of their philosophy. Also noteworthy in the B.C.T.F. literature of this phase is their re-defining the role of the B.C.T.F. president as a “political leader” and marking this change as a defining factor in its shift into their “full maturity phase” (ibid).

It is interesting that in the B.C.T.F. literature, the B.C.T.F. actions against the government’s policies are often justified solely in instrumental rather than ideological terms; in other words, the B.C.T.F. fights the government policies because the policies reduce benefits or ignore contracts, not because the B.C.T.F. disagrees in principle with
their neoliberal ideology. Critics from outside the organization, such as those who follow below, differ in this respect.

Charles Ungerleider, for example, suggests that the greatest reason for the conflicts between the B.C.T.F. and the Social Credit government, who were in power in B.C. for thirty-seven of the forty years between 1952 and 1991, was competing ideologies:

The ideological gulf between the BCTF and Social Credit is vast. Where Social Credit emphasizes the individual, the BCTF places primacy on the group. Instead of competition, the Federation emphasizes cooperation and collective action. Where Social Credit sees inequality as inevitable, the Federation sees it as a condition that may be overcome, at least in part, by education and in large measure through democratically produced social changes (Ungerleider, 1996, n.p.).

He goes on to suggest that the Social Credit ideology informed many of their decisions, such as reduction in government, streamlining of the public sector, privatization, and reduction in the power of organized labour. (Interestingly, Ungerleider makes almost identical claims in 2003 in his book Failing Our Kids, but this time applies them to both the Social Credit and the Liberal parties, generalizing them as “conservative” parties.) Ungerleider believes the Social Credit philosophy is articulated in their Industrial Relations Act of 1987, which encourages employers and employees to work together in order to be “participants in and beneficiaries of a competitive market economy” (as quoted in Ungerleider, 1996, n.p.). Ungerleider believes the ideology of the Social Credit government values “economic interests and individual rights rather than social harmony” (ibid). For example, when the new School Act was proclaimed in 1989, the government’s mission statement for education had an economic thrust:
...the purpose of the British Columbia school system is to enable learners to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy society and a prosperous and sustainable economy (as quoted in Ungerleider, 1996, n.p.).

He contrasts this to the B.C.T.F.’s mission statement:

The broad aim of the public school system should be to foster the growth and development of every individual, to the end that he/she will become a self-reliant, self-disciplined, participating member with a sense of social and environmental responsibility within a democratic society (as quoted in Ungerleider, 1996, n.p.).

Ungerleider also believes that the Social Credit philosophy of competition led to its support of private schools and home schooling; the support of home schooling also carried with it the implied notion that anyone could teach (Ungerleider, 1996). The B.C.T.F. was opposed to both as they made inequities in education a greater possibility, with only richer parents being able to afford private schools or homeschooling.

Ungerleider also addresses a theme common to literature concerning the B.C.T.F.: its dual role as a union and a professional organization. He comments on this in the context of the government’s creating a College of Teachers in 1987, which granted teachers professional status. From an ideological perspective, the government may have been continuing its plan for privatization, given that the College would take over the certification and licensing roles previously provided for free by the government. Also, the government continued to weaken the union, as membership in the B.C.T.F. was no longer compulsory once the College was established. Finally, it may have wanted to “separate the professional concerns of teachers from their economic concerns” (Ungerleider, 1996, n.p.). According to Ungerleider, the B.C.T.F.’s response to the
creation of the College was to “ignore” the positive aspects, such as teachers finally being granted professional status, and instead to focus “almost exclusively on what it perceived to be an attempt by an ideological adversary to dismantle the B.C.T.F.” (ibid).

The themes of ideological difference and the dual role of the B.C.T.F. are also addressed by Fleming (2003). He describes the B.C.T.F. from 1972-1996 as the government’s “unofficial opposition” on educational matters, regardless of which party was in power (Fleming, 2003, pg. 4). Like Ungerleider, Fleming believes that ideological differences were the cause of much of the opposition: whereas the government was making economic decisions which the B.C.T.F. felt were maintaining the status quo, the B.C.T.F. believed that “schools should be used as instruments of social change” (Fleming, 2003, pg. 6). Fleming situates this ideological conflict in the context of a greater shift in thought that was encompassing not just Canada, but all Western governments in the late 1970s:

By the late 1970s, however, the social and political philosophy of liberalism upon which Canadian and other Western governments had been premised for more than a century was losing considerable political currency at home and abroad....Around the same time, critics in and outside government began to question liberalism’s efficacy and called for a new and more limited role for government in various arenas of social life, including schools (Fleming, 2003, pg. 10).

The B.C.T.F. and the government were soon going to conflict over the government’s emerging “neo-conservative or post-liberal” ideology, which emphasized restraint and accountability (Fleming, 2003, pg. 11).

Fleming also discusses the dual role of the B.C.T.F. during these times. Although teachers had made significant gains in professional status in previous years, their militant,
political stance against the government during the years of restraint emphasized their union role, as the B.C.T.F. strengthened its ties with organized labour in its efforts to fight the government’s policies (Fleming, 2003). Fleming makes a connection between the growing union activism of the B.C.T.F. and the two apparent motives of the government in creating the College of Teachers in 1987: first, if teachers were granted professional status, “their public voice might become more professional in tone”; second, by separating teachers’ professional from union concerns, the government believed that the “moderate majority of teachers [would] prevail over the Federation’s radical and militant elements” (Fleming, 2003, pg. 15). Fleming describes the government’s reasoning as both “flawed” and “transparent”: “flawed” in that they misjudged the mindset of B.C. teachers, and “transparent” in that the government clearly intended to divide and thereby weaken the B.C.T.F. (ibid). If there were any doubt that creating the College was for a political rather than an educational purpose, Fleming removes it with an interesting observation: the legislation was written

...in law offices outside the educational civil service. Educational officers in the Ministry of Education, including John Walsh, who headed the government’s legislative and policy section, did not see the government’s proposed bills until one hour before their release and at no time were given an opportunity to review or comment on the efficacy of the legislation (ibid).

Nancy Sheehan and J. Donald Wilson have similarly studied the B.C.T.F., primarily in the context of the professionalization of B.C. teachers (1994). On the topic of the B.C.T.F.’s dual role, they describe the initial decision of B.C. teachers to form a union to try to improve their professional status as “ironic,” which may suggest that they do not see the two roles as being compatible (Sheehan & Wilson, 1994, pg. 3). They
discuss how members of the B.C.T.F. have debated the question of whether they should be more a union or professional organization since its inception. Although they seem to question the B.C.T.F.’s decision to serve two roles, they acknowledge that, by the 1980s, “the development of the B.C.T.F. enabled teachers to focus on both economic and working condition issues and on professional development” with the result that B.C. teachers had made major gains in both areas (Sheehan & Wilson, 1994, pg. 4).

Like Ungerleider, Sheehan and Wilson offer two similar explanations for the government’s creating the B.C. College of Teachers. They cite Ungerleider when they suggest that the government may have been trying to break the B.C.T.F. because of conflicting ideologies. They also agree with Ungerleider that a second reason for the government’s decision may have been to continue their policy of privatization (Sheehan & Wilson, 1994).

In summary, while some interesting work has been done on the B.C.T.F., almost no work has been done on teacher specialists’ associations in B.C., the BCScTA study being an exception. This is a field that invites further research, especially considering the great shifts in ideology that have taken place not only in Canada, but worldwide.

**B.C. Politics**

It is difficult, if not impossible, to discuss the topics of teacher professionalization and teacher associations in B.C. without a discussion of politics. B.C.’s educational history is typified by the constant interplay between government policies, initiatives, and commissions, and the various teacher associations in the province reacting to them. A study of government policy is crucial not only to illustrate the philosophical shifts
undergone by B.C.’s education system over the years, but also to illuminate the reasons for teachers associations’ reactions to them. Unfortunately, with the exception of some work on the B.C.T.F., almost no scholarly work has been done in this area. There is no shortage of discussion in the literature, however, about many of the B.C. government’s educational policies over the years—far too much to discuss in this paper. I have narrowed my focus, therefore, to a discussion of the decades of the 1960s-2000s, as this is the focus of my study of the English teachers’ association in B.C.

The decade of the 1960s began with The Report of the Royal Commission on Education, often referred to as the Chant Report (Report, 1960). The Commission was struck to examine the “academic aspect of public education” for the first time since the Putman-Weir Report of 1925 (Johnson, 1964, pg. 256). In the wake of the Russians launching Sputnik in 1957, there were concerns that the Western education system was too soft, or too “Progressive.” The Commissioners held public meetings in thirty-four locations and read three hundred and sixty briefs, many of which addressed the concern that our schools had become too heavily influenced by Progressive notions (Johnson, 1964) but the Commissioners’ report refutes this claim, saying schools were using a mix of traditional and progressive methods. The report does, however, make many “back-to-the-basics” recommendations, to the chagrin of more progressively-minded critics. Dean N. Scarfe of U.B.C., for example, was quoted in the Vancouver Sun as saying that the report “was aimed at destroying progressive teaching methods in British Columbia” (as quoted in Johnson, 1964, pg. 267).
One criticism of B.C. schools was that they had recently focused too much on the retention of all students. In response, the Commission states that the major aim of B.C.’s public schools is “that of promoting the intellectual development of the pupils, and that this should be the major emphasis throughout the whole school programme” (Report, 1960, pg. 17). “Intellectual development” is their main goal, the Commissioners state, because “more than ever before, the survival of mankind will very largely depend upon learning more intelligent ways for dealing with problems that threaten the human race” (Report, 1960, pg. 18), which is perhaps a response to the threat of the Russians. They provide a second reason: “intellectual development has been traditionally accepted as a primary concern of the schools” (ibid).

The Report recognizes that 1960s classrooms contain students of varying abilities, and the Commissioners recommend that more examinations should be given in schools for the purpose of streaming students:

Examinations would serve to divert from the regular school programme into suitable continuation courses the pupils who have reached a point in the regular school programme where satisfactory progress is not maintained. The continued presence of such pupils in the regular school programme, as at present, tends to lower the standard of instruction that can be set (Report, 1960, pg. 258).

The report focuses on the study of English as the “groundwork for all subsequent education...it is almost wholly through words that thoughts are formulated...” (Report, 1960, pg. 294). The Commissioners recommend that “a high standard of English be demanded in all subjects, and that more emphasis be placed upon systematic practice” (Report, 1960, pg. 295) and further state that “It was disturbing to the Commissioners to find remedial reading classes being continued in the secondary schools, for by that time
any faults in reading that are remedial should have been corrected” (Report, 1960, pg. 299). The Report puts a strong emphasis on reading, writing, and arithmetic; in general, its 158 recommendations encourage a return to more traditional standards and subjects.

The Commissioners make several other recommendations, most of which are implemented in the following two to three years. They suggest that schools change their grade groupings from 6-3-3 or 6-6, to a 7-3-2 system (in other words, seven years of elementary school followed by three of junior secondary then two of senior secondary). They also suggest that six different streams be introduced in senior secondary schools: academic-technical, commercial, industrial, community-services, visual and performing arts, agriculture- vocational (ibid). When these recommendations were implemented, a consistent sixty-seven percent of students took the academic option (Johnson, 1964). On the topic of teacher professionalization, the Commissioners urge “the aim of having all teachers complete a degree course to be implemented as soon as possible” (as quoted in Johnson, 1964, pg. 265). Most scholars suggest that the Chant Report emphasized traditional subjects and values, which was not surprising given the political climate.

The remainder of the 1960s passed with some changes in educational policy, but nothing approaching the scope of the Chant Commission. In 1962, for example, a new Federal-Provincial Training Agreement provided for extending vocational schools that had been established a generation earlier under the Dominion-Provincial Youth Training Act (1937-1942) (Dunae, 2008, n.p.); in 1967 the Social Credit government amended the Public Schools Act giving the government more control over school board funding (ibid).
More significant changes were to come in the decade of the 1970s. In June, 1973, departmental exams (today called provincial exams) were discontinued. There has been much discussion in the literature about why the government made this decision. Rexin (1985) summarizes at least four reasons: the Socreds, who had an election coming up, were trying to placate the B.C.T.F., who had been advocating for the exams’ discontinuance; the government was trying to save money, and the creating, distributing, and marking of the exams were expensive; the government was following the trend of discontinuing exams that had started in Eastern Canada and was moving West; exams were thought to be poor indicators of students’ critical thinking abilities, especially since most of the exams were in multiple-choice format (Rexin, 1985).

By 1977, the public was expressing concerns that standards had slid in B.C., especially since exams were discontinued. According to Education Minister Pat McGeer,

We had a very large survey done about general attitudes towards Education...whether people wanted an improvement in general standards in the school system. There was absolutely no question about the results. Strongly in favour of examinations and the 3 R’s (as quoted in Rexin, 1985, pg. 78).

The Socred government instituted two new programs: a “core curriculum” which outlined "that which must be taught, that which should be taught, and that which may be taught" (ibid); and the Provincial Learning Assessment Program (P.L.A.P.), a wide-scale standardized series of tests for students. As a further means to hold public schools accountable for educating students, the government also introduced Bill 33, which provided for government funding of private schools. McGeer provided the following justification for Bill 33, which was not received well by teachers:
I thought the independent schools should be there as a disciplining force to the public schools. Because then, if necessary, you can certainly prop up the support for the independent schools if you felt that it was really going to be required to bring greater accountability to the public system (as quoted in Rexin, 1985, pg. 83).

The 1970s ended with many teachers feeling resentful that the government not only believed they were incapable of making good curriculum and assessment choices, but also that they needed a “disciplining force.”

During the 1980s, teachers’ resentment increased as two new economic policies were implemented by the Socreds. In February, 1982, Premier Bill Bennett announced a new programme, known as “Restraint,” to curtail government spending; this program provoked “opposition and great hostility among organized labour groups, including provincial employee unions and the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation” (Dunae, 2008, n.p.). In August, Bill Vander Zalm was named Education Minister and was given the task of implementing Restraint measures in the education sector. In 1983, the government announced the School District Restraining Policy, which “raised student-teacher ratios in the classroom, shifted budget control away from school districts and to the Ministry of Education, and led to thousands of teacher layoffs” (ibid), culminating in “School Wars” and the “Solidarity” movement, both of which were discussed earlier in this paper. In the meantime, Vander Zalm had reinstated provincial exams in 1982. His reason for this was not only to test students, but also to “measure the effectiveness of their teachers and schools” (as quoted in Rexin, 1985, pg. 86). The result of the government’s recent actions was to inflame teachers who perceived that the public school system generally and its teachers specifically were under attack.
The 1980s were typified by increasingly strained relations between teachers and the government. When the Socreds announced Bills 19 and 20 in 1987, teachers in general and the B.C.T.F. in particular believed that the government’s prime motive was more to weaken the B.C.T.F. than to grant teachers professional status.

Also in 1987, a Royal Commission on education was appointed under the direction of Barry Sullivan, and has come to be known as the “Sullivan Royal Commission.” The mandate of the Commission was to address “educational issues to do with enhancing the qualities of the system, its mechanisms for accountability, its teaching methods and curricula, its structures for governance and administration, as well as the means available for public, parental and teacher input” (as quoted in Chan, Fisher, & Rubenson, 2007, pg. 12).

Their report was published in 1988, and is thought by many education scholars to be “the document that set the stage for education through to the end of the 20th Century” (Chan et al, 2007, pg. 12) and indeed, many educational policies that follow are based on it. The report states its purpose as to “help address some of the important problems that have been identified in regard to our education system (such as the large number of students who choose not to complete their formal education)” (Year, 1990, pg. v). Chan et al believe its focus on “the right to education based on equality of rights” owes its philosophy to Canada’s recently adopted Constitution and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which is referenced in the report (Chan et al, 2007, pg. 12). The report stresses that the primary focus of schools is to meet the specific individual needs of every learner. The report also comments on teachers; they are seen as professionals who need to become lifelong learners in order to maintain and improve teacher standards so they
can meet the changing demands of teaching in our increasingly diverse and pluralistic society (ibid). The provincial government accepted "nearly all of its 83 recommendations, including a blueprint for an innovative curriculum program known as Year 2000" (Dunae, 2008, n.p.).

In the following year, 1989, the government changed the Public School Act and introduced Parent Advisory Councils at every school. They also produced a report entitled Policy Directions: a response to the Sullivan Commission on Education by the Government of British Columbia. In it, the government published its new mandate for B.C. schools:

The purpose of the British Columbia school system is to enable learners to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy society and a prosperous and sustainable economy (as quoted in Chan et al, 2007, pg. 13).

The shift from the last Royal Commission in 1960, when "academic excellence" was the primary purpose of schools, to this more skills-based, instrumental, economic mandate is unmistakable. "This mandate acknowledged that education had an integral relationship with the economy and was part of a societal agenda" (ibid). The policy also encouraged parental participation, and strongly supported the notion that each child must be taught individually depending on his needs; this was to be accomplished by enhancing the "professionalization" of teachers (Policy, 1989):

Policy Directions suggested that teacher development include learning new instructional strategies to consider diverse groups of students, and that emphasis be placed on teaching students creative thinking and problem solving. Increasingly, teachers were expected to use a number of approaches to develop resources and to diversify their teaching skills and approaches. This trend in teacher development called on teachers to be creative and flexible in recognizing that the needs of students had
changed, and that teaching had changed as a result (Chan et al, 2007, pp. 15-16).

Teachers were to raise their standards in order to meet the needs of their students; the government even instituted Provincial Teaching Excellence Awards. "The discussion of standards was intended to raise the status of the teaching profession and of professional development activities" (Chan et al, 2007, pg. 15).

The Socreds followed this policy paper the next year with its Year 2000: A Framework for Learning policy (Year, 1990). Its defining feature was its focus on individualized instruction for each child.

A child is not "failed" or required to repeat a unit of work because his or her learning rate does not match the expectation for that age group. Emphasis is given to what the child can do rather than what he or she can't do....All learners' programs should be personalized as much as possible to match individual interests and preferences for ways to learn, as well as individual rates of learning...all students should have the opportunity to experience success in their particular program (Year, 1990, pp. 9-10).

As for accountability, a teacher is to report to parents only what students can do and "rarely, if ever, presents information on an individual's learning relative to the performance of other students being taught by that teacher" (Year, 1990, pg. 11).

A second defining feature of the Year 2000 policy is its focus on career preparation; for example, all students must complete a work experience component as part of their graduation requirements. The government reaffirms its interest in preparing students for the workforce: "Our mission is immensely challenging but simple in concept; we are engaged in the task of enabling learners to be the best they can be, both as individuals and as contributing members of society and the economy" (Year, 1990, pg. 29).
The philosophy of the day was to retain as many students as possible in order to give them the best chance at being “successful” in life; another example of this philosophy is the national “Stay in School” initiative during the early 1990s whose purpose was to raise awareness of the number of students who do not graduate and to mobilize people to find ways to keep all students in school.

By 1993 Art Charbonneau was the Minister of Education in the ruling N.D.P. government. He conceded that some of the directions from the Year 2000 had not been successful and would therefore be discontinued. Two changes were a return to structured written reports rather than anecdotal reports in the primary grades, and a return to letter grades and written comments for the secondary grades. Much of the instrumental philosophy of government educational policy, however, did not change with the switch from the Socreds to the N.D.P.. The following three policy documents continue to emphasize skills and career preparation for students and “collectively set the education agenda through to the end of the decade” (Chan et al, 2007, pg. 17).

The 1993 Education Policy document (Improving, 1993) allows for trades people to teach in public schools; as a result, there was a surge in apprenticeship programs. Chan et al suggest that the effect is to deprofessionalize the job of teaching and to turn education into “a system to produce skilled, employable young people for the marketplace” (Chan et al, 2007, pg. 17). This policy was also concerned with increased accountability, requiring teachers to make anecdotal and quantitative comments on report cards. The 1994 Putting Policies into Practice paper (Putting, 1994) continues to emphasize work experience and career preparation programs; also, funding is provided to
schools to promote inclusion, multiculturalism, and diversity (Putting, 1994). Specifically mentioned is the integration of special needs students and updates to E.S.L. policies. For the first time, violence in schools is emphasized as a concern that schools need to address. On the topic of accountability, schools are required to produce data that is easily assessable to the public concerning school finances. The 1995 Skills Now policy (Skills, 1995) emphasized partnerships with business, labour and the community.

Schools had certainly shifted their focus in thirty years, prompting some critics to note that “we are observing a clear allocation and imposition of values on the system at every level” (Chan et al, 2007, pg. 18) which is reflected in “the increasing dominance of a political-economic imperative in the formation of provincial educational policy” (Chan et al, 2007, pg. 25).

Conclusion

A review of the literature on professionalization, teacher organizations, and B.C. politics as separate entities is difficult. In B.C., at least, the three concepts are inextricably-bound. Before I could describe their interrelationships in my own research, I first felt it was necessary to define what professionalization means, and how the conceptualization of teachers-as-professionals continues to change in the Western world. Although educational theorists describe and define professionalism in many ways, two sets of criteria emerge in the literature by which one may measure the success of B.C. English teachers in attaining professional status: Hoyle’s criteria, which describe professionalism in general terms, and Goodson and Hargreaves’s criteria, which pertain
specifically to teachers. As the story of the B.C. English teachers' struggle to attain professional status unfolds, we shall see to what extent they have succeeded.

Secondly, I wanted to explore the changing relationship between teacher associations and governments with a narrower focus on Canada and B.C. Thirdly, I wanted to narrow my focus further to some of the B.C. governments' main policy initiatives that have affected education in general and teachers in particular in B.C. during the 1960s to the 2000s.

There has been significant work done on the topic of professionalization of teachers, especially since it continues to be redefined; there has been some work on Canadian teachers' associations; there has been little work on B.C. associations; there have been copious amounts of work on B.C. politics. I have endeavoured to review the literature on each separately, in the hopes of bringing some clarity to a very complicated relationship.

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4: CHAPTER THREE: HISTORICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND TO B.C. SCHOOLS

Historical Background

The story of the history of education in B.C. is that of an emerging post-frontier, post-colonial society. Although in its earliest days our education system was no more than a collection of one-room schoolhouses scattered over hundreds of inhospitable miles, various historical developments led our population to expand at a breathtaking pace. B.C. now has over 600,000 students attending over 1600 public schools. A primary challenge of our schools has always been to keep up with B.C.’s burgeoning numbers and rapidly-changing society; it seems as though constant change has become part of the “social imaginary” of schooling in B.C., to borrow a phrase from Charles Taylor (2004).

Some of the earliest schools were established on Vancouver Island and in the Lower Mainland as early as the 1850s, when these territories were still colonies of Great Britain. Many small schools were opened during the 1850s: some government-run, some run by the Hudson’s Bay Company, some run by the Church of England, and some by various other religious groups, both Protestant and Catholic. By 1861 the Cariboo gold rush was on, and B.C.’s population increased during the 1860s as a result. In 1870, the colony of B.C. had been promised a trans-continental railroad; in 1871, B.C. became a part of Canada. By 1876, with no railroad yet begun, and B.C. politicians tired of broken promises, B.C. voted to secede from Canada, and the motion was passed fourteen to nine,
but was never acted upon (The Way, 2000). In 1876, B.C.’s first public high school opened in Victoria. On the Mainland, by the late 1870s, about seven hundred people had settled into two communities called Hastings and Granville. The total population in B.C. in 1881 was 49,459: fifty-two percent “natives,” twenty-nine percent British, five percent other Europeans, nine percent Asians, and five percent “Others” (Molyneux, 1992, pg. 43). In 1884, the first Lower Mainland high school was opened in New Westminster.

B.C.’s fledgling Lower Mainland was about to boom: the last spike was driven in the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1885. The first passenger train steamed into Port Moody in 1886, but plans were already underway to extend the tracks to Granville, whose harbour could accommodate ocean-going ships: “the boom that resulted rivaled the gold rush” (Molyneux, 1992, pg. 54). In February, 1886, for example, the town of Granville had a total of only one hundred buildings; in April, Granville was incorporated as the city of Vancouver; by May, there were already eight hundred buildings in the new city; in June, they burned to the ground in the great fire. Work to re-build the city was started immediately, and by the next year, with the new CPR extension, the first passenger train from Montreal arrived in Vancouver, and the first passenger ship from Asia arrived in port three weeks later (ibid). Vancouver was on its way to becoming an international city.

B.C.’s school system was expanding as well. By 1895, there were 14,469 students in public schools, and B.C.’s four high schools—the original high school in Victoria, the New Westminster school, and subsequent schools in Nanaimo and Vancouver—enrolled a total of 460 students (A Century, 1971). From 1900-1910, the
high school population in B.C. almost quadrupled from 584 to 1988 students as B.C.’s industrial society started to flourish. The changing demographics of B.C.’s population was leading to

Considerable social and economic unrest as unemployment, racial riots, radical politics and class conflict became acute...Reformers tried to ameliorate severe conditions of working people and bring order to the community threatened by the spread of moral decay, unsanitary conditions and class antagonisms. The reorganization of public education after 1900 was one means of dealing with these conditions (Dunn, 1979, pg. 239).

Dunn’s comments make clear how the economic and moral state of our society played a vital role in determining the direction of educational reform in B.C. (The resulting philosophical shift in education will be discussed in the next section.)

In the next decade, from 1910-1920, B.C.’s high school population again almost quadrupled from 1988 to 7,259 (A Century, 1971). In the midst of this continuing boom, world events again affected education, when World War I broke out and lasted for four years, 1914-1918. At the end of the war, several factors had to be considered in meeting the needs of B.C. students, such as the continuing population boom in B.C., and a federal initiative to prepare veterans for their return to civilian life. Two of the results were the offering of more vocational courses in schools and the relaxation of high school entrance requirements to encourage more students to stay in school, thus accomplishing two goals: keeping students out of the depressed job market and better preparing them for jobs in B.C.’s changing post-war economy. Once more, world events affected the curriculum of B.C.’s schools.

As the economy continued to struggle and the school system continued to grow during the 1920s, education became increasingly difficult to finance; property owners
were starting to complain about the amount of property taxes they were paying to fund the school system. In 1925 a commission was struck to study all aspects of the B.C. school system including its finances; the report of the commission would lead to some widespread changes in B.C. schools, which will be discussed in the next section. Another development in B.C. schools in the late 1920s, which was meant to encourage more students to stay in school, was the abolition of entrance exams.

By the new decade of the 1930s, B.C.’s education system was still growing exponentially. It now served 115, 919 pupils (A Century, 1971). More remarkably, in the 1930-31 school year, B.C.’s students were scattered amongst 830 separate school districts. This fact alone foreshadows future efforts by the B.C. government to centralize some government practices related to education; the system was an administrative nightmare. District consolidation began in the mid-1930s and was to continue for over a decade.

Not only did the overall number of students in public schools continue to grow during the 1930s, but the percentage of students who were staying in school was also growing. Whereas in 1923, high school students made up less than ten percent of B.C.’s student population, by 1935, twenty-eight percent of the age group was enrolled in grade twelve (Johnson, 1964). It was becoming clear that the curriculum needed to be revised in light of the fact that many of the grade twelve students were no longer university-bound, as was the assumption in the past.

The next great historical event was, of course, World War II. Perhaps surprisingly, the war did not have a significant impact on our education system during the
1940s. In fact, “the schools carried on with little evidence, for some time, of the effects of the war effort” (Johnson, 1964, pg. 123). There were some changes to be sure:

There was the sale throughout the schools of war savings certificates; the growth of the junior Red Cross league; the requirement of the oath of allegiance from all teachers, and the regulation of the Council of Public Instruction that cadet corps be re-established wherever possible in high schools; the male teachers took military training to qualify as cadet instructors…(Johnson, 1964, pg. 123).

However, the government did note that during the war years their funding would be restricted, and they informed teachers that “we may be obliged to mark time” until the war was over (Johnson, 1964, pg. 124). Both teachers and the government, however, recognized that the end of the war would result in a baby boom. They needed to prepare for another surge in the population of B.C. schools.

By the mid-1950s, B.C. schools had distinguished themselves for having retention rates double the national average. Fifty-one percent of B.C. students were reaching grade twelve; “comparable figures for Canada as a whole at that time (1956) were one quarter” (Johnson, 1964, pg. 188). To some critics of our education system, this was a troubling statistic, as they felt that greater numbers of students were successful at senior high school because the curriculum had been simplified over the years.

B.C. schools certainly had changed. From their earliest days a century before, schools had changed from tiny, one-room frontier buildings heated with wood stoves stoked by the teacher, to large, bright, urban composite schools with all the modern conveniences. B.C. had similarly undergone massive changes, from a colonial outpost to an increasingly populated province boasting an international city. The history of B.C. is reflected in the schools’ curriculum, practices, and finances. Even more pronounced,
however, are the accompanying philosophical shifts in B.C. education from its early days to 1959, when my study begins.

**Philosophical Background**

The philosophical changes in educational thought that took place in B.C. schools during the time of my study are not unique. Throughout our history, the education system in B.C. has constantly changed its vision of the purpose of our schools and the role of teachers in implementing that vision.

In the new British colony of Victoria in 1870, schools had two main purposes: the maintenance of the British class system, and the inculcation of the religious beliefs of the Church of England (Barman, 1986, pg. 242). When John Jessop, B.C.’s first superintendent of schools, was appointed in 1872, he believed that schools should be non-sectarian, and felt that the Church of England had too much influence in the schools. In the *Public School Act* of 1872 he made schools non-denominational and free. He also abolished corporal punishment, believing instead in rewarding students for good behaviour rather than punishing them for bad behaviour (Johnson, 1964). Jessop thus was instrumental in setting B.C. schools on the more “Progressive” path advocated by his ex-teacher and mentor, Egerton Ryerson, Ontario’s first superintendent of schools.

By 1890, schools were no longer expected to instruct children in religion, but the English school system continued to be the blueprint for B.C. schools. The Superintendent’s annual report stated that the B.C. curriculum was “sufficiently comprehensive to enable the pupil to obtain a good ordinary English Education, which is the chief aim of our school system” (as quoted in Dunae, 2008, n. p.). The turn of the
century saw a more pronounced philosophical shift. Various courses in the “manual arts” were introduced in B.C. schools. Although their stated purpose was for students to develop dexterity and to learn practical skills, as the head and the heart were to work “in concert,” there are two other possible reasons for their introduction: with schools becoming more “Progressive” in trying to meet the needs of more students, educators needed to find courses for non-academic students; another reason may have been that B.C. was in desperate need of skilled labourers (Dunae, 2008, n. p.). Schools very early in B.C. were either trying to provide differentiated instruction as they were becoming more inclusive, or they were becoming more instrumental in educating future labourers for the province—perhaps both.

This trend continued. By 1920, schools were offering a myriad of courses to students, including many new “vocational” courses whose intent was to prepare students for “life” and not just university (Dunn, 1979). Both business people and educators felt that the schools’ “white collar bias” gave students the impression that manual work was inferior to academic work, a philosophy that was not compatible with society’s needs (Dunn, 1979, pg. 244). As our economy demanded skilled labourers, “strengthening the relation between schools and industry became a central purpose of vocationalism” at least for boys (ibid). For girls, however, the story was quite different. In the decade of the 1910s in B.C., the philosophy of our education system was that the role of women was to strengthen the family unit, and thereby the social cohesion of the nation....Domestic science and home economics contributed to industrial citizenship by preparing girls for their place at work, and, more important, in the home. Educators argued that if young women could properly manage a home and bring up children, they could strengthen the community fabric and counteract social distress generated by industrialism (Dunn, 1979, pg. 251-252).
We can see now the basis for the continuing debate over whether B.C. schools should be academic or vocational institutions, or both: a debate which continues to this day. We can also gain an appreciation of the upcoming battles that will be waged in society concerning women's rights, and in schools concerning gender equity.

After World War I, many educators thought that a "new deal" in education was needed (Johnson, 1964, pg. 101). For the first time, the government considered the role that teachers might play in effecting changes: the superintendent of schools encouraged teachers in 1922 to become "students of the new education" (Johnson, 1964, pg. 162). New progressive methods were being touted as the way to improve education, and the first ever study of the B.C. school system was commissioned. The resulting Putman-Weir Report of 1925 proposed a continued shift away from a "traditional" and "rigid" curriculum and "factual" teaching methods, to a more progressive curriculum and progressive teaching methods (Putman, 1925, pg. 112). Their correlative objectives were to retain more students and to meet the diverse needs of all students. We will see how this philosophy is sometimes questioned, but continues to be a mainstay of B.C.'s educational philosophy today.

The progressive nature of B.C. schools and the government's inclusion of teachers' input continued into the 1930s. In 1935, Minister of Education George Weir announced that a committee of teachers was "planning a new curriculum to be the most up-to-date in Canada" (as quoted in Johnson, 1964, pg. 313). The responsibility given to teachers may be indicative of the government's recognition of their status. Also interesting is the purpose of the new curriculum: "to make future British Columbians
more socially-minded, more cooperative in their attitude to society as a whole” (ibid).

Furthermore, the function of the school in 1935 was described thus:

...through carefully selected experiences, to stimulate, modify and
direct the growth of each pupil, physically and mentally, morally and
socially, so that the continual enrichment of the individual’s life and an
improved society may result (as quoted in Johnson, 1964, pg. 314).

We see an emphasis on meeting every student’s needs as before, but gone is the
implication that schools must produce future workers: the focus was on an improved
society rather than a prepared workforce.

The focus on providing an education for every student becomes increasingly more
pronounced during the 1940s: the schools’ goals of making students feel accepted and
happy is best exemplified in the Department of Education’s inaugural newsletter of 1946.
Its headline is, “What is a Good School?” and the text begins, “A good school is a place
where you do more than cultivate good habits, develop initiative, and get a sound
education” (British Columbia Schools, 1946, pg. 1). It continues, listing twenty-two
indicators of a “good school,” the first being “It is a place where you are surrounded by
love and friendly understanding” (ibid). Not one of the twenty-two items mentions
curriculum or course content, nor does any item allude to anything one would consider an
“academic” concern of schools (Salkel, 2002). The Department of Education in 1948
similarly declared that high schools are “no longer a selective institution for the
intellectual, cultural or economic elite” but “a school for every man’s child” (as quoted in
Johnson, 1964, pg. 184). The philosophy of education certainly had changed since its
earliest days in B.C.

Some critics felt it had changed too much. During the 1950s, criticism started to
surface in the United States and Canada about the perceived declining standards in
schools; in Canada, the charge was led by Hilda Neatby, whose book *So Little for the Mind* (1953) was a stinging indictment of the Canadian school system. Her overall thesis was that schools were so interested in retaining all students and in making them “happy,” that they were producing scores of functionally illiterate students who were incapable of intelligent thought. She further charged that our system, in its quest for equality, had instead settled for “democratic equalitarianism” resulting in “a dull level of mediocrity” rather than excellence (Neatby, 1953, pg. 317). Her words seemed prophetic when in 1957, the Russians launched Sputnik. Critics warned that our Western education system had become “too soft, dealing with fads and frills, and that education needs to return to basic studies, like mathematics and science” (Ozmon & Craver, 1999, pp. 68-69). Teachers were still considered to be the professionals who would meet this challenge and lead the way in the education system’s renewal. The philosophy of B.C.’s education system was about to undergo a rather short-lived back-to-the-basics movement. It is in this context that the English teachers of B.C. formed their association.

**References**


Introduction

From its modest beginnings in 1917 as a group of teachers trying to improve their working conditions to today, the B.C.T.F. (British Columbia Teachers’ Federation) has become a powerful “union of professionals” (BC, 2008, n.p.). For almost a century in B.C. the B.C.T.F. has proclaimed itself the voice of teachers in this province, and has taken on the responsibility not only to address union or “welfare” issues of teachers, but also to fight for their right to become a professional organization. It is this dual, sometimes contradictory function that best defines the vision of the B.C.T.F.

The road to professionalism for B.C. teachers has been a turbulent one, not only because of conflicts between the government and the teachers, but also because the philosophy of the B.C. education system during the twentieth century was shifting. Part of the struggle for the B.C.T.F. in its early years was to have the voices of teachers heard in a system that was tightly controlled by the “schoolmen” who supervised and controlled the education system, while the (mostly young, female) teachers carried out the implementation of the prescribed practices for the benefit of the masses. In addition to the B.C.T.F.’s struggle to represent the teachers’ interests in union issues such as bargaining, working conditions, salaries, and pensions, the B.C.T.F. also strove towards the goal of the professionalization of teaching, which was historically a relatively new conceptualization of educators.
The efforts of the B.C.T.F. to raise the status of its teachers to that of professionals and to improve their working conditions is one of struggle and conflict, the seeds of which were sown before the B.C.T.F. had formed, in the earliest Colonial days of education in B.C.

**Pre-B.C.T.F.**

During the first half of the nineteenth century, British Columbia’s education system was just starting to develop. In 1865, the Free School Act established free, non-denominational schools, a General Board of Education, and local school boards. Two years later, Canada became a nation, and under the terms of the British North America Act, “provincial legislatures assumed full legal responsibility for education within their jurisdictions” (Fleming & Hutton, 1997, n.p.).

When B.C.’s public system ran into financial trouble, so much so that the Victoria board of education could not always pay its teachers (“History,” 2008, n.p.) a new act, the Common School Ordinance of 1869, reinstated fees, with the result that many children in B.C. could not afford an education. However, three years later, the Free Public School Act of 1872 again created “free, non-sectarian public schools for children ages 6-16.... [It] re-established a central Board of Education and provided for the election of local school boards within school districts” (Encyclopedia of British Columbia, 2008, n.p.). “Wherever a handful of settler children could be gathered together, a free non-denominational public school was to be opened and operated” (Sheehan & Wilson, 1994, pg. 2.). Universal education in B.C was becoming established along with the modern notion of educating the masses for the sake of progress.
Teacher associations were also becoming established. “John Jessop, the Superintendent of Education, organized British Columbia’s first Teachers’ Institute in 1874. The institute was intended to promote effective teaching methods and improve classroom administration. Meetings of the Teachers’ Institute were held annually until 1916” (Dunae, 2008). During the 1880s, several other professional teachers’ associations were formed independent of the government: the Victoria Teachers’ Association (1885), the New Westminster Teachers’ Institute (1886), and the Kootenay Teachers’ Institute (1899) (Dunae, 2008). Although teachers were organizing to work towards improving their practice, the requirement to teach in B.C. was not very stringent: with B.C.’s rapidly increasing population, especially after the extension of the railway to B.C. in 1886, the need for teachers was so great that “to become a teacher in this era was largely a matter of self-selection” (Sheehan & Wilson, 1994, pg. 2). Teachers were considered temporary employees of the province and had little input in educational decisions. The climate was not right to educate a highly specialized group of professionals.

With the new century came changes. In 1901 school attendance became mandatory for “urban children” aged seven to fourteen (Encyclopedia of British Columbia, 2008, n.p.) and the first Normal School opened in Vancouver for the training of teachers. For the first time, “professional educational credentials became accepted in lieu of provincial examinations”; the province with its ability to license teachers defined who was qualified to teach in B.C. (Sheehan & Wilson, 1994, pg. 3). As B.C.’s population continued to grow during the first two decades of 1900 and the need for teachers was great, teaching qualifications remained rather basic; one could teach with a high school diploma and only four months of normal school (Sheehan & Wilson, 1994,
However, as the number of teachers grew in these two decades, so did their dissatisfaction with the education system in general and their jobs in particular, and they were starting to organize:

Teacher institutes were held during alternate years to discuss professional and curriculum concerns. Teachers could not be openly critical in such a forum. There were many sources of dissatisfaction facing teachers of that era. The economic stresses created by the war had caused prices to rise at a rate five times faster than the rate of increase in teacher salaries. Capricious acts by some employers—the disrespect of teachers’ rights, the lack of tenure or professional contracts, and the general pressures of the war were causing many to abandon their positions. Teachers played no part in the management of schools or in the formulation of educational policy (“History,” 2008, n.p.).

In October of 1916 the leaders of various local teacher associations, including the newly established Vancouver Teachers’ Association (1914), met and decided to create an umbrella organization for the teachers of B.C.; the result was the B.C. Teachers’ Federation, which held its first official meeting in January, 1917, and was incorporated as a “benevolent society” in July, 1919 (“History,” 2008, n.p.).

In its earliest days it was concerned more with union issues than in elevating teachers to professional status, but its goals changed over time. The B.C.T.F. separates its history into four phases: infancy (1919-1926), adolescent (1926-1947), early maturity (1947-1971), and full maturity (1971-present) during which we can study their priorities.

**B.C.T.F. 1919-1926**

From its very beginnings, the B.C.T.F. has striven to be both a union and a professional organization. This dual purpose, usually seen as separate and even contradictory entities, has typified the B.C.T.F. since its inception.
Ironically, the path which British Columbia teachers took to try to improve their professional status was to form a teachers’ union in 1917. The debate over whether the B.C.T.F. should play by the rules of the trade union or the professional association was to extend over close to three decades before the Federation formally affiliated with the Trades and Labour Congress in 1943. But support for labour affiliation within the Federation was always precarious, divided as it was between those who favoured unionism as such and those who preferred to develop a professional association (Sheehan & Wilson, 1994, pg. 3).

Indeed, the earliest concerns of the new B.C.T.F. were more union issues such as teachers’ salaries and pensions, disputes which led to the first ever teachers’ strike in the British Empire in Victoria in 1919.

Also of concern to the B.C.T.F. in its early days was its goal of “making teaching a true profession” (ibid) which was defined the following way:

The Federation has consistently sought to achieve professional recognition by identifying and promoting the expertise that sets teaching apart from other tasks in society. Its professional goals have been pursued in terms of improved qualifications, a recognition of the inevitability of change and a willingness to engage in a continuous process of re-education through a variety of in-service education activities, and a demand for freedom for teachers to make decisions about their work in the classroom and about instructional materials and curriculum (ibid).

According to Sheehan and Wilson (1994), however, it was doubtful that teaching had reached a professional status in those early years:

In early twentieth century British Columbia, about the time that the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation came into being in 1917, it was difficult to tell whether teaching was a profession or not. The pay was certainly poor and teachers’ work was highly supervised. In that sense teaching was hardly “professional.” One might even argue that teaching resembled more a working class job with low status, little autonomy, strict supervision and few educational requirements....Teaching, at least at elementary school, was not exactly “mental” work, either. Much of it was routinized around standardized textbooks and classroom procedures, and supervision from male principals, inspectors and school trustees continued to increase as the
educational bureaucracy became firmly established (Sheehan & Wilson, 1994, pg. 3).

As the first two decades of the 1900s came to a close, the B.C.T.F. continued to fight for the rights of teachers. During the week-long strike by New Westminster teachers in 1921, for example, the B.C.T.F. organized financial support for the teachers from other locals, thus setting the precedent for the B.C.T.F. reserve fund which for the next fifty years financed collective bargaining initiatives (Novakowski, 1999, n.p.). As for professional concerns, the B.C.T.F. took the opportunity to “play a major role” in the first comprehensive survey of education in B.C., the Putnam-Weir survey of 1924-25 (“History,” 2008, n.p.). Unfortunately, the writers of the Putman-Weir report of 1925 are rather critical of the professionalism of B.C. teachers.

The first few years of the B.C.T.F. were indeed its infancy; it set as its mandate the double function of acting both as a union, and therefore addressing “welfare interests” of B.C. teachers, and acting as a professional association (“History,” 2008, n.p.). As the B.C. education system enters its new phase post Putman-Weir, the B.C.T.F. enters what it calls its “adolescent phase” during which it continues to perform this double function.

**B.C.T.F. 1926-1947**

Although in 1929 Vancouver teachers negotiated a salary scale based on experience and certification, the Great Depression struck, and teachers were all paid the minimum scale amount for many years (“History,” 2008, n.p.). Because of the economic climate, the B.C.T.F. made little headway for several years in improving salaries or working conditions for its teachers, but it was not for lack of effort. The B.C.T.F. remained an active voice for teachers during the first half of the 1930s, particularly in
relation to union issues. B.C. teachers were involved in "court cases, strike funds, letters and petitions, mass meeting, boycotting local boards of education and demonstrations" (Smaller, 1998, pg. 2). Finally, "through the determined efforts of grassroots teachers' groups (and over the objections of many of their provincial union leaders), teachers became affiliated with the national Trades and Labour Congress in 1934" (Smaller, 1998, pg. 2). The activism of B.C. teachers paid off, such that when the economy improved in the latter half of the 1930s, B.C. teachers won benefits that surpassed most teachers in Canada. For example, on "welfare interests," in 1937 binding arbitration was entrenched in the Public Schools Act; in 1938 teachers were able to get continuing contracts; and in 1939 the B.C.T.F. established a salary indemnity plan for teachers who ran out of paid sick leave ("History," 2008, n.p.).

To further strengthen its position as the united voice of B.C. teachers, the B.C.T.F. was fighting for compulsory membership. The B.C.T.F. "used its affiliation with organized labour to gain public support for its position on compulsory membership" ("History," 2008, n.p.). It was "a long and difficult struggle" which eventually resulted in ninety-three percent of B.C. teachers being members of the B.C.T.F. (ibid). Whereas other teacher groups, such as those in Alberta and Saskatchewan, considered the enforcement of ethical standards of conduct as a negative result of the newly-implemented Teachers' Profession Act (Smaller, 1998), the B.C.T.F. felt that "professional status demanded that the Federation enforce professional ethics for the profession" ("History," 2008, n.p.). It is one of the ironies of B.C. educational politics that the B.C.T.F. fought for the right to establish itself as a professional organization by using its labour affiliation to win that right.
During the 1930s, the B.C.T.F. made some professional gains, one of which was the right to have one of its members on the Department of Education's advisory curriculum committee. The B.C.T.F. was thus able to express its views (although not to effect any changes) on curriculum revision, resources, and Departmental examinations as well as to discuss teaching strategies ("History," 2008, n.p.). The B.C.T.F. also "played a significant role in two royal commissions—the King Commission in 1935 and the Cameron Commission of 1945" ("History," 2008, n.p.).

The phase of the B.C.T.F. saw it start to establish itself in several key ways: it became affiliated with organized labour in B.C., it had the membership of ninety-three percent of B.C. teachers, and it was beginning to establish itself as a professional organization. Although the B.C.T.F. was given more of a voice in the 1930s and 1940s, its effect was more on "welfare" issues than professional ones.

One of the reasons that the B.C.T.F. was successful in furthering the causes of B.C. teachers during the 1930s and 1940s is that the government was invested in education as a means to increase the overall productivity of its citizens:

Modern Western economies had been run along the lines of Keynesian economics which fostered and legitimated direct state intervention in industrial production and economic life more generally....More than this, the state expanded its investment in education, medicine and social welfare as ways of responding to rising social aspirations, "buying off" potential dissent, creating and sustaining a technically educated and physically healthy labor force, and generally trying to construct conditions of sufficient social harmony for economic productivity to prosper (Hargreaves, 1994, pg. 31).

This was especially true in the boom years after World War II, when a goal of post-war schools was "to produce future workers and consumers for mass-consumption society" (Robertson, 1996, pg. 33). Capitalism was flourishing, and there was a mass expansion
of schooling because of universal access. All was not well however, as some critics of the education system believed that “despite the rhetoric of equity and uniformity” it was clear that some students were receiving a better education than others, sometimes because of streaming brighter students into better programs (Robertson, 1996, pg. 33). However, the post-war years were years of optimism, and people continued to believe in education as a means to a better life:

Critics and researchers in the 1940s pointed out the class biases in the education system, and a natural response was to eliminate them by extending more schooling to those who had been excluded...Above all, there was popular support. For most people in the 1940s, more education was one of the hopes they had for a better and more equal postwar world (Connell et al., 1982, pg. 19).

The 1940s were years of economic growth and improvements in the lives of most British Columbians, which translated into increased professional status for the teachers who were grooming the next generation of workers for society. During the decades of the 1950s and 1960s, the education system in B.C. would undergo significant growth, and the teachers and government struggled to keep up. Given the strong economy and the advances made on teachers’ “welfare” issues in the preceding decades, the B.C.T.F. turns its focus to teachers’ professional issues.

**B.C.T.F. 1947-1971**

The 1950s were typified by various competing forces leading to changes in B.C. education. One tension concerned the role teachers expected the B.C.T.F. to play:

...support for labour affiliation within the Federation was always precarious, divided as it was between those who favoured unionism as such and those who preferred to develop a professional association.
The Federation thus broke with the TLC [Trades and Labour Congress] in 1956 (Sheehan & Wilson, 1994, pg. 3).

Although the B.C.T.F.'s stated role was addressing both "the complementary areas of teacher welfare and professional concerns" ("History," 2008, n.p.), it is quite clear that most of their energies in the 1950s and 1960s were directed towards the professionalization of teachers: "Because many economic battles had been won in earlier decades, the B.C.T.F. was able to devote a greater emphasis on the professional development aspects of its work" ("History," 2008, n.p.). It may not be a coincidence, for example, that 1956, the same year the B.C.T.F. broke its labour affiliation, is also the year that teachers in B.C. were to be certified by the university instead of the government. Perhaps the B.C.T.F. intended to become more "professional" by its break with the union; the movement toward university-educated teachers seemed to be a step towards professionalism. By the end of World War II, following the lead of U.S. schools, secondary school teachers were expected to have a university degree plus a year of teacher certification, and elementary teachers were to have one year of Normal School, now often called "Teachers' College" (Sheehan & Wilson, 1994, pg. 4). B.C. was one of the first Canadian provinces to have all of its public school teachers university trained (Sheehan & Wilson, 1994, pg. 4).

Although the university training of B.C. teachers was a step towards professionalization, both demographics and politics intervened. Because of the baby boom after the war, B.C.'s education system was undergoing significant growth:

In the twenty-four year period from 1947-1971, there was a thirty-five-fold increase in educational expenditures; in 1970-71, the money spent on education equalled the entire provincial budget only nine years earlier. During this same period, school enrolments almost quadrupled from 137,827 to 527,106 pupils, and secondary enrolments increased by
a factor of nearly five. The growth in the teacher population in these years was no less impressive: between 1947-1971, the number of teachers rose from 4,833 to 22,301” (Fleming, 1986, pg. 297).

Because of this boom, the demand for teachers “severely outstripped the supply” (Sheehan & Wilson, 1994, pg. 4). The result was that the provincial government “delayed the introduction of longer training periods and more stringent certification requirements” (ibid) and therefore

...managed to direct and exert control over both the training and licensing of teachers in the various public school systems. This situation contrasted sharply with other professions in Canada, such as law, medicine and dentistry, where both education and self-regulation were supervised by their respective professional bodies. If the notion of a profession involves the use of a professional organization, belief in public service, sense of calling, belief in self-regulation, and a large degree of autonomy in its day-to-day operation, then teaching in Canada had some way to go at least with respect to the last two points (Sheehan & Wilson, 1994, pg. 4).

Whereas teachers in B.C. were struggling to attain the professional status they wanted, the B.C.T.F. was making “major efforts” in many areas concerning teacher welfare as well as teacher professionalism (although they do not note the amount of success they achieved).

Although the B.C.T.F. was making valiant efforts in the 1950s to have teachers become true professionals, world events again intervened in the latter half of the decade. When the Russians launched Sputnik in 1957, some critics in the western world became concerned about the quality of our education system. Not only was the curriculum about to undergo significant changes in the U.S. and in Canada as a result, but the role of teachers as curriculum experts was being challenged:

...the origins of the ambitious national curriculum change efforts of the 1960s lie in the response of the Kennedy administration to U.S. fears of
Soviet scientific ascendancy during the Cold War. The very purpose of these national curriculum initiatives was to effectively remove the curriculum from the control of teachers and local developers. Educators, who in the view of politicians and academic critics like the historian Richard Hofstadter were responsible for the slide in educational standards in America, should not be trusted with the solution. Thus, curriculum development became a matter for cognitive psychologists and disciplinary experts from the relevant subject areas....A lack of adequate attention to the place of teachers as acting subjects in educational reform movements reduces teachers to the status of simply being the installers of curriculum rather than being originators of the curriculum (Carson, 2005, pg. 2).

It seemed that experts, particularly those in the areas of math and science, were to shore up the failing North American education system, especially with its “progressive” methods. With the efficacy of the B.C. school system and its teachers being questioned, it is not surprising that the government decided B.C. schools were in need of a thorough examination. A Royal Commission headed by Dean Chant of the University of British Columbia was struck in 1958, and its report, The Chant Report, would be published in 1960. It is in this context that the English teachers of British Columbia first came together to form their association.

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The B.C.T.F.

As the 1950s came to an end, a philosophy emerged, particularly in the United States but also in Canada, that schools had to get “back to the basics” if they were to be competitive on the world stage. There were concerns that North American schools were too “progressive” and that a greater emphasis was needed on academics, specifically math and science. Now, more than ever, science was going to save the Western world from its problems, both external and internal, and the job of teachers was to implement these new methods:

Such adoration of science, its deification, probably reached its height of influence in the early 1960s, shortly after Sputnik and just at the beginning of the curriculum reform movement. The Fall 1963 issue of Daedalus praises science and its methodology—in the form of professionalism and expert knowledge—as “characteristic of the modern world as the crafts were of the ancient” (p. 649). At this time it was believed that professional, scientific knowledge would help us compete with the Russians in space, defeat the communists in Vietnam, eliminate poverty and improve health care at home, and increase the knowledge base of young people. Teaching machines, programmed learning, and a teacher-proof curriculum were the wave of the future, the road to social salvation (Doll, 1993, pg. 2).

It is not surprising, then, that when the Chant Report was published in 1960 after a thorough survey of the B.C. school system it included several suggestions for a “back-to-the-basics” style of education; even though it concluded that B.C. schools were an amalgam of both “progressive” and “traditional” methods (Report, 1960, pg. 352). It had little to say, however, about who should be making curriculum decisions in B.C. schools,
although it did serve as a platform for the B.C.T.F. to advocate for the rights of teachers to have more of a voice:

Although the Chant Commission proved to be of little consequence in changing the administrative structure of British Columbia schools, it provided a timely forum for the expression of long-held resentments against tight provincial control of education. Moreover, the hearings afforded the BCSTA [British Columbia School Trustees' Association] and the BCTF a welcome opportunity to present publicly their case for the local control of schools....(Fleming, 1986, pg. 297).

On the other hand, political scientist Frank MacKinnon’s book, *The Politics of Education*, also published in 1960, had a lot to say, especially about the professionalization of teachers:

MacKinnon advocated granting a large amount of local control to the public schools, even down to the individual school, and recommended that teachers should become a true profession by virtue of being allowed to regulate themselves as to certification, discipline and professional development in much the same way as Canadian doctors, engineers and lawyers were able to do....MacKinnon centred his critique on the fact that at that time [1960] teaching was the only profession where the State controlled both training and licensing (Sheehan & Wilson, 1994, pg. 4).

In such politically-charged times, however, it was unlikely that the government would be willing to turn over control of education to teachers. It is clear that during the 1950s, there was still much debate about whether or not teachers were true professionals who should be granted full professional status not only to regulate themselves, but also to affect decisions concerning the education system in B.C.

As the new decade of the 1960s began, the B.C.T.F. scored a victory: in 1961, after decades of advocating for B.C. teachers, the B.C.T.F. was granted the opportunity for input into curriculum decisions in B.C. schools. The government appointed two standing committees on curriculum, one for elementary schools and one for secondary
schools, containing members representing the Ministry of Education, universities, school trustees, and the B.C.T.F. ("History," 2008, n.p.). Its hopes of continuing to affect curriculum decisions were rather short-lived, however; the B.C.T.F. was given few opportunities for further dialogue or input over the next five years. Finally, in 1967-68, the B.C.T.F. "stimulated and provoked a study and debate within the teaching profession of British Columbia" which saw hundreds of teachers present briefs to the government resulting in a document entitled The Key to Better Schools which made recommendations about the future of education in B.C. ("History," 2008, n.d.).

What may have motivated the B.C.T.F. to become more involved in the educational policies of B.C. schools was the continuing (and increasing) philosophical divide between the B.C.T.F. and the Social Credit party (Socreds). The Socreds under W.A.C. Bennett had been in power in B.C. since 1952, and throughout the 1950s and the 1960s, the "ideological gulf" between the two continued to grow. In 1967, when the government passed legislation to amend the Public Schools Act giving the government more control over school board finances, the B.C.T.F. mounted a campaign to inform the public about the policy (Ungerleider, 1996, pgs. 2-3). Then in 1969, an election year, the B.C.T.F. mounted another campaign, this time against the government's school financing policies, but to no avail: the campaign was seen as an attack against the popular Socreds, who scored a decisive victory in the election (Ungerleider, 1996, pg. 3). When Tom Hutchinson, the B.C.T.F. president addressed the B.C.T.F. annual general meeting of 1969, he called for teachers to become more "political" and "militant" in their efforts to oppose the government's policies:

   Teacher power is only beginning....It's the power that comes from confidence in professional preparation and experience and the right that
the preparation and experience gives to a voice in education. Power also means that we have to become political. This does not mean partisan politics. It means our involvement in influencing those who have, or may have, the political power to allocate resources....It means a constant effort to educate ourselves and the public on the needs of education; it means fostering public attention on government and board education policies, and it means short run sacrifices by some of us, in militant action, when there appears to be no other way of dramatizing an intolerable situation....We need more authority in many areas: in pensions, in control of entry to the profession, in the proper training and apprenticeship of teachers, in control of incompetence, and above all, in having the right to assist students to an education appropriate to them.... (as quoted in Ungerleider, 1996, pg. 2).

Hutchinson is urging teachers to become more “professionalized,” in that they need to be the ones in control of decisions affecting their profession. Although the focus of the B.C.T.F. during the 1950s and 1960s had clearly been on improving the professional status of teachers, it should be noted that they also continued to work on improving the welfare of teachers, including asking the government in 1969 for major changes to the pension plan, some of which were finally implemented in 1971. The new militancy of the B.C.T.F. in the late 1960s, however, is a preview of what is to come.

Whereas the B.C.T.F. focused on more welfare issues in the 1930s and 1940s, their focus shifted to professional issues in the 1950s and 1960s. Although the B.C.T.F. had been through some turbulent times, relations between it and the Social Credit government would get worse. The next phase of the B.C.T.F., from 1971 onward, was to be the most turbulent of all.
S.A.T.E.

In 1959, shortly after the launch of Sputnik and the striking of a new Royal Commission on education in B.C., a new association was formed in British Columbia that would one day become a very powerful voice for English teachers in B.C. in their efforts to have input into the B.C. English/Language Arts curriculum. S.A.T.E., the Secondary Association of Teachers of English, began as a provincial specialists’ association under the umbrella of the B.C.T.F., and although based in Vancouver, then the largest school district in B.C., it had local chapters in nine other districts (East Kootenay, Okanagan, Fraser Valley, North Central, Vancouver Island, Peace River, North Shore, Howe Sound, and Central).

Because fifty years have passed since its inception, many of S.A.T.E.’s records and its founders have been lost. What do remain are some microfilmed copies of old journal publications, meeting minutes, and presidents’ newsletters that were at one time kept in paper files at the B.C.T.F. The story of S.A.T.E.’s first decade is held in those records much as a photo album holds snapshots. When studied in sequence, a fuller picture begins to emerge of an organization that grew from a small, dedicated group of teachers to a larger, more politically-astute organization with connections to policy makers in the Ministry of Education.

In S.A.T.E.’s first journal in 1959, its president, John Sutherland, explained why S.A.T.E. was formed:

The largest group of teachers in the secondary schools is that comprising the teachers of English. It, possibly, has the most to achieve in a professional way through co-ordinated action. That is why the Secondary Association of Teachers of English has been formed.

The efforts of the S.A.T.E. executive have been concentrated on two objectives:
• To help the teachers professionally in the classroom.

• To help the teachers organize themselves so that they may speak with one voice through their own local bodies on those matters which they feel need attention.

In its early days, S.A.T.E.’s efforts focused on coordinating and uniting the efforts of English teachers throughout the province. Unfortunately, few records remain from their first full year, 1960; according to their January 1, 1961 newsletter, however, we learn that there would be two main topics for discussion at their upcoming April convention: a committee on reading (soon to be established as a standing committee of S.A.T.E.) was to report its findings, and a “thorough discussion of teaching load” was to take place. Similarly, a Committee on Tests and Examinations was to become a standing committee, the purpose of which was to make recommendations to the Department of Education to change the current examination system with help from faculty members at U.B.C. The formation of these committees and liaisons seems to address Sutherland’s attempts to “help teachers professionally” and “help teachers organize” as stated in his earlier objectives.

Few records exist from the remainder of 1961; we do get a glimpse of some of S.A.T.E.’s activities, however, from the President’s Report of February, 1962. We also have our first evidence of S.A.T.E. endeavouring to have some input into the English curriculum: the report states that “a second seminar on types of examinations suitable for English is to be held in March. The one held in October [1961] with U.B.C. English Faculty members and S.A.T.E. members present was highly successful.”

We can see that S.A.T.E. continues to form committees in 1961, and that they are studying curricular issues. We can also see the continuation of cooperation between
U.B.C. and S.A.T.E. Even more interesting, however, is the following information from the same President’s Report, in which we see that S.A.T.E. may be having some input into the English curriculum, which was undergoing revision by the Department of Education:

In the Fall your president attended six meetings called by the B.C.T.F. to discuss curriculum matters and P.S.A. [Provincial Specialists’ Association] organization. At one of these Mr. John Meredith, Curriculum Director for the Department of Education, discussed the ten resolutions on reading training adopted at our 1961 A.G.M. The general reaction of the Department is favorable and there is hope that the new program will provide definite opportunity for continued and specific training in the reading skills in the senior grades.

As the story of S.A.T.E. unfolds, it will become clear that these early days are indeed the glory days of co-operation and mutual respect between S.A.T.E. and the Department of Education.

The optimism continues in the “Pre-Easter Newsletter” of March, 1962. Although it is clear that the Department of Education is still determining the English curriculum, S.A.T.E. feels that it is worthwhile for English teachers to come together and discuss the changes the government is “reported” to be making. It is similarly interesting to note that S.A.T.E. is interested in proposing changes to the secondary examinations, and that they are working with U.B.C. to achieve this end. The newsletter also states that S.A.T.E. is similarly reaching out to its elementary colleagues in an attempt to involve these teachers in the dialogue about English curriculum.

By the spring of 1962, only three years since its inception, S.A.T.E. has come a long way already towards forming committees, uniting teachers, and making connections with several other groups in order to effect changes in the B.C. English curriculum. They
are optimistic and seem proud of what they have accomplished. Their March, 1962 newsletter states

Things are moving if sufficient numbers of the teachers of English but knew. We are having a far greater impact on curriculum revision than ever before. The teachers on the English Revision Committee are S.A.T.E. members whose names were submitted to the Department by the B.C.T.F., and it is the committee that is making the course and choosing the texts. Furthermore its decisions try to reflect the thinking of the organized teachers of English.

If there is one note of dissatisfaction in Sutherland’s comments above, it is that so few teachers are involved in S.A.T.E.

This sentiment continues when Dennis Nickerson takes over as S.A.T.E. president in mid-1962. In a release entitled “The Old Order Changeth” (no date) Nickerson states “we remind the members that it is their task to renew their membership, to seek new members, or at least to publicize S.A.T.E. to their colleagues teaching English.” He indicates that “it is important to recognize that the S.A.T.E. executive is the appropriate channel for communicating with the Federation or the Department of Education, and for sending forward resolutions dealing with curriculum.” If there was any doubt before that S.A.T.E. had established itself as the voice of secondary English teachers in B.C., there seems to be no question of it now. This sentiment is stated even more forcefully in the next newsletter of October, 1962: “If S.A.T.E., the official spokesman for English teachers, is going to function forcefully and representatively, it must have full enrolment. Only then can the teachers voice their opinions effectively....” Nickerson’s frustration at receiving little input from English teachers is evident in his remarks:

Although we repeatedly asked teachers to submit ideas (since it was from teachers near and far that the request for examination revision
came), few replied....But we always come back to the real problem. Teachers were not uninterested, they probably did not know of our request because our membership of two hundred fifty was too pitifully small to be effective.

Two months later, in the December, 1962 newsletter, Nickerson seems more optimistic that S.A.T.E. is accomplishing two of its goals: forming a liaison with elementary teachers and continuing the association with U.B.C. that Sutherland started. It is interesting to note the change in tone of Nickerson's report. Whereas in March, 1962, Sutherland was "urging" teachers to "discuss" curricular reforms put in place by the government, Nickerson and his committee are not only writing, but also "promoting" an examination, and enlisting support from U.B.C. colleagues. Nickerson is also promoting the formation of more local chapters of S.A.T.E. It seems as though S.A.T.E. may be becoming more pro-active in effecting changes than it has been thus far.

In "The President's Message" from late 1962, Nickerson summarized the process by which S.A.T.E. was able to offer its suggestions on the revision of the English 40 examination to the government. We are thus given some insight into the relationship between S.A.T.E. and the Department of Education. In short, the Department of Education, or at least its Board of Examiners, did not seem very accommodating: they initially gave S.A.T.E. a year to make recommendations, then changed the timeframe to three months. When S.A.T.E. hurried to write a response, the government postponed their timeline twice until six months had passed and no firm timeline had yet to be established. Although not all was going smoothly, there still seemed to be some level of collaboration between the government and S.A.T.E. concerning curricular changes in
B.C. schools. We will see how this spirit of collaboration continues to develop in the new year.

January of 1963 brings both heartening and disheartening news to Nickerson and the other executive members of S.A.T.E. In his President’s Report, Nickerson is pleased with the increase in numbers of S.A.T.E. members, but still clearly feels that more teachers need to join: “Happy New Year to our 425 members. The figure represents one third of the total....” Nickerson is also disappointed that S.A.T.E.’s recommendations to the Board of Examiners considering changes to the English 40 examination are having no immediate impact; but he is also optimistic that the Department of Education is listening to the concerns of S.A.T.E. and willing to possibly implement some of their suggestions in the future:

The gentlemen of the Department were most courteous, friendly, and receptive. They were impressed with the work done by S.A.T.E. and the volume of correspondence from the membership to the Executive.... We came away confident that at the next meeting we shall get the authority to make the changes we want.

Although Nickerson believes the Department members were courteous and receptive about some suggestions, he feels that they are still in charge of curricular decisions in English; Nickerson clearly wants to “get the authority” to have more say.

In his report to the Annual General Meeting of 1963, Nickerson sums up some of S.A.T.E.’s activities over the past year:

The Secondary Association of Teachers of English has had a successful year, with an increase of membership to over 500 and with local chapters functioning in eight areas and two other areas in process of forming chapters. SATE has become one of the largest and most active provincial specialist associations....
The new style of examining would be reflected in all English courses. To date, we can say that everyone in the English Department at UBC, and in the teaching of English 40 has agreed on the principle of the change, and there now remains only the formal business of Departmental authorization to initiate the new style examination.

The members of the Joint Committee on the English Department of UBC and SATE have met several times during the year to keep each other informed about curriculum changes and English 40 examination change, and to exchange views on English in general.

In addition to Nickerson’s report at the Annual General Meeting, Mr. Frank Bertram presented the report of the Curriculum Committee. Given that his report is three pages long and very detailed, it will be summarized here briefly. Mr. Bertram states that in the two years since the formation of the Curriculum Committee, “a number of important decisions have been made, the most important of which concerns the general direction of the language and literature programs.” He states that there are “four general attitudes” that must underpin any curricular changes: these concern teacher autonomy, access to appropriate resources, class size limits, and dissatisfaction with current testing methods. He makes several recommendations, including that “a continuous revision committee be established as a standing committee of the Department,” and that “SATE request the Department of Education to make available to the Curriculum Department still more assistance.”

This report gives us insight into how curricular changes were approached in the early 1960’s: committees were formed, many months of work were put in, and then recommendations were made to the Department of Education, who had the ultimate decision-making power as to which, if any, of the recommendations would be implemented.
At this same 1963 Annual General Meeting, S.A.T.E. adopted resolutions aimed at their having more input into the English curriculum in B.C.; for example, one concerned the inclusion of more Canadian literature in English courses. We can see how S.A.T.E. is becoming more involved in lobbying the government for changes in English curriculum, although it is unclear how much of an impact their input has had. One telling note is listed at the end of the Annual General Meeting minutes: a resolution concerning secondary English “was reported to have been submitted to Curriculum Revision (by Mr. Sutherland at the Annual Meeting 1962) as reported in the minutes. No reply has been received to date.” As the years pass, we will see a trend developing of recommendations from S.A.T.E. going unanswered by the Department of Education.

Perhaps because of S.A.T.E.’s frustration with the slow progress of change in B.C. English curriculum, the existing records from 1963 seem to show a general apathy amongst English teachers in B.C. In S.A.T.E.’s June, 1963 newsletter, Nickerson reports that “the news is not yet definite about the English 40 examination’s being a single paper. There’s no doubt that there will be the usual two papers....” His frustration is evident.

The news improves by the December, 1963 newsletter when there is finally some movement on the English 40 examination:

By now you are probably aware that the Department examination will be based on the usual two-examination procedure, and that next year there will be only one examination—a single Language-Literature paper resulting in a single mark. I think we can be satisfied that the change has been accepted ahead of the revision, and that once more the Department has shown willingness to work with us and make changes we think appropriate.
This same newsletter also reports that Mary Fallis, a long-time S.A.T.E. member, and Dennis Nickerson were invited to “a part of the meeting” in the office of the Division of Curriculum. They were given the opportunity to provide the curriculum officials with questions in advance (they submitted eighteen questions) and their questions were to be answered at the meeting. Even though many of S.A.T.E.’s questions were not answered, and S.A.T.E. was not provided with much information and little opportunity for input, Fallis and Nickerson were both pleased to have been given the opportunity to attend the meeting.

This same December, 1963 newsletter contains the minutes of the S.A.T.E. executive meeting held on September 28. At this meeting, S.A.T.E. executives outlined their objectives for the following year. Their objectives are significant in both number and content. They have ten objectives, much more than in previous years, and they are more expansive than in previous years: they indicate that S.A.T.E. is becoming involved not only in “helping” teachers in the classroom, but in curricular concerns and expansion as well. S.A.T.E. is continuing to establish itself as the voice of English teachers, and is making connections with more groups than they have in the past.

These goals seem to be reiterated in the minutes of the S.A.T.E. executive meeting of November 16, which are also contained in the December, 1963 newsletter. In these minutes, the executive members suggest several “matters of policy” they believe should be considered at the next Annual General Meeting. One is that “we should be prepared to make a statement” about whether promotion should be by grade or course; another is the idea of expanding S.A.T.E. to also include intermediate teachers; another is that “we must continue to press for improved [learning and teaching] conditions.”
Perhaps because of S.A.T.E.'s (albeit limited) success in having some of its recommendations considered by the Department of Education, its executives seem to feel that the opportunity exists for S.A.T.E. to have a more far-reaching impact on curricular matters in B.C. education.

This optimism continues into the new year. It is reported in their February, 1964 newsletter that "the Alberta Council is sending a delegate to our section meeting. We are sending our past president, Mr. John Sutherland, to theirs." They also give notice of the following motion:

Be it resolved that we request the Department of Education to take the necessary steps to enable the teachers of English to carry out their work in the revised English courses.

We respectfully submit the following suggestions:

a) Reduction in number of students in the classroom.

b) Reduction in the number of classes.

Unfortunately, few records remain from 1964. One can infer, however, that S.A.T.E. was not feeling satisfied with the Department of Education's responses to their concerns, and that they were not feeling supported by English teachers. At some point during the year, Mr. N. E. Nelson took over as president of S.A.T.E., and in his newsletter of October, 1964, his frustration is evident:

Year after year...many English teachers must accept impossible teaching loads. They are required to assign a certain number of essays, to administer and mark examinations four times a year, and to provide individual assistance where needed. It is mathematically demonstrable that they cannot possibly do all that they are supposed to do—there are not enough hours in the day. If they are conscientious teachers, therefore, they must suffer frustration.... Perhaps it is time that English teachers became more vocal on the subject of work-load.
Mr. Nelson’s frustration is reflected in the relationship between the Department of Education and S.A.T.E., which seems to be less affable than in the past. For example, a motion passes “that S.A.T.E. request the Department of Education to send, as soon as possible, a directive to teachers of English 40 indicating the nature and format of the English 40 June Departmental Examination.” This is certainly a more strongly-worded request than we have seen thus far.

S.A.T.E. also takes the step sometime in 1964 to write for itself a formal constitution; a motion to adopt it will be presented at their next Annual General Meeting. In addition, Mr. Nelson is becoming involved in several committees in order to represent S.A.T.E.: he attended a meeting of the Examination Study Committee of the B.C.T.F. and an October meeting of the B.C.T.F. Curriculum Committee as a representative of S.A.T.E. His efforts may be paying off. The October newsletter reports that “the SATE membership for 1964-65 is 682 members. This figure represents an increase of 207 members from last year….SATE is now the second largest Federation PSA, second only to the Primary Teachers’ Association.”

The October, 1964 newsletter also indicates that S.A.T.E.’s collaboration with other groups is continuing: S.A.T.E has become an affiliate of N.C.T.E. (the National Council of the Teachers of English). Mr. Nelson seems to be continuing the work begun by Mr. Nickerson before him.

S.A.T.E. is certainly endeavouring to influence the English curriculum in B.C. on a much larger scale than it has before. In their March, 1965 newsletter, S.A.T.E. gives its members advance notice of the policy motions they will introduce at their upcoming Annual General Meeting. There are sixteen motions, fourteen of which involve
curriculum. Their topics include that teachers have autonomy in choosing reading materials for their students, and that teachers be provided with anti-censorship literature to distribute to those critical of their choices; that language and literature be taught as separate courses; that a common examination be given at the end of grade 10 or 11; that senior courses may need to be modified to accommodate weaker students; that an English Language 12 course be mandatory. Proposing motions such as these suggests that S.A.T.E. believes their concerns will be heard. We shall see how many of their recommendations are indeed adopted by the Department of Education.

At the Annual General Meeting of April 23, 1965, Mr. Nelson sums up the change in tone concerning relations between S.A.T.E. and the Department of Education:

We have instituted what amounts to a campaign on the improvement of teaching conditions for the English teacher. Our editorials on the subject of work load have been quoted in the briefs of other associations, and it is our modest belief that we have been instrumental in sharpening the attack on poor teaching conditions.

Notice that tone has shifted from a conciliatory one a few years ago, to one in which S.A.T.E. has launched a "campaign," an "attack." He encourages B.C. English teachers to support S.A.T.E. as it takes on the challenges of the future, in which he sees many changes happening:

I can assure you that there is a crying need for an active, enthusiastic association—an association that will ensure that teachers of English will have a strong voice in influencing the changes that are inevitable in the days to come.
At this Annual General Meeting, Mr. Nelson finishes his term as president of S.A.T.E., a term during which he took S.A.T.E. in new directions. We will see if these directions continue under Mr. Inman, the new president of S.A.T.E.

The first indications we have are from the newsletter of June, 1965, which begins with a four-page diatribe by Mr. Inman on the fact that English has been ignored by the Department of Education. He states that English “is the poor relation in the curriculum family.” He says that English teachers in B.C. are “doing their best to implement the changes in the English curriculum” but that they have few resources and poor facilities. Perhaps more interesting is one solution to these problems which we have not seen before by S.A.T.E.: enlisting the support of parents.

Somehow in the future the members of SATE have got to persuade the parents of the children they teach that the school boards they elect are woefully in error in equating the teaching of English with other jobs. Parents are concerned that their children get a good education. Perhaps, when they realize fully that they do not get more out of the teacher by working him longer and harder—when they realize that teaching is a creative process in which the teacher needs time to think—they will realize that better classroom conditions will benefit their children directly.

Mr. Inman’s comments do seem to indicate a new direction for S.A.T.E. Whereas previous presidents sought to make changes through affiliating with other professional organizations, Mr. Inman suggests that power may also come from the parents.

Little information is provided in the newsletter of October, 1965 about new directions for S.A.T.E. Mr. Inman states that the executive had yet to meet to determine their priorities for the following year, but he does indicate that examinations will be one of his prime concerns. Similarly, the March, 1966 newsletter is very brief and contains
no information concerning curriculum. The June, 1966 newsletter contains only brief notes on revisions to the English curriculum.

By September, 1966, J. W. Satterthwaite is the new president of S.A.T.E. In his first newsletter, he seems to indicate that he is prepared to renew S.A.T.E.’s energies to “battle” the Department of Education:

At the Barricades

Main points of battle for the 1966-67 SATE Executive appear to be three:

1. To prepare a brief on the workload of English teachers for presentation to the Department of Education.
2. To utilize every possible means to make public the state and aims of English teaching in British Columbia.
3. To continue our program of in-service education (this year focusing especially on the new English 11 course).

Satterthwaite seems to have injected some renewed energy into S.A.T.E.’s efforts to again become vocal advocates for the teachers of English in B.C. He also continues Nelson’s work in expanding S.A.T.E.’s sphere of influence by affiliating with other groups such as elementary teachers, and a soon-to-be-formed Canadian Council of Teachers of English. At the Annual General Meeting in April, 1967, Mr. R. H. Perlstrom is elected as the next president. Before he begins his term in office, however, Mr. Satterthwaite makes one more report: his president’s report of June, 1967, in which he summarizes S.A.T.E.’s activities for the past year. It is mainly concerned with working conditions of teachers, and with a censorship issue that caught the attention of the media; the resultant discussion being around who should determine what is appropriate material for students, the teachers or the government.
We will see how these concerns are addressed by Mr. Perlstrom as he takes over as president. In his September, 1967 newsletter, he publishes S.A.T.E.’s “program for the coming year.” He lists seven priorities he would like to address, one of which concerns the examination for Literature 12:

[A] letter of protest will be sent to the Department of Education, through the BCTF, criticizing the basic format of the 1967 June Examination; in particular, the emphasis on factual, objective material. Suggestions for improvement will accompany this letter.

S.A.T.E.’s tone in addressing the Department has changed significantly over the years. It was only in 1963, for example, that S.A.T.E. members were thrilled to be invited to “part of a meeting” at which they were told almost nothing, but still held the Department “in the highest regard.” Now, four years later, S.A.T.E. is sending “a letter of protest” and is “criticizing” the Department. There is strong evidence that S.A.T.E. is becoming more vocal in its displeasure at not being more involved in curricular issues in B.C. schools.

These feelings of frustration are made very clear in S.A.T.E.’s December, 1967 newsletter. In a continuing battle of whether or not a particular story should be taught at high school, Mr. Perlstrom has some strong words to say about the Minister of Education:

A Revision Committee that has made some excellent decisions over the past few years has seen fit to resign. This is disturbing. The whole concept of revision committees has been damaged by Dr. Peterson’s authoritarian maneuver. The Minister seems determined to prove that he runs his department even if it means ignoring professional advice....The revision of English courses must go on. However, meaningful revision can only take place when professional judgment is sought and acknowledged at all times. The members of the Secondary English Revision Committee tendered their resignations to the Hon. L. R. Peterson, Minister of Education, on November 3, 1967.
It is clear that relations between S.A.T.E. and the Department of Education are at their worst point since S.A.T.E. was formed in 1959. In the Revision Committee’s letter of resignation to the Hon. L. R. Peterson, they state very strongly that they are no longer comfortable with their advice being ignored. They also seem to imply that the Minister may have been grand-standing:

The Minister’s public statement that he cannot remain Minister of Education if this story [“Defender of the Faith”] is retained leaves the Committee unmoved. But the Minister’s implied assumption that the Committee’s only responsibility is to endorse his decision is of grave concern and cannot go unchallenged; no responsible committee can function as a rubber stamp.

Although both S.A.T.E. and the B.C.T.F. supported the resignation of the members of the Revision Committee, Mr. Perlstrom was put in a difficult position at the beginning of 1968: he had no revision committee, and he felt one was necessary: “In view of the changes that are taking place in the teaching of English today, it is absolutely pointless to be without a revision committee.” It seems that even with all of the frustration of the past year(s) in which S.A.T.E. felt that their recommendations and concerns were going unheard by the Department of Education; Mr. Perlstrom, and one would assume S.A.T.E. in general, still thought it necessary to try to effect changes in English curriculum in B.C. Their constant effort over the past years and in future decades, will come to typify S.A.T.E.’s cautiously optimistic approach with the Department of Education.

By January of 1968, no Revision Committee had been formed, but there was still an active Curriculum Committee made up of both Ministry officials and S.A.T.E. members. S.A.T.E.’s June, 1968 newsletter begins with an item entitled “Picture Brightens for New Revision Committee,” which states that “the BCTF will now make a formal approach to the Department to ask that a new committee be appointed.” It is
noteworthy that the Department of Education still has the power of determining whether or not there will even be a committee, and that English revision in the province of B.C. is at a standstill. The tone of this newsletter item seems to be one of cautious optimism, however: there is hope that a committee will be established and that work on the B.C. English curriculum may proceed.

By September, 1968, S.A.T.E. has a new president, Marnie Coburn, but little else has seemingly been accomplished. Again, cautious optimism about S.A.T.E.'s relationship with the Department of Education has turned to frustration if this item in her September, 1968 President’s Report is any indication:

B. C. Still without an English Revision Committee

Since the resignation of the English Revision Committee last November, the Department of Education has done practically nothing to establish a new committee. SATE officers have supplied reasons why an English Revision Committee is urgently needed in B. C. English 12 revision is not complete: there are, for example, areas in the study of the novel for which books have not been selected. Serious gaps exist in English 8 and 9.

SATE will continue to press for a Revision Committee. It is absolutely essential that a committee be struck as soon as possible.

Coburn echoes these thoughts in her October, 1968 newsletter; a committee had not yet been formed, and it is essential that one be formed soon. Similarly, she laments in the December, 1968 newsletter that “we are without a Curriculum Revision Committee.” Although there is no revision committee, S.A.T.E. is still endeavouring to have some impact on the English curriculum. Many English teachers were concerned with the new “scientific” multiple-choice style of testing used not only in classrooms by some teachers, but also more predominantly on English provincial examinations. S.A.T.E. had been lobbying the government to change English examinations so that they had more
subjective than objective questions. However, their voices went unheard. The “Administrative Circular” put out by the Department of Education and reproduced in S.A.T.E.’s March, 1969 newsletter stated

For a variety of reasons it has become desirable to make the regular Department of Education examinations at the Grade 12 level available more often than once a year. This means that marking procedures must be simplified in order to make possible earlier release of Statements of Standing. It has therefore been decided to make these Grade 12 regular Departmental examinations, commencing June 1969, exclusively objective in format.

Not surprisingly, S.A.T.E. disapproved of the Department of Education’s decision to change the format of the examinations (one would assume not only philosophically, but also because they had no input in the decision). They note in the newsletter that “SATE, at its executive meeting on Saturday, March 8, 1969, went on record as strongly opposing computerized exams in English. A letter to this effect was sent to both the BCTF and the Department of Education.”

However, the March, 1969 newsletter also contains some good news: “it now appears, according to the Professional Committee, that a new [English Revision] committee could be formed in the not too distant future.”

By December of 1969, S.A.T.E. had a new president, Just Havelaar. The December newsletter provides no information on the major curricular concerns of the past few years. It is interesting to note, however, that as the sixties draw to a close, we see a new direction in the B.C. English curriculum starting to emerge: that of various stakeholder groups having a voice in the curriculum, a trend that would dominate for the next two decades. The following item appears in the newsletter:
SATE has been asked to recommend to the BCTF Curriculum Committee teachers who could serve on a committee studying courses for Indian children in B.C. Any teacher interested in working on such a committee is asked to write Just Havelaar, SATE president, outlining experience with Indian children.

As the sixties drew to a close, it seemed as though S.A.T.E. was continuing its mission to have an impact on the curriculum in B.C. schools.

The surviving documents from S.A.T.E.'s first decade tell two stories. One is the story of an organization that undergoes changes in the ways in which it perceives its role in effecting changes in the English curriculum in B.C. schools. The second, related story of S.A.T.E. in the 1960's is a story of their changing relationship with the Department of Education.

As the 1960s progressed, and as S.A.T.E. tried to become more involved in decisions affecting B.C. curriculum, they felt increasingly frustrated that their objectives were not being realized: in fact, some of their earliest objectives from 1961, such as reducing workloads of English teachers and having significant input into the development of departmental examinations, were not realized by the end of the decade. Along with their increasing frustration came more strenuous attempts to recruit members, form committees, form liaisons with other groups, and make recommendations to the Department of Education. One of the results of their increased attempts at involvement seems to be a progressively strained relationship with the Department of Education.

In 1961, S.A.T.E. focused on helping teachers to organize and unite. In 1962, S.A.T.E. is pleased that teachers are being kept informed about Department decisions: "teachers know far more of what is being done in curriculum revision than ever in the
past.” They are similarly pleased that they have some input by means of committees. The good will extends into 1963, when S.A.T.E. feels that the Department is “refreshingly sympathetic” to some of their concerns, although the inclusion of the word “refreshingly” indicates that all is not well. S.A.T.E. also is hopeful that they will “get the authority to make the changes we want.” By 1964, after not getting changes they requested, S.A.T.E. makes a “request” that the Department of Education send them “as soon as possible, a directive” because they feel they are no longer involved in the dialogue about examinations. By 1965, S.A.T.E. has “instituted what amounts to a campaign” against the government and is “sharpening the attack” and “enlisting the support of parents” to make their concerns known to the Department of Education. By 1966, S.A.T.E. is “at the barricades” and talking about their “main points of battle.” By 1967 they are sending a “letter of protest” and “criticizing” the government; the poor relations escalate to a point at which the Revision Committee resigns en masse, angry that their role seems to be to “rubber stamp” the government’s decisions. By 1968 the Department of Education “has done practically nothing to establish a new committee” and S.A.T.E. has little input into curricular matters. By 1969 the government unilaterally changes the format of the examinations knowing that S.A.T.E. was “on record as strongly opposing” the new format.

The 1960s were turbulent times for S.A.T.E. As it became increasingly more involved in curricular matters in B.C., its relationship with the Department of Education deteriorated. S.A.T.E. perceived itself as the voice of English teachers, and therefore felt that it should have a role in determining what is taught in English classrooms. The government saw S.A.T.E.’s role as that of advisor, not as policy-maker.
As teachers in B.C. became more professionalized with the creation of S.A.T.E. in 1959, the stage was set for conflict between the teachers and the government. Whether conflict was inevitable or whether it was a result of ideological differences between the teachers and the government of the time is not clear. What is clear is that the government seemed willing to listen to the concerns of S.A.T.E. but that ultimately the government made decisions they felt were appropriate for the students and teachers of B.C.

As the B.C. English curriculum continued to be revised for the next three decades, there continued to be disagreement about who should ultimately determine the curriculum in B.C. schools: the working teachers, or the Department/Ministry of Education. The study of S.A.T.E.'s efforts in the 1960s must be contextualized within the climate of a post-colonial, post-war, rapidly-growing, educationally-Progressive, politically Social Credit system. We must keep this perspective in mind as we study how S.A.T.E. defines its place in this system. The decade of the 1960s is only its first chapter.

References


7: CHAPTER SIX: THE 1970S

The B.C.T.F.

Educational philosophy had shifted during the 1960s and it would continue to shift during the 1970s. Some scholars, such as Andy Hargreaves (1994), characterize the major philosophical shifts in Western thought during the 1960s-1980s as a shift from modernity to postmodernity:

By the 1970s, there were growing signs that the age of modernity may have been approaching its end. Continuing ambiguities have always pervaded the modern condition. But towards the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, the magnitude of the difficulties created by modern economies, modern states and modern patterns or organization were becoming immense. Through the 1970s and beyond, these difficulties reached such crisis proportions that they began to generate a set of powerful pretexts for change in economic, political and organizational life: the change that we have come to call postmodernity (Hargreaves, 1994, pg. 31).

He believes that one of the reasons for the philosophical shift in the West was undoubtedly economic; North American economies were collapsing, partially because of the oil crisis of 1973 (Hargreaves, 1994, pg. 31). He suggests that as the economy collapsed, so too did some modernist notions about the wisdom of investing in education:

In the context of a collapsing economy, however, the state’s once shrewd investments in education, social welfare and public ownership quickly came to be viewed as expensive luxuries that taxpayers could no longer afford. More than this, with profits in decline and people out of work, the state (and schooling with it) no longer appeared to be doing its job. As well as being expensive, the state also seemed to be manifestly inefficient...These crises of finance and legitimacy in the state created powerful pretexts for “rolling back the state” and reforming the educational and social welfare systems of Western societies. These reforms, we shall see, impact considerably on the work of teachers (Hargreaves, 1994, pg. 32).
Robertson (1996) believes that another impact of the emerging philosophy was the notion that teachers were not truly professional, since they apparently failed to correctly and efficiently implement scientific methods which were to help North Americans keep pace with the Russians. Although I would suggest this perception was more pronounced in the United States than in Canada, the B.C. education system and its teachers were not immune from criticism.

The perceived shortcomings of the education system exacerbated the poor relationship between the B.C.T.F. and the Social Credit government. Although the government implemented some of the B.C.T.F.’s pension requests from 1969, they refused to extend the new benefits to retired B.C. teachers, which led to the first province-wide strike by B.C. teachers in March, 1971 (Novakowski, 2004, pg. 1). Then, Bill Bennett’s government “introduced legislation to eliminate automatic membership in the BCTF and prohibit teachers from serving as school trustees anywhere in the province” (Ungerleider, 1996, pg. 2). Whereas the Socreds could justify their decision about teachers serving as trustees because of a conflict of interest (given that school boards negotiated teachers’ salaries) the B.C.T.F. felt there was little justification for the removal of mandatory membership; they felt the government made this decision “in retaliation for a mounting opposition from the BCTF to poor education policies” (“History,” 2008, n.p.). If the government’s intention was to break the B.C.T.F., it was unsuccessful: of the 22,000 teachers in B.C., only 69 withdrew from or failed to join the B.C.T.F. when the proposed legislation passed into law (Ungerleider, 1996, pg. 2; “History,” 2008, n.p.). However, the conflicts of 1971 did not end there. Later in 1971,
the Socreds introduced more legislation to limit teachers’ salary increases. When B.C.T.F. president Adam Robertson went to Victoria to protest the legislation,

...a Social Credit back bencher made a declaration in the legislature that between 20 and 30 per cent of B.C. teachers were incompetent and suggested that teachers form a self-policing association similar to the B.C. Medical Association and the College of Physicians and Surgeons. Stan Evans, assistant general secretary for the BCTF, indicated that the teachers would be willing to police themselves if they were given control over entry to teacher education programs, the nature of the preparation given to teachers, and the teachers’ job assignments (Ungerleider, 1996, pg. 2).

1971 was a very turbulent year as the B.C.T.F. led the first ever teachers’ strike in the province, and as it received a strong vote of confidence from teachers when mandatory membership in the B.C.T.F. was eliminated by the Socreds. It seems appropriate that this year marks the beginning of what the B.C.T.F. calls its “full maturity phase.”

The struggles with the government were to continue throughout the decade. In addition to the government’s low opinion of teachers, if the Socred back bencher is any indication, it also seems as though the government’s position on teacher professionalism had not changed much since the 1930s: the government wanted teachers to police themselves as “professionals” but not to have full professional status insofar as controlling the type of members, their education, or their work. When the legislation to limit teachers’ salary increases passed in March, 1972, the B.C.T.F. formed the Teachers’ Political Action Committee and asked B.C.T.F. members to donate a day’s pay to help the committee drive the Socreds from office. The government responded by issuing a restraining order against the B.C.T.F. preventing them from “collecting and distributing funds to oppose the government” so the members re-formed the committee outside of the
B.C.T.F. (Ungerleider, 1996, pg. 3). The Social Credit party, after twenty years in office, was defeated that August by the New Democratic Party (N.D.P.).

The philosophy of the new N.D.P. government was more closely aligned with that of the B.C.T.F. Its Minister of Education, Eileen Dalley, had been a member of the Burnaby school board. She believed in administrative decentralization, that people in the community and not the government

...should control administrative appointments, as well as other aspects of public schooling. Her views in this regard corresponded closely with positions the BCSTA and the BCTF had been promoting, at least since the time of the Chant inquiry. The Federation, in particular, had taken an active role in the campaign of 1972, believing that an NDP government would be amenable to the idea of local control as well as to teacher aspirations for greater participation in educational policy- and decision-making (Fleming, 1986, pg. 299).

Soon after its election the N.D.P. government “restored compulsory membership in the BCTF and its right to collectively bargain salaries and bonuses for its members” (Ungerleider, 1996, pg. 3). Although the Social Credit era was (temporarily) over in B.C., the B.C.T.F. had learned that it had power: perhaps even the power to topple governments. This more radical political stance became a defining feature of the B.C.T.F. in the years to come.

The success of the 1972 teacher involvement served notice to all political parties that teachers would stand up for their rights, for their students, and for public education and that, if necessary, they would use the electoral process to achieve those results. This political-activist stance of the BCTF did not come about overnight. It was the result of many meetings and extensive debates by teachers within the organization over the five years leading up to the 1972 election (Novakowski, 2004, pg. 1).

Over the next two years, with the N.D.P. government seemingly more amenable to the B.C.T.F., its President Jim MacFarlan argued that the time had come for the B.C.T.F. to
articulate its vision of a good education system. He voiced concerns over the B.C.T.F.'s perception of the traditional, modernist school system, the goals of which were "inculcation of the values of the status quo, the socio-economic political system presently in power, and the production of mental and manual workers to meet the society's needs" (Ungerleider, 1996, pg. 3). He similarly voiced the B.C.T.F.'s concerns with contemporary philosophers like Fritz Perls and Ivan Illich, whom the B.C.T.F. felt were "unwittingly" encouraging a return to "the unfettered individualism, to the worst aspects of the laissez-faire idea, to the concept of absolute sanctity of the rights of the individual, regardless of the rights of the society" (as quoted in Ungerleider, 1996, pg. 3). The B.C.T.F. instead wanted to develop a school system that would "foster the growth and development of every individual to the end that he/she will become a self-reliant, self-disciplined, socially productive and participating member of a democratic society" (ibid).

To this end, the B.C.T.F. proposed a "teaching profession act" to the N.D.P. government in November of 1974, part of which would grant B.C. teachers a level of professionalism they had heretofore not achieved.

...the main purpose of such an act "should be to assign to the teaching profession a major role in guaranteeing the quality of teaching service...." The task force believed that the BCTF should retain autonomy governing its own internal operations. It proposed that at Teacher Certification Board, independent of the Department of Education, be established with "major representation" from the BCTF and representation from the "public-at-large, the minister, and institutions, associations or agencies concerned with the preparation, training or certification of teachers (Ungerleider, 1996, pg. 3).

The N.D.P. government did not take any action on the task force's proposal; perhaps they didn't have time. Their government was defeated the next year and replaced with a Social Credit government. The B.C.T.F.'s brief reprieve from political unrest was far
from over; indeed, the worst was to come. Shortly after the election, the new Minister of Education, Pat McGeer, put into place a core curriculum and the Provincial Learning Assessment Program (P.L.A.P.) in response to the public’s perception that standards were falling in B.C. schools. This perception may have been a result of the discontinuation of provincial examinations in B.C., or in response to widely-publicized attacks on the American education system, with their concerns over the high number of American students who graduated functionally illiterate (Rexin, 1985, pg. 75-76). The B.C.T.F. perceived this new assessment initiative as having less to do with education and more to do with assuaging the voters’ fears before the upcoming 1979 election. Although the B.C.T.F. again ran a “political action campaign” against the Social Credit party (Ungerleider, 1996, pg. 4), the Socreds were re-elected by a narrow margin. Thus ended the decade of the 1970s and began the new era of conflict between the B.C.T.F. and the Social Credit party: the decade of the 1980s.

S.A.T.E./B.C.E.T.A.

During its first full decade of the 1960s, S.A.T.E. had started to establish itself as an organization interested in having a voice in the English/Language Arts curriculum of B.C. schools. As the 1970s begin, it soon becomes clear that S.A.T.E. is neither having any input into such decisions nor being kept well-informed of upcoming changes.

In the first S.A.T.E. newsletter of February, 1970, President Just Havelaar announces that there are “new B.C. English courses possibly on the horizon.” His use of the word “possibly” underscores that not only was S.A.T.E. clearly not involved in precipitating changes in the curriculum, but also that they were not being kept well-informed by the Department of Education when changes were imminent: Havelaar
doesn’t realize that the entire B.C. English curriculum is about to undergo revision during the next decade. He does, however, have some positive news to report in this February, 1970 newsletter concerning S.A.T.E.’s working relationship with the government on curricular issues:

A new English Revision Committee has been formed and is now meeting with Mr. Bruce Naylor of the Department’s Division of Curriculum. The previous English Revision Committee resigned in November 1967 because of the Department’s handling of the ‘Defender of the Faith’ story in the Grade 12 text....The first concern of the new committee is to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the present courses. Reactions of English teachers throughout B.C. are therefore welcomed at this time....All suggestions will be forwarded to the Secondary English Revision Committee.

Little progress is reported on the workings of this committee for the remainder of the year; S.A.T.E. was focused on providing new curricular materials to B.C. English teachers. They are apparently starting to evaluate the role that media (specifically television and movies) are having on students and are trying to implement some media into the classroom: for example, they are ordering eighteen new films for possible study in classrooms. S.A.T.E. is also working on a new “Paperback Project” the goal of which is to raise the status of some books formerly considered un-academic to the status of literature worthy of study in schools. One paperback mentioned in the February, 1970 newsletter is S.E. Hinton’s novel The Outsiders, still a favourite amongst students thirty-nine years later. S.A.T.E. is also spending some time in this new decade supplementing school libraries with modern books for students. Similarly, S.A.T.E. held a workshop at The University of British Columbia (U.B.C.) on November 21, 1970 at which they recommended several new books for study in secondary schools.
By January, 1971, a year after the new English Revision Committee was formed, seemingly little had been accomplished. According to S.A.T.E.’s January, 1971 newsletter, the new President, Iris McIntyre, reports on the workings of the committee:

In January, 1970 a newly constituted Department of Education Secondary English Revision Committee held its first meeting. The committee was charged with the examination of the Secondary English program, with a view to determining what, if any, weaknesses exist, and to recommend remedial action.

In determining its own priorities, the committee set as its first task the examination of the Literature 12 course with a view to suggesting certain revisions. It is possible, if the committee’s recommendations are accepted by the Department, that the revised course will be implemented on an interim basis in September, 1971.

After completing its work on Literature 12, the committee will proceed with a review of the Junior Secondary program.

It is clear that curriculum revision has heretofore moved rather slowly, as the committee had only determined its first task a year after its inception. It is also interesting to note that the committee’s role is to “recommend” to the Department, and that “it is possible” only that its recommendations may be accepted by the Department. Nonetheless, the revision committee seizes the opportunity to have some input into the B.C. English curriculum.

The pace seems to have quickened over the next two months. In S.A.T.E.’s March, 1971 newsletter, McIntyre puts out a call for help on behalf of the revision committee: “The English Revision Committee is starting its examination of the Junior Secondary Program—What improvements would you like to see in a revised English 8 or 9 course?” She similarly asks B.C. English teachers for feedback on supplemental reading materials available in schools, whether or not “the study of media [should] be an integral part of the English program,” whether or not secondary English teachers “have a responsibility to teach reading” and the relative importance of Canadian content in
English courses. It seems that the revision committee is now well underway, as they were to have completed their Literature 12 review before working on the Junior Secondary program; work has now begun on the latter.

Indeed, when S.A.T.E.'s May, 1971 newsletter comes out, its headline is "New Lit 12 Course for September 1971." Eight changes are listed to the existing course. Unfortunately, no commentary follows as to which of the changes were recommendations of the revision committee. The newsletter item ends by stating that "the new course of Study [sic] will be sent out shortly by the Department."

The June, 1971 newsletter provides little information on the curricular changes in English specifically, but is interesting as an historical document simply because it is a reflection of some of the changes affecting B.C. schools in the new decade of the 1970's. There is an article on Handsworth Secondary (Vancouver) experimenting with a modular system of education, in which students work on various units of study at their own pace; there is an item announcing that the University of Victoria has implemented a required entrance examination for all first year students to test their ability "to write clear, coherent, expository prose"; there is a letter from Lewy Olfson, "a freelance writer specializing in educational material," who applauds the fact that Ray Bradbury has finally been deemed acceptable for study in English classrooms. These items highlight two facets of B.C. education that come to typify it over the next two decades: its constant change, and concerns with accountability.

In the meantime, a significant change has taken place. In the President's Message of September, 1971, McIntyre updates her readers on what has happened in the preceding months:
Dear BCETA Member,
Let me fill you in, very briefly, on what lies ahead for us in our organization. First, as you may know, we have a new name and a new constitution, passed at the April AGM and ratified by the BCTF. We are now known as the B.C. English Teachers’ Association and we welcome as members teachers at all levels of education, from kindergarten to Grade 12 who are BCTF members, or Associate members of the BCTF (to include our friends in private schools, colleges, etc., and to enable you to keep your membership with us if you are on leave of absence). Our objectives are to stimulate interest in and exchange ideas about the various aspects of our subject....

Obviously, a major change has been from an organization representing the interests of only secondary English teachers to all English/Language Arts teachers in the province. Unfortunately, no documentation exists concerning this change in focus, as records exist neither of the minutes of this important AGM nor of their new constitution. The only glimpse into S.A.T.E.’s rationale is provided in the upcoming October, 1971 newsletter, which McIntyre opens with the following:

Recognizing the need to improve communications with teachers of English in the elementary school, the members present at the April AGM of the Secondary Association of Teachers of English (SATE) approved a revised constitution changing the name of the Association to the British Columbia English Teachers’ Association (BCETA). Consequently, the association will no longer be oriented solely toward the teaching of English in the secondary school, but will attempt, through workshops, seminars and publications, to encourage dialog among teachers of English at all grade levels.

We may observe, however, that as the years progress, S.A.T.E. changes from a small, specialized organization to a larger one representing the interests of more teachers and affiliated with other large, more powerful organizations. McIntyre is writing her September, 1971 newsletter, for example, from Montreal where she is attending the Fourth Annual Conference of the Canadian Council of Teachers of English. The tone of her report suggests (for the first time) her dissatisfaction with the pace of changes facing
English teachers, and perhaps buoyed by her colleagues in Montreal, she seems ready to spearhead a more concerted approach to address some of her teachers’ concerns:

One point I should like to share with you just now is that in B.C. we have continued to be a very healthy organization despite our slight drop in membership last year. Problems that disturb us, I find, are by no means peculiar to B.C., but are part of the current trend in the rest of Canada. Teachers everywhere are slightly stunned, to say the least, by the rapid changes the discipline has recently undergone. Their attitude toward the future is tentative, I should say. No one hazards a formula for even reasonable success. Many adults simply “turn off” by retreating behind traditional fortifications.

Against this backdrop, I look forward to coming home to work with an executive composed of interesting energetic people. With your help, we may be able to inspirit not only ourselves here in B.C., but others as well.

We have a wonderful opportunity to do this in planning the August 1973 Conference of the Canadian Council of Teachers of English, which we are to host. We hope to attract people from the U.S.A. and Britain, as well as other Canadians....

McIntyre’s plan to “inspirit” her teachers is not evidenced throughout the remainder of her term. The next eight months of newsletters seem to suggest that the B.C.E.T.A.’s relationship with the Department is unchanged: the B.C.E.T.A. continues to have its members serve on committees making recommendations to the Department, and the Department ultimately decides whether or not to listen to their concerns.

The October, 1971 newsletter continues, for example, with McIntyre putting out a call for more Departmental committee members: “The Department of Education, through the BCTF, have asked our association to recommend additional members for the Secondary English Revision Committee” and McIntyre asks interested teachers to write her outlining their background experience and their “ideas concerning revision of English 8, 9, and 10.”
Although the Department of Education regularly strikes committees, there continues to be some indication that their influence is limited. For example, the Department had made some changes to the Literature 12 course that were clearly not endorsed by the B.C.E.T.A.:

The Department of Education has not yet met with the BCETA Literature 12 Exam Committee. The Committee is currently preparing a brief that outlines the specific criticisms of the Literature 12 exam to enhance its request for a meeting. Included among the criticisms are: the multiple choice format, the objective testing of literature, the ambiguity and irrelevance of questions, and the use of “trick” questions. The distribution of two different exams, O (Old Course) and R (Revised Course) caused confusion for students and teachers during the examination period in January. Although the Revised Course is prescriptive, two exams were distributed. The Old Course exam was compiled to accommodate the correspondence course.

As the present Literature 12 exam will continue for a [sic] least three more examination periods, the committee feels that immediate action is necessary. It is hoped that a meeting with the Department of Education will result in a number of necessary changes.

The B.C.E.T.A. continues to involve itself in matters affecting English curriculum; we shall see in three months’ time how many of the exam committee’s recommendations were adopted by the Department of Education.

In the meantime, the B.C.E.T.A. continues to try to effect changes in the curriculum of B.C. schools. A method they use in addition to serving on Committees, Departmental or otherwise, is to try to strengthen their ties to their mother organization, the B.C.T.F., since it is through them that the B.C.E.T.A. has access to the Department. In B.C.E.T.A.’s March, 1972 newsletter, there are two resolutions submitted to the B.C.T.F., one suggesting a reading task force be struck, one concerning a procedural matter for course revisions; there is also a formal request made for the B.C.E.T.A. to meet with the English Revision Committee, a request that must necessarily be made
through the B.C.T.F.; it is not surprising, then, that also in this newsletter, McIntyre urges her members to run for B.C.T.F. office.

Of more concern to McIntyre, however, is the number of B.C.E.T.A. members. By March, 1972, McIntyre reports only a three percent increase in membership in the B.C.E.T.A. to 583 members; she is disappointed that the numbers are below SATE’s high of 673 in 1964-65. She also seems concerned that membership increased in other provincial specialists’ associations (PSAs) by ten percent, and that the B.C.E.T.A.’s membership makes it the eighth largest of the twenty-one PSAs. She is therefore announcing a membership drive, headed by member-at-large Rick Cooper. The B.C.E.T.A.’s struggle to attract and maintain members is a continuing concern over the decades.

The existing B.C.E.T.A. members, however, continue to represent the interests of B.C. English teachers, even when met with limited success. By June, 1972, for example, McIntyre outlines two B.C.E.T.A. initiatives that have been unsuccessful, the first concerning the reading task force, and the second concerning Literature 12.

The BCETA executive met with the Curriculum Directors on February 15 to discuss the reading difficulties among secondary school students. The Curriculum Directors agreed that there is a serious reading problem among many secondary students and that the matter should be raised with the English Revision Committee and then with the Advisory Committee on the Secondary School Curriculum. On March 22, the BCETA executive met with the English Revision Committee. The result:
1. The English Revision Committee lacks the necessary time to deal with the whole matter.
2. The task does not belong solely with the English curriculum.
2. W. B. Naylor, Director of Curriculum, suggested that if the BCETA devised a Developmental Reading Handbook for all subject areas, the Department of Education would consider undertaking its distribution.
Many observations can be made from this report. First, the Department is unwilling to set up a task force, even though acknowledging that "a serious reading problem exists." Second, their suggestion that an (apparently overworked) existing committee take on this new responsibility is untenable. Third, the Department's suggestion that the B.C.E.T.A. take on the responsibility itself of devising a new program for all subject areas is a monumental task. Fourth, the fact that if the B.C.E.T.A. manages to produce such a program, the Department would only "consider undertaking its distribution" speaks to the fact that the Department of Education is seemingly not eager to put its resources behind a program which addresses a serious concern for B.C. English teachers and students. It would be understandable if the B.C.E.T.A. felt a lack of support from the Department.

Similarly, the meeting between the B.C.T.F. Literature 12 committee (which includes members of the B.C.E.T.A. Literature 12 exam committee) and the Department took place on April 24, 1972, at which time the committee outlined several of its concerns about the Literature 12 exam. Following this meeting, the Literature 12 committee prepared a report outlining several of their concerns discussed at the meeting, and sent it to the Department on May 12. Their report is reproduced in the B.C.E.T.A. newsletter of June, 1972:

The committee has prepared the following report:

A. That an immediate change in the Literature 12 grading procedures is necessary is evident from the following:
   1. The Literature 12 objective examination cannot test the major objectives of the Literature 12 Course (as per the Literature 12 Court [sic] Outline, 1971).
   2. The last six Literature 12 government examinations have been shown to be unsatisfactory due to the ambiguous nature of some of the questions and the unsatisfactory options among the answers.
   3. A student with a very low school-given mark can pass the examination with a high enough mark to receive credit for the course.
4. A student with a school-given mark of 50%-59% (a passing grade by university standards) can fail the government examination and, as a result of this single, often-questionable examination, fail the entire course.

Therefore this committee requests the following:

1. That the Literature 12 Departmental Examination be discontinued before June 1972, or

2. That the Literature 12 Departmental Examination be made completely subjective.

If the above requests are not immediately feasible, the committee urges your acceptance of the following:

3. The recommendation of all students who receive a school-given mark of 50%, combined with the principle of elective writing to improve the student’s standing.

After considering the other alternatives discussed at the April 24 meeting in Victoria, the committee feels it necessary to reiterate numbers 1 and 2 above and urge acceptance of our proposal.

The report goes on to suggest two changes to the Literature 12 scholarship examination, including a request that all objective questions be eliminated and that the number of essays students must write be restricted to no more than two. The committee also requests another meeting to discuss the report, and lists three possible dates (in May and June).

The Literature 12 committee received a rather prompt response from the Department, given that they sent their report on May 12 and had the Department’s response in time to reproduce it in their June newsletter. The Department’s response, written by Registrar E. A. Killough, is too long to reproduce in its entirety: to summarize, he responds in turn to each of the committee’s concerns and under his “Recommendations” concludes that “in my opinion, it is not possible at this time to accept any of the three recommendations of your committee on the matter of the English
Literature 12 examination”; he ends his correspondence by stating that “I do not feel that a further meeting on the English Literature regular examination would serve any useful purpose at this time...”.

The B.C.E.T.A.’s newsletter has a “Final Comment” concerning this matter:

As the Department has declined to meet again with the BCTF Literature 12 delegation, the committee has written a letter to Mr. Donald Brothers, Minister of Education to express its continued dissatisfaction over examination procedures of English Literature 12.

Again, it seems that a pattern is becoming established of English teachers being given the opportunity to express their concerns through various B.C.T.F. and B.C.E.T.A. committees, and the Department ultimately making curricular decisions that do not take the committees’ recommendations into consideration.

By the beginning of the new year, 1973, Blair Brown has taken over as President of B.C.E.T.A. and British Columbia has their first new reigning political party in twenty years: the Social Credit party had been defeated by the New Democratic Party (N.D.P.) in August of 1972. Brown’s newsletter strikes a note of cautious optimism with its headline “a new government—perhaps a new policy.” The B.C.E.T.A. seizes the rare opportunity to change its working relationship with the Department of Education:

The BCETA executive believes that it is necessary to develop a position paper on the teaching of English in British Columbia. Do you want your opinion counted? If so, comment on the following topics, and others that you want considered:
-philosophy of the English curriculum
-financing of PSA expenses re: in-service and curriculum development
-book selection
-financing pilot programs
-censorship
-department budgets
-recycling of books
-duties of department heads
-Public Schools Act
-time off for revision committees
-...others

The B.C.E.T.A. continues to press for more control over not only curricular concerns (the first five considerations) but also concerns related to finance, roles and responsibilities of teachers, resources, etc.

Shortly thereafter, by March, 1973 the Secondary Revision Committee that was established in 1970 had finished its proposal for the revision of the English curriculum in grades eight through ten. The overview of their recommendations, published in the B.C.E.T.A. March, 1973 newsletter, outlines the following nine guiding principles and asks B.C.E.T.A. members for their comments:

1. Retention of the resource course concept of multiple adoptions in literature and its extension into language.
2. Grouping to continue to be the professional responsibility of teachers but assistance to be provided to teachers by annotating titles selected.
3. Encouragement to be given to flexibility, teacher selection of materials and autonomy in English instruction.
4. Recognition to the interests of "less able" students in materials prescribed.
5. Increased emphasis on other methods of communication without minimizing the importance of the written means.
6. Increased emphasis on non-print media by authorizing media materials.
7. Articulate all English programs from K to 12.
8. Recognition of the need to emphasize developmental and corrective reading skills for all students.
9. Recognition of the need to work closely with teachers of other disciplines in the teaching of reading skills.

Evident in these recommendations are the teachers' requests for professional autonomy, an attention to differentiated instruction, the widening of what had traditionally been considered "English," the importance of improving reading, and a recognition of the importance of collaboration. Thirty-five years later, these principles still guide English instruction in B.C. English classrooms.
By July, 1973 a decision had been made by the Department of Education to implement "on a permissive basis" the new grade eight curriculum in September. Also noteworthy in the July, 1973 newsletter is that it has a new name "Update" after being called "Satelines" for its first decade, then remaining nameless for a time. Secondly, B.C.E.T.A. has a new President, Arnald Muir. Although little is reported in Update, a change with far-reaching effects is about to be implemented by the Department of Education.

Published in the Update of October, 1973 is a section from the Department of Education's Instructional Circular 18.6.73 which announces the discontinuance of departmental examinations effective at the end of the 1973-74 school year. There are several implications for schools and teachers according to the Department's circular: "...beginning in the 1973-74 school year, schools, working within general Department and district guidelines, will assume total responsibility for assessment of students graduating from Grade 12"; "...the school working within the new curriculum organization, also will have general responsibility for determining whether or not students have met graduation requirements"; "...schools will assume the full responsibility for completing and issuing of student transcripts of marks at the senior secondary school level. The prescribed forms to be used will be provided by the Department of Education."

Unfortunately, with such a major announcement from the government, and following the extensive work done by the Literature 12 examination committee, no response or comment on this development is provided in Update from Muir or any other member of the B.C.E.T.A. or the B.C.T.F.. Muir, does, however, ask his B.C.E.T.A.
members for feedback concerning another part of the Department's June circular which outlined the Grade 12 English scholarship examination, which would continue to be administered by the Department. Muir also encourages all English teachers who support PSA's to become delegates to the B.C.T.F. Annual General Meeting, or at least to vote for delegates who support the work of PSAs: "Only in this way will PSA proposals be passed." Muir may be frustrated by the Department's non-recognition of the work of B.C.E.T.A. members. He similarly suggests "that all English teachers should promote professional development at the school level and should create locally developed provincially approved courses."

Muir and his colleagues at the B.C.E.T.A. and the B.C.T.F. are aware that the Department's delegation of some of its historical responsibilities to the local level can present both challenges and opportunities. A section of the January, 1974 Update discusses the B.C.T.F. Curriculum Department Brief which had been sent to the Minister of Education in September, supporting the decentralization of education. Following are some selections of the B.C.T.F.'s report on the highlights of the brief (taken from the Spring, 1974 Journal of the B.C.E.T.A. in which they were reproduced):

"The brief advocates decentralization of curriculum authority so that local boards and teachers have room to provide for their own local requirements. The government is urged to accelerate the trend toward decentralization, which has been evident in recent years, through changes in legislation and financial policy." The report goes on to make recommendations to the government, including some which effectively changed the role of English education in B.C. Recommendation #3, for example, is to "change the terms of reference for provincial curriculum committees, restricting their role to that of
recommending intended learning outcomes for pupils.” Over the years, this de-emphasis on content and an increasing emphasis on skills became a hallmark of English education in B.C. English teachers today are very familiar with the government’s publication of “Prescribed Learning Outcomes” for English courses. Recommendations #5 and 8 ask for the shift of current and additional professional development funds to districts, which is the norm today. Recommendation #6, to “encourage the development of district and regional resource centers of the comprehensive ‘teacher center’ type” was also soon to be realized.

Marion Poggemiller, soon-to-be Curriculum Co-ordinator for the B.C.E.T.A., writes a response to the B.C.T.F.’s September, 1973 brief in the B.C.E.T.A.’s January, 1974 *Update*. While she agrees that there are some positive points to decentralization, she is also aware of some possible negative implications:

There are many positive and exciting possibilities arising out of the Curriculum Development brief submitted to the Minister of Education in September 1973. There are, also, numerous potential problems for individual classroom teachers and for specialist associations that must be given serious consideration by teachers. Generally, the brief supports the decentralization of education through locally developed curricula, transfer of funds to local districts, provision of teacher time for curriculum planning, the combining of the elementary and secondary provincial curriculum committees into one strictly advisory body. Should these recommendations be implemented, greater variety and flexibility in educational structures would result. Already, alternative courses and even alternative schools are being developed.

Poggemiller goes on to raise fourteen questions concerning some of the implications of the decentralization of education:

A. Possible implications for PSAs
   1. Can provincial specialist associations continue to exist and serve a useful purpose?
   2. Should teachers from all grade levels be members of PSAs?
3. Should teachers from various disciplines join into associations such as a humanities group? locally and/or provincially?

B. Problems for teachers even with sufficient time and funds

1. Initially, how will all teachers gain the knowledge and expertise to develop worth-while courses and to acquire appropriate materials and texts?

2. Can there be province-wide standards of achievement? Should there be a common body of knowledge prescribed for English? At what level should this be acquired?

3. What happens to the student who moves from one school to another; from one part of the province to another? How difficult will it be for a student to move from, for example, from an unstructured school to a structured one?

4. How will teachers cope with either overly reactionary or overly progressive boards and superintendents? How will teachers guarantee suitable education for students? How will teachers introduce and evaluate innovative courses? Will there be provisions for teachers and students who do not wish to participate in innovations?

Poggemiller raises several questions outlining the far-reaching implications the government’s policy had on B.C. schools during the 1970’s. The prospect of the decentralization of education along with the discontinuation of departmental examinations had the effect of shifting a majority of the responsibility of curriculum and assessment to the local level. Some of Poggemiller’s concerns reflect not only the legitimacy of specialist teachers’ associations such as the B.C.E.T.A., but also the more pressing questions of how teachers are to take on these new responsibilities with limited training and funding and of the effects these changes may have on students in B.C. schools. Although the B.C.E.T.A. had been advocating for its association to have more control over education since its inception in 1959, the shift in government policy by the N.D.P. government seems to have left the B.C.E.T.A. and its members feeling unprepared as local districts would be expected to take on new and expanded roles.

Six months later, the June, 1974 newsletter updates us on several ongoing concerns at the B.C.E.T.A.. Poggemiller had been elected as B.C.E.T.A.’s Curriculum
Coordinator and then had been “forced to resign before her term was completed” because of “a massive number of obligations”; however, in the intervening months she had become “involved in the complex issue of locally developed courses.” We learn also that the B.C.E.T.A. is writing a Position Paper to the Minister of Education, endeavouring to “resolve the difficult question of confluent education versus a more structured skills approach.” Diana Cruchley was the new President of the B.C.E.T.A.. We also learn that the B.C.E.T.A. had indeed taken on the monumental task of developing an interdisciplinary reading program:

Dr. Jane Catterson chaired your Reading Handbook Committee. Efforts are being made to write four handbooks dealing with reading in English, social studies, science and mathematics. Generally, developmental reading cannot exist as a subject. Reading instruction must be given as part of the content subjects.

The B.C.E.T.A. is also continuing to work on one main goal, perhaps more urgently now that government policy has arguably made the existence of specialist teachers’ associations less relevant: continuing to strengthen its voice as the representation of all B.C. English teachers. Towards this goal, the B.C.E.T.A. has been working “very closely with the Professional Development Division of the BCTF.” They were “involved in the selection of two new members” of the English Revision Committee, and is suggesting the following changes to the committee in order to ensure a wide representation of teachers:

1. Balance the membership between junior and senior secondary.
2. Strive for a geographic balance.
3. Include a reading specialist in an advisory capacity.
4. Establish term appointments.
5. Encourage the Revision Committee members to retain membership in B.C.E.T.A..
6. Establish a direct link with the Elementary Language Arts Revision Committee.
The B.C.E.T.A. in its June, 1974 report makes no secret of the fact that one of its main goals has been to become stronger as an organization. As Muir’s term as President ends, he outlines in his last report the recent accomplishments of the B.C.E.T.A.: 

In addition to the above activities, BCETA has tried to reorganize and, therefore, strengthen itself. The executive has:
1. written a BCETA handbook, which gives a detailed description of each position.
2. encouraged greater participation from regional co-ordinators.
3. tried to obtain regional co-ordinators for the four geographic regions of the Lower Mainland....
4. written a new constitution, which encourages more local involvement. Blair Brown, the constitution committee chairman, is to be congratulated for a fine job.
5. sought the opinion of all BCETA members with regard to the appointment of an English provincial co-ordinator. This issue will have increasing significance for all PSAs.
6. sponsored an English information booth at the BCTF AGM as part of the PSA Council display.
7. actively supported the efforts of the PSA Council, which represents all PSAs. In the name of teacher involvement and professionalism, the council has experienced one of its most successful years. The BCTF has increased its PSA per capita grant to cover the soaring publication costs. The BCTF is now including PSAs in its PD Summer Conference and is financial supporting PSA Council meetings.
8. conducted a vigorous recruitment program through the regional co-ordinators and the BCTF....Our membership has increased this year.

We can see by the activities of the B.C.E.T.A. that they are trying to clarify their role as a relevant and worthwhile organization, by not only writing a handbook but also a new constitution; they are working to strengthen P.S.A.s by encouraging regional coordinators; they are fully supporting the P.S.A. Council. As their identity becomes more defined, we will see how their relationship changes in relation to the B.C.T.F. 

With the decentralization of some educational responsibilities, for example, it may not be as necessary for the B.C.E.T.A. to rely on the B.C.T.F. as their voice in provincial
matters. There are some minor indications in this *Update* that the B.C.E.T.A. may not be very pleased with the B.C.T.F. on the issues of finance. Muir reports that

The BCTF has not increased its per capita grant to PSAs since 1969. The BCTF has asked all PSAs to increase their fees before a grant increase of $5 would be considered. All PSAs now charge at least $5 in order to receive the increased grant.

He further laments that the B.C.T.F. is placing greater demands on the B.C.E.T.A. for input:

More and more, BCETA is being consulted by the BCTF on many issues. Recently, for example, BCETA was asked for information on teacher education, school buildings, provincial co-ordinators, scholarship examinations, revision committees, locally developed courses, and a Canadian Author’s Association Reading Committee. To gather such information is to spend scarce funds for stationery, meetings, and travel.

The B.C.E.T.A. sounds as though it believes the B.C.T.F. is taking more from it than it is giving. Muir ends this newsletter item by reinforcing that it is the B.C.E.T.A. that is key to representing the interests of teachers as professionals:

As the backbone of BCTF professional development, PSAs are making increased efforts to promote the ideals of the professional educator and to make these ideas a reality. BCETA is part of this effort. We intend to serve the classroom teacher, the key to quality education.

We will see how the relationship between the B.C.E.T.A. and B.C.T.F. develops over the next few decades.

One way in which the B.C.E.T.A. redefined itself was by writing their new constitution, which appears in the June, 1974 *Update*. While their “proposed constitution and by-laws” is divided into five sections, Name, Objectives, Base of Operation, Membership, and Fees and Financial Records, only the Objectives section will be
reproduced here, as their objectives best address the B.C.E.T.A.'s involvement in the curricular development of B.C. schools and their role in that development:

The objectives of this association shall be:
2.A. To improve the opportunities of students in B.C. schools to experience the widely varied uses of English as a communicative medium through:
2.A.1. advice to school boards and the Department of Education regarding purposeful new developments in English education;
2.A.2. active participation of qualified members on B.C. Teachers’ Federation and on Department of Education committees concerned with matters relating to the teaching of language arts/English;
2.A.3. continuing efforts to improve learning and teaching conditions in the language arts/English classroom
2.B. To provide for professional growth of all language arts/English teachers and instructors from kindergarten to university by:
2.B.1. sponsoring workshops, seminars, meetings and similar activities to inform teachers/instructors of new approaches in English as a communicative medium;
2.B.2. encouraging experiments and projects conducted by teachers/instructors and directed toward improving classroom learning;
2.B.3. supporting the principle that only qualified teachers of English be assigned the responsibility of teaching English in secondary schools.
2.C. To provide an official channel of communication between teachers of language arts/English in B.C. schools and the BCTF, the departments of English/communications in community and technical colleges, the faculties of English and education in the provincial universities, the Department of Education, and the general public.

The goals of the B.C.E.T.A. are to improve education for English students and to be the official voice of English teachers in B.C. The language of these objectives suggests that the B.C.E.T.A. sees its role as supportive: they want to “advise,” to sponsor, to encourage, to support. This language is markedly different from that used a decade ago when S.A.T.E. was “sharpening the attack” on the government, being “at the barricades,” and “criticizing” the government. It is also markedly different from what is to come in the 1980s, when relations between the government and B.C. teachers reach a boiling
point. The relatively civil relationship which exists in the 1970s between the B.C.E.T.A. and the N.D.P. government would exist for another year.

By October, 1974, as the new school year is underway, there is still some confusion as to what is expected of teachers not only with their new curriculum and assessment responsibilities, but also with implementing the new English 8 and 9 programs, and with changes to the English 10 program on the horizon. The October, 1974 *Update* tries to reassure English teachers:

Some teachers have begun to ask questions about new responsibilities they will be assuming as decentralization of decision-making in curriculum takes place. Don't panic! New provincial guides and prescribed textbooks will be issued this year as usual. The Federation has named three persons (Ross Regan, John Church and Isobel Cull) to work with the Department in recommending new procedures and regulations.

It is not only the junior program that is under revision, however; the senior program is also undergoing revision by a Department committee. In the *Update* of November, 1974 is printed “a reaction paper for discussion with respect to a revised senior secondary English program prepared by the Department of Education’s Secondary English Revision Committee.” Before their recommendations are submitted to the Ministry, the committee is eliciting feedback from English teachers. Because of its length of four pages, it will not be reproduced here. To summarize, the paper asks for reactions to such basic questions as “Should a core (skills or otherwise) be made mandatory in Grade 11 and/or 12?”; “Should there be an evaluation of basic skills at the end of Grade 10 to determine whether or not a student should have to continue with a skills program in Grade 11? If so, what are the basic skills which should be identified? Should such an evaluation take
the form of a province-wide test?"; “Should English Literature 12 and Writing 11 remain as senior electives?”

What is most evident from such questions is the huge scope of work before this committee. They were in the position not only of re-writing completely the curriculum of secondary English, but also of determining its assessment. The reaction paper goes on to address such diverse topics as suggested elective courses, world literature in translation, contemporary literature, women in literature, utopian dreams, Bible literature and myths, popular culture, future studies (science fiction and fantasy), tradition of drama, skills workshops, English as a second language, and language systems. The B.C.E.T.A. urges its members to “please respond in writing now” and to “get your opinions in before the committee is far along in its decision-making.” Concurrently, the Update announces that

W.B. Naylor, Director, Provincial Curriculum Development Branch, has invited the B.C. Teachers’ Federation to consider submitting nominations for a small committee to identify a set of basic skills in the area of English language and communication at the secondary school level.

One may wonder about the formation of this committee since there is an existing committee already addressing the topic of basic skills as one of its issues; perhaps the government is already working on a plan to offer a remedial English course, Communications, at the secondary level.

Several months pass before any significant reports are made by the B.C.E.T.A. in its Update concerning curricular matters. This lapse is explained in the Update of May, 1975: the B.C.E.T.A. recording secretary had resigned in October, 1974, and the executive was unable to find a replacement. According to Diana Cruchley’s President’s Report, “1974-75 has been a very successful year in spite of some rather impressive
problems the executive faced.” In addition to losing their reporting secretary, the workshop co-ordinator resigned in October, which led to the cancellation of their workshop planned for Nanaimo; they were without a Vice-President until January; and the B.C.T.F., who had promised to provide the B.C.E.T.A. with $5 per member (as per their previous agreement) reneged and provided only $3.84 per member, necessitating the B.C.E.T.A.’s re-financing their yearly budget. In spite of the problems, Cruchley reports that the B.C.E.T.A. had a very successful year, with its membership soaring to 822 members, the highest ever; with “record-breaking attendance at the two conferences”; and with a balanced budget. Given the six-month dearth of meaningful reports, one can only guess at the renewed interest in the B.C.E.T.A. from B.C. English teachers. Perhaps the re-invention of the English curriculum provided more opportunity or the impetus for greater involvement.

Cruchley also reports that the B.C.E.T.A. is forging stronger partnerships with several groups. First, they are working more closely with the Department of Education as two members of the B.C.E.T.A. executive are serving on the Language Arts Revision Committee and on the Language Skills Committee. Second, the B.C.E.T.A. “in an effort to establish a closer liaison with post-secondary institutions” has attended two meetings with representatives from the English and Education faculties of both the University of British Columbia (UBC) and Simon Fraser University (SFU). Plans were made at these meetings to establish an “informal English Teachers’ group that will help arrange more communication and assistance between universities and secondary schools,” and indeed, Vice-President John McVicar attended such a meeting at UBC on March 8. Third, the B.C.E.T.A. is maintaining its affiliation with both the National Council of the Teachers of
English (N.C.T.E.) and the Canadian Council of the Teachers of English (C.C.T.E.). McVicar is also working with Past-President of the B.C.E.T.A., Iris McIntyre, now with the C.C.T.E., on the C.C.T.E.'s “Commission on Professionalism.”

The one negative note concerning B.C.E.T.A.'s partnerships may be its relationship with its mother organization, the B.C.T.F.. In his Vice-President’s Report, McVicar states that he is “most concerned” about “the future of the B.C.E.T.A.. Current attitudes within the B.C.T.F. seem to be threatening the very existence of PSAs.” He does not elaborate on these comments, so we are left to wonder whether he is referring to the B.C.T.F.'s not meeting their financial obligations to the B.C.E.T.A., or whether there is something more.

The Update of June, 1975 provides more detailed information about the on-going process of decentralization of education that was happening in B.C. There was a curriculum seminar held on April 11 at the B.C.T.F. which included members of teacher organizations and the Department of Education. A report from John Wiebe, a member-at-large of the B.C.E.T.A. who attended the seminar, is printed in the June, 1975 Update. It is interesting in that it not only outlines the major topics of discussion, but in that it also comments on the “tone” of the meeting. Even though it is rather long, it is reproduced here in its entirety because it offers a behind-the-scenes look at the process involved in the decentralization of B.C.’s education system during this pivotal time in the history of B.C. education.

The objectives of the seminar, with representation from the specialist association, the Pro.D. [professional development] committee and the Department, were:

a. To help participants gain an understanding of decentralization of the curriculum.
b. To let participants review and react to the draft regulations submitted by the advisory committee.

c. To encourage participants to discuss the nature of a core curriculum as proposed in the White paper.

The tone of the six hour session was "collegial" in that a searching attitude prevailed with many questions asked, objections raised and vague suggestions proposed, but no answers or promises clearly preferred. The Department stance on decentralization was stated by Mr. Mc Birney in the opening address which listed, among others, the following considerations:

a. We are, in effect, legalizing something that already exists, for example, special, school, or teacher initiated programs.

b. Decentralization reflects input received by the Department over the past years now being legalized by the White Paper.

c. Help will be made available in this complex task of devising curricula on the local level.

When members of the seminar were asked to consider the practical implications of decentralization, the following questions were raised:

a. Will there be substantial funds readily available:

1. to free teachers for in-service training in the techniques of curriculum development?

2. to free teachers for the development and initiation of new courses?

3. to provide materials and resources for alternative programs?

b. The problems of accountability, standards and consistency received considerable attention. Student mobility invariably became a factor in these discussions. In answer, the advisory committee and the Department representatives suggested some form of needs assessment, a core curriculum and stated that, indeed, these problems are presently in evidence. Mr. Mc Birney also alluded to the possibility of involving the Joint Committee on Evaluation, not as "imposed control" but as an "information gathering service."

c. Public acceptance of "unique" programs, acceptance by administrators and district superintendents of teachers as curriculum "experts," as well as the matter of dealing with minority pressure groups were some further problems aired. The answers, again, could hardly have been specific. Suggestions that included workshops on interpersonal skill, in-service training in writing, clarifying objectives and the need for intensive PR were heard.

After lunch (compliments of the BCTF) attention centered on the core curriculum, as yet not specifically defined, but for which each board of school trustees shall be held responsible, according to regulation five of the draft. Even after limited discussion, a tremendous range of opinions as to what should constitute the core became evident. The final presentation, a review of the efforts of one elementary school staff's attempt to come to grips with a core curriculum, demonstrated some of the variables that must be considered when approaching the problem.
The conference was adjourned with few questions answered but with increased respect for, and some misgivings about, the huge task of implementing and sustaining legislation dealing with a core curriculum, in particular, and decentralization, in general.

This report is interesting on many levels. It is interesting that the tone was "collegial" and that the Department was willing to discuss concerns and elicit feedback, but that they offered "no answers or promises." It is interesting that Mr. McBirney attempts to downplay the magnitude of decentralization in his opening address, suggesting that the government is largely legalizing existing practice, when clearly the members present left feeling that decentralization was a "huge task." It is interesting that no response is recorded to the teachers' requests for assurances that funding would be provided for the "practical implications" such as teachers' professional development and the writing of curriculum. It is interesting that one fear of teachers is that they will not be seen as curriculum "experts" by their superiors (which is interesting in that the B.C.T.F. has made the case for years that teachers should be awarded professional status). It is interesting that the "core" curriculum, though still ill-defined, is to be the major tool by which the success of schools, teachers, and students will be measured. Overall, it is interesting to evaluate the nature of the relationship between the Department of Education and the teachers. Although the teachers have seemingly been treated respectfully in that their input and concerns are heard, it is disheartening that they left the meeting with very few answers and instead, a sense of foreboding about the enormity of the task ahead of them, with few assurances of help from the government.

Following this report given in the June, 1975 Update, there is information about the Department's working towards developing a core curriculum and a "consolidated curriculum guide indicating clearly the purposes to be achieved by a secondary school
English program. The Department believes that this guide will provide a suitable structure for subsequent course development and materials selection at the local level.” *Update* reports that because the Department is undertaking such a “major research project in the language arts/English field,” they decided to delay the implementation of the new English 10 curriculum from September, 1975 to September, 1976.

There is further information that the Department will be aided in its goal to produce new curriculum guides with a restructuring of existing curriculum committees. The English Revision Committee, which worked for five years on Literature 12, English 8, 9, 10, and was beginning work on senior English, would be dissolved. Similarly, the new Secondary Language Skills Committee would be dissolved. With the government’s decision to institute a core curriculum, two new committees would be formed to meet the Department’s two new objectives. “The new English Curriculum Development Committee will be responsible for preparing an English 8-12 curriculum guide consisting of an introductory statement and an outline of goals and learning outcomes.” To meet the Department’s new goal of compiling locally-evaluated learning materials suitable to their core objectives, the new “English Materials Evaluation Committee will receive materials forwarded by the Curriculum Development Branch, read them, and submit written evaluations based on criteria provided. The criteria would include most importantly, the pre-stated goals and learning outcomes of English 8-12.” The project of decentralization is underway, under the guidelines of the Department of Education.

When the next *Update* is published in October, 1975, John McVicar is the new President. The *Update* contains little information about curricular revisions. It does list the goals of the B.C.E.T.A., which have remained unchanged since last stated in June,
1974, and it lists the objectives of the year, which include publishing their journal and sponsoring two workshops, as usual. Perhaps the lack of information on curricular work is a result of the pending provincial election.

By the time of publication of the Update in March, 1976, some major changes had taken place in B.C. After a little over three years in power, the N.D.P. party was defeated in a December election, and the Social Credit Party was back in power, as it had been in B.C. for the twenty years preceding the N.D.P.'s term. There is little reference in this Update to curricular revision; perhaps the committees' work has been stalled while the new government assesses the situation. The Update instead contains several articles on a variety of topics, then devotes half of its issue to the condemnation of standardized testing. One such article is from the N.C.T.E., which at their annual convention in San Diego railed against standardized tests, not only "citing the 'racial, sexist, social and ethnic biases' of tests," but also deploring "the frequent misuse and questionable use of them." This focus on standardized tests may be a result of the Social Credit government's institution of two new tests: the English Placement Test given to grade 12's to test their skills, and the P.L.A.P., the Provincial Learning Assessment Program test. This focus is also coincidentally prophetic for teachers in B.C.; although there are no Departmental examinations in B.C. during the mid-seventies, the Social Credit government will re-institute them in a few years.

It is not until May, 1977, over a year later, that a B.C.E.T.A. Update discusses the workings of the curriculum committees. The report is that the new "English Revision committee met at the Vancouver Teachers' Centre for the first time March 25 to consider materials for grades 11 and 12. The committee, appointed by the Ministry, consists of
five members...” including B.C.E.T.A. Past-President Diana Cruchley, now with the Curriculum Development Branch of the Ministry of Education. Of interest is that the committee is newly-appointed, which suggests a break from the committees struck under the N.D.P.; also of interest is that “their work will consist of identifying, studying, and piloting texts selected to correspond with goals stipulated in the new English 8-12 Guide.” It seems as though the curriculum guides begun under the N.D.P. have been completed, and are to be used under the new Social Credit Ministry of Education.

The June, 1977 Update makes clear that the work of the English Materials Evaluation committee has been continuing, in that it has now developed a resource book for English 8 which complements the curriculum guide, and that first drafts of the English 9 and 10 resource guides are also completed. Also in this Update is evidence that some of the teachers’ requests made to the N.D.P. at the decentralization seminar are being answered by the Socreds. Professional days are being given to teachers to in-service the new English 8, 9, and 10 courses, and “resource people will be sponsored by the Ministry.” The new government is also calling for teachers’ input into the development of new senior English courses, which had started under the N.D.P.: “The English 11 and 12 Revision Committee has been working hard....committee members will be visiting various Lower Mainland schools to meet with English teachers. They want teacher input.” The Ministry also decided to continue with the N.D.P.’s plan to outline a core curriculum; the governments’ “CORE curriculum working paper elicited 14,000 responses from the B.C. public. These have been statistically collated by the Ministry, and show strong support for the language portions of the proposed goals and a desire to strengthen the reading portions.” What is noteworthy here is that the
government asked for the input from the general public, not only educators in making its decision to implement their core curriculum.

As Elaine Spilos, the new B.C.E.T.A. President-elect, takes over for outgoing President Joyanne Landers in June, 1977, Landers’ writes some final words in the Update, many concerning the need for teachers to have the opportunity to continue their professional development:

I have mentioned the universities’ responsibilities in adequately preparing English teachers. We must also consider who is responsible for the continuing education of teachers. Much more in-service in the area of professional development is required. The B.C.E.T.A. does its part. It relies on the work of dedicated English teachers who give of their free time.
That is why we ask the Ministry, the universities, local school districts, local English chapters, and individual schools to also provide needed in-service assistance. Teachers need the opportunity to receive continuing education and they need adequate provision for release time from their classes to take advantage of such sessions.

By September, 1977, curriculum revision was not only on-going in B.C., but also on a larger scale: the C.C.T.E. was calling on Ottawa to supply funding for a national Royal Commission on Education.

C.C.T.E. and the Association of Canadian University Teachers of English are hoping to raise a $140,000 budget through provincial and federal cooperation. With this financial backing, the two organizations hope to support two “commissioners” who will carry out extensive curriculum research and subsequently make recommendations for national curriculum guidelines in Language Arts/English.

The B.C.E.T.A. did not print a response to the C.C.T.E.’s call, nor did they elicit any responses from their readers.

There is little new information on curriculum revision to report over the new few months of B.C.E.T.A. Updates. The November/December, 1977 issue reports that the Resource Books are delayed, and that there is “hope that the English 11 Revision
Committee will be able to push through a language perscription [sic] for the Fall of '78; a "hope" in that the committee had received over fourteen hundred books to evaluate. When it comes to making final selections about the materials to be taught in B.C. schools, the B.C.E.T.A. accepts without further comment the predetermined outcome of the committees' work: "The Ministry, while listening to any and all suggestions or even committee recommendations, will make the final selections."

Another few months pass with little information concerning curriculum. On the topic of the relationship between the B.C.E.T.A. and the B.C.T.F., however, the Update of March, 1978 has a lot to say. It seems that relations between the two organizations have continued to deteriorate.

It is safe to say that most English teachers are not very aware of BCTF politics; they have enough concerns with class preparation and marking loads. But an issue has arisen which should have our attention. That is the matter of BCTF support of the Provincial Specialist Associations—such as the B.C.E.T.A.

Attempts to increase the BCTF grant to PSAs from $5 to $8 per PSA member failed in the BCTF executive committee by as 6-5 vote. Another attempt at the Representative Assembly met with similar failure. And rumour suggests that the PSA Council, which co-ordinates the PSAs, will be disbanded at the BCTF Annual General Meeting.

We cannot allow PSAs to be disbanded....

Although the B.C.E.T.A.'s relationship with the B.C.T.F. is deteriorating, the B.C.E.T.A. is offering some measure of support to the C.C.T.E. Although they stop short of endorsing the C.C.T.E.'s proposal for a national English curriculum, they do say that the C.C.T.E. is "struggling to become the voice of Canadian English teachers from elementary through university levels" and sympathizes with their concern with "teaching Canadian literature and using Canadian texts in our classrooms." The B.C.E.T.A.
encourages its members to pay the $20 membership fee and become a member of the C.C.T.E.

It is not until the *Update* of April/May, 1978, two and a half years after the Socreds returned to office, that we see some opposition expressed towards the Ministry of Education to one of its curricular initiatives. The Ministry’s “Draft Proposal re New Regulations and Procedures re Curriculum Responsibility” restricts the texts teachers may use in the classroom to those prescribed by the Ministry. Any texts not on the Ministry’s prescribed list that are currently being used or that have traditionally been used are no longer acceptable unless they are subsequently approved by local school boards (the “elected representatives” referred to by the B.C.E.T.A. in its following motion). The B.C.E.T.A. executive’s response to the Ministry’s draft paper concerning the regulation of texts is in the form of a motion passed by the executive committee and reprinted in the *Update*.

Moved that we go on record as being opposed to the Ministry’s proposals as expressed in the Draft Proposal re New Regulations and Procedures re Curriculum Responsibility (Presented by [Deputy Minister] Jim Carter to a Meeting of Directors of Instruction, Feb. 24, 1978). Some of our concerns are:

1. That in the case of English, many prescribed texts, particularly in the language area, are neither practicable for classroom use nor research-based. This has caused teachers, in the best interests of their students, to use supplemental materials which are useful. We are opposed to any measure which restricts or prohibits teachers from finding and using texts which are beneficial to students.

2. That the unique student-teacher relationship may be endangered when a decision taken by the elected representatives of the public is in conflict with the appropriate learning environment necessary for that student and teacher.

3. That it would appear that the Ministry is moving away from the curriculum guide, which expresses a goal-oriented philosophy, toward a content-dominated curriculum, resulting in a conflict between philosophy and practice, specific to English.
4. That the proposal undermines the professional responsibility and judgment of teachers who exercise their professional mandate in selecting supplementary materials.
5. That the proposal undermines the validity of existing English programmes which have been established over the years and built around teacher-chosen resources.
6. That it would appear that the Ministry has not requested in-put from the BCTF before framing this draft.
7. That there is a lack of accountability in decision making due to the nature of the term of office of elected representatives.

If the government responded to the concerns of the B.C.E.T.A., there is no record of it, nor is this issue mentioned again in future Updates. With one notable exception, it seems to be business as usual if the November, 1978 Update is any indication. The newsletter reports that the English 9 Resource book has again been delayed; a draft of The Scope and Sequence Guide for English 8-12 is being reviewed by teachers; the B.C.E.T.A. is again concerned that its membership has declined, this time from 697 members in July to 648 in September.

The one exception is articulated by Vic Wright, the Burnaby North Membership Chairperson, who explains why a strong P.S.A. is important:

At present the whole English programme is under close scrutiny, and many of our aims and objectives seem to be under attack, especially by proponents of the "back to the basics" movement. A strong English PSA must exist if we are to continue to liberalize the teaching of English within the public school system.

This is the first mention by the B.C.E.T.A. of the "back to the basics" movement which was gaining ground in the 1970's, and a term which some critics feel applies to the Sacred government of this era, not only because of their tendency for prescription of texts and content, but also because of their calls for a return to "accountability" in education. We will see how relations between the B.C.E.T.A. and the Sacreds continue to develop as the decade nears its end.
The new year of 1979 starts out with cautious optimism:

On January 2, Deputy Minister Jim Carter, BCTF President Pat Brady, BCIT English department chairman Henry Arthur, and Curriculum Consultant John McVicar attended a special meeting of the BCETA executive to discuss cooperation between the Ministry of Education and the BCETA on two fundamental problems: the allotment of time for English instruction and the training of English teachers in writing. An extensive programme of in-service workshops, hopefully with some Ministry funding, was discussed.

In addition, two motions were passed by the B.C.E.T.A. executive concerning draft proposals the B.C.E.T.A. would write to the Ministry on several related issues: that the Ministry endorse the concept of more English instructional time, that the Ministry designate an English specialist to serve in its curriculum development branch, and that the Ministry strike a standing committee to review materials and programs in English.

As the school year ends in 1979, a new B.C.E.T.A. President, Gary Temlett, is elected for the upcoming year. Apart from announcements in the May/June, 1979 Update concerning upcoming conferences and professional development opportunities for teachers in the fall, there are no major developments reported. In fact, there are no major reports of any significance concerning curriculum by the B.C.E.T.A. for many months.

The 1979-1980 year was reviewed at the B.C.E.T.A.’s Eighteenth Annual General Meeting held on April 17, 1980. President Gary Temlett reports on many issues, some about which he is pleased, others about which he is not. He is pleased that the B.C.E.T.A. has continued its association with both the N.C.T.E. and the C.C.T.E.; he is similarly pleased that “conferences and in-service have been most successful this year.” He is not as pleased that the second draft of the Ministry’s “The Administrative Handbook for Elementary and Secondary Schools” reduces the amount of time of English
instruction to be equal to that of other subjects, and that the Ministry's new term of "M.E." a new designation of "minimum essentials" to be used in the assessment of students, is not well-defined. Also noteworthy is that Temlett reports that he and a colleague in the B.C.E.T.A. had expressed their concerns publically on television and on the radio. This is the first time that the B.C.E.T.A. has discussed airing its displeasure with the Ministry so publically. Temlett ends his report by making some "suggestions" for next year's executive. Most are expected; for example, that the B.C.E.T.A. continue to work with other groups sympathetic to the concerns of B.C. English teachers; but one is very interesting. His last recommendation is that "improvements for English teachers continue to be sought through the B.C.T.F. in an atmosphere of co-operation rather than confrontation." It seems clear that during the 1970s the relationship between these two associations has indeed deteriorated.

The 1970s were a decade of change in B.C. education: the changes in political parties, the discontinuation of governmental examinations, the institution of a core curriculum and of the P.L.A.P. test, the renewed focus on reading across the curriculum, the attention to differentiated instruction, the re-writing of both the junior and senior English/Language Arts curricula, the shift to a more skills-based curriculum, and particularly the decentralization of education, all combined to shift unprecedented responsibility for curriculum and assessment to the local level. The B.C.E.T.A. worked to ensure that English teachers were well-represented on Ministry committees, but was often frustrated when its recommendations were largely ignored. The B.C.E.T.A. also worked to strengthen its ties with other organizations, notably the C.C.T.E., the N.C.T.E., U.B.C., and S.F.U., perhaps because its relationship with its mother organization, the
B.C.T.F. became more strained throughout the decade, as it felt undervalued and unsupported by the B.C.T.F. The B.C.E.T.A. felt that in these times of rapid change, its association was crucial as it was the voice of English/Language Arts teachers in B.C.; thus, it also worked to strengthen its organization through increased membership. The B.C.E.T.A. would need both strength and support in order to face what was to come. The most difficult decade for B.C. teachers in their history was on the horizon: the 1980s.

References


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8: CHAPTER SEVEN: THE 1980S

The B.C.T.F.

With the Social Credit party again in office after winning the 1979 election, conflicts were to continue with the B.C.T.F. during the 1980s; however, the extent of the future animosity between teachers and the government was unprecedented in B.C. Throughout 1980, B.C. teachers were becoming increasingly upset with their poor working conditions and poor pay, and were starting to comment publically on the inefficacy of the B.C.T.F. in representing their concerns. Then B.C.T.F. President Larry Kuehn stated that “the BCTF did not possess the tools to bargain successfully because it was excluded from the provision of the Labour Code that allowed other groups to bargain terms and conditions of their work” (Ungerleider, 1996, pg. 4). The B.C.T.F. responded to the teachers’ concerns by making bargaining their first priority and a return to more “welfare” or union-related issues thus took shape. The B.C.T.F. created a Bargaining Division and was successful in making some “modest gains in 1980 and even more substantial gains in 1981” in such areas as “lunch time supervision, non-instructional time, personnel practices, as well as an average salary increase of 17.25 per cent” (Ungerleider, 1996, pg. 4). In addition to welfare issues,

...professional issues received attention and membership on ministry curriculum committees, educational commissions and task forces were demanded and accepted. The establishment of professional specialist associations enabled teachers to work together to improve their own professional development (Sheehan & Wilson, 1994, pg. 5).

Although teachers were given more opportunity for input, the government continued to make major educational changes unilaterally. One month after his appointment in 1982
as the new Minister of Education, for example, Bill Vander Zalm revealed at a Social Credit party convention that provincial examinations would be reinstated in the spring (Rexin, 1985, pg. 86-87). Teachers were similarly still concerned with their limited bargaining rights, and in early 1982 the B.C.T.F. held a referendum asking B.C. teachers whether or not they wanted the right to strike as a means of resolving bargaining disputes. In February of 1982, the referendum was defeated; teachers did not want to strike (Novakowski, Jan/Feb. 2000, pg. 1).

Within one week of the teachers’ failed referendum, in February, 1982, the Social Credit government “announced a two-year restraint program for all sectors of the economy, including education” (Ungerleider, 1996, pg. 4). Premier Bill Bennett established the Compensation Stabilization Program which was a “wage-control program to cut back salaries in the public sector. The economy was in recession and government’s response was to blame public-sector wage increases and, in particular, teacher salaries” (Novakowski, Jan/Feb. 2000, pg. 1). When the Social Credit party was re-elected in May, 1983, they were given the mandate to extend their economic plan. In July, 1983, the government introduced a series of twenty-six Bills which according to the B.C.T.F., “had the collective effect of attacking the basic rights of unionized workers, the human rights of large numbers of British Columbians, and allowing for the first time, the layoff of teachers and other public sector workers without cause” (“History,” 2008, n.p.). The B.C.T.F. and other unions believed that these Bills in conjunction with the ongoing restraint program gave employers and the government excessive power over workers, and they decided to organize in protest:

The response of the labour movement and social-action community was swift. Within weeks of the legislative assault by government, the B.C.
Federation of Labour called a meeting of all unions in B.C., affiliated and non-affiliated, to a founding conference of Operation Solidarity, a united front of labour to oppose the legislative package and to pressure government to withdraw it. Community groups including human rights, women’s rights, anti-poverty, tenants’ rights, students, seniors, and environmental joined together in a Solidarity Coalition. Never before in the memory of most had labour and community united so actively around a common agenda in this province. By the end of August, 1983, 50,000 people attended a protest rally at Empire Stadium and by the middle of October, 80,000 people were marching in protest on the streets of Vancouver, past the assembled convention of the Social Credit party (Novakowski, Jan/Feb. 2000, pg. 2).

In addition, and particular to education, Minister of Education Bill Heinrich unveiled the School District Restraint policy, which raised student-teacher ratios in the classroom, shifted budget control away from school districts and to the Ministry of Education, and led to thousands of teacher layoffs; the resultant hostility between the government and educators became known as “School Wars” (Killian, 1985). The government was certainly not investing in education as the economy struggled.

While the unions were organizing their protests in the summer of 1983, the B.C.T.F. was trying to negotiate with the government on behalf of teachers. Bill 3 allowed for layoffs without cause, and the B.C.T.F. was trying to have the Bill amended so that if teachers were laid off, their seniority would be considered. Their attempts failed, and when teachers were asked whether or not to join the Solidarity Strike, they voted yes. The three-day Solidarity Strike of November, 1983, was the largest strike in the history of B.C.

Although “controversy remains to this day about the end of the solidarity action” as the Solidarity leadership negotiated an end to the strike with the Socreds, participation in the strike was a turning point for teachers (Novakowski, Jan/Feb. 2000, pg. 3). In 1984, the B.C.T.F. passed a policy that all members would honour all future
picket lines; teachers in every local of B.C. negotiated seniority/severance agreements; the B.C.T.F. continued to oppose cutbacks to education; and more importantly, the B.C.T.F. felt the power of having the right to strike (ibid).

The history of the B.C.T.F. has been typified by its trying to reconcile its dual functions: that of being a union and that of being a professional organization. During all of the conflicts in the early 1980s, the B.C.T.F. was more concerned, perhaps necessarily, with union matters. As relations between the B.C.T.F. and the government continued to be strained during the 1980s as B.C.’s economy struggled, and as the Socreds won another term in office in 1986, the B.C.T.F. was to face a new challenge with respect to its role. On April 1, 1987, the government, without warning and without consultation with teachers, announced two new pieces of legislation: Bills 19 and 20. Bill 19, the Industrial Relations Act, “restricted existing rights for trade unions while at the same time including teachers as employees entitled to those rights. Principals and vice-principals were removed from the teacher bargaining unit with a clear ‘management’ role” (Novakowski, Apr. 2000, pg. 1). Bill 20, The Teaching Profession Act, “established a College of Teachers (BCCT) with the power to establish and enforce professional standards related to training, certification, discipline and the professional practice of teaching” (Ungerleider, 1996, pg. 4). The government also removed “the legal recognition that was given to compulsory membership in the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation” (ibid). The purpose of these two Bills was apparently to “separate the professional concerns of teachers from their economic concerns” (Ungerleider, 1996, pg. 5). The government seemingly wanted to split the dual role of the B.C.T.F..
While labour unions were angry over Bill 19, the B.C.T.F. was “adamantly opposed” to Bill 20 (Novakowski, Apr. 2000, pg. 1). “The fact that the Industrial Relations and Teaching Profession acts granted the 75 local associations the right to seek union status with expanded bargaining rights and established teacher control over teacher certification was ignored by the B.C.T.F. The Federation focused almost exclusively on what it perceived to be an attempt by an ideological adversary to dismantle the BCTF” (Ungerleider, 1996, pg. 5). The B.C.T.F. again mobilized against the government. On April 28 teachers held a one day strike to protest Bill 20. On June 1, teachers joined the rest of the labour movement in a one-day province-wide general strike to protest Bills 19 and 20 (Novakowski, Apr. 2000, pg. 1).

There has been much debate about the government’s real purpose of these two Bills:

Although it is unclear why the Government acted as it did, there is some speculation. For several decades and increasingly in the 1980s, the BCTF had an agenda which many have argued has been at odds with the agenda of the Government. Each approached education from a very different ideology resulting in growing antagonism between the two. It has been suggested with much plausibility that Bill 20, in creating a second body of teachers, and Bill 19 which allowed independent local teacher associations, was intended as a way of undermining the control and authority of the BCTF. A second conjecture suggests that the Sacred Government had already adopted a policy of privatizing many government services. By creating an independent College with control over certification and discipline the Government decreased its costs. The price of professional control was the institution of fees. Accordingly teachers now pay for a certification service formerly supplied by the government (Sheehan & Wilson, 1994, pg. 6).

If one of the government’s purposes was to undermine the B.C.T.F., it was not successful. In the fall of 1987, the B.C.T.F. held a campaign to sign up B.C. teachers, and 98% joined (“History,” 2008, n.d.).
One of the options provided by Bill 19 was that teachers could choose to be an "association" with limited scope and binding arbitration or a "union" with full scope and the right to strike. Every local association chose the union option (Novakowski, Apr. 2000, pg. 1); shortly thereafter, however, Premier Bill Vander Zalm declared teachers an essential service, thereby severely limiting their right to strike.

The B.C.T.F. was also successful in establishing itself as the voice of B.C. teachers when the first College elections were held in the fall:

...all 15 members first elected in the fall of 1987 had been supported by the British Columbia Teachers' Federation. Many had at one time or another held executive positions in either a local branch or the provincial association. The Chairperson of the council elected at the first meeting was Bill Broadley, a former President of the BCTF. The BCTF announced it had control over the Council of the College and believed that it had circumvented the legislation which had created a second body of teachers (Sheehan & Wilson, 1994, pg. 6).

In effect, though Bills 19 and 20 encouraged a separation between teachers' union and professional interests, the B.C.T.F. reports that it had "reshaped and reformed their 'union of professionals' into a new organization that would continue to represent all of the economic, social, and professional interests of teachers" (Novakowski, Apr. 2000, pg. 2). The B.C.T.F. felt that they could retain control over all issues concerning teachers, both union and professional:

Pressure from the BCTF, backed by solid member support, ensured that the enactment of the college would see its role largely limited to teacher certification and de-certification. With the achievement of full collective bargaining rights at the same time, teachers were now able to negotiate aspects of their tenure and professional rights. In particular the inclusion of professional autonomy provisions in many agreements took the issue of teacher professional rights a great step forward ("History," 2008, n.p.).
The focus on teacher autonomy is understandable in light of the history of the centralization of the B.C. education system. When one institution, be it governmental or professional, has the mandate of determining curriculum and assessment, the result can be that teachers become less professional:

In many ways, given the centralization of authority and control...the very things that make teaching a professional activity—the control of one’s expertise and time—are also dissipated....Hence the tendency for the curriculum to become increasingly planned, systematized, and standardized at a central level, totally focused on competencies measured by standardized tests (and largely dependent on predesigned commercial materials and text written specifically for those states that have the tightest centralized control, and thus the largest guaranteed markets) may have consequences that are the exact opposite of what many authorities intend. Instead of professional teachers who care greatly about what they do and why they do it, we may have alienated executors of someone else’s plans (Apple and Jungck, 1992, pg. 24).

Whatever the intentions of the government, the teachers in B.C. for the first time had been granted professional status. Although the council members “had a difficult first term as they struggled to clarify the meaning of the Act and determine their responsibilities”, they have since developed policies around membership, discipline, professional development, and certification (Sheehan & Wilson, 1994, pg. 6).

Political unrest continued at the end of the 1980s as each district bargained locally and independently, albeit with much training and support from the B.C.T.F. Kitimat teachers struck for ten days in November, 1988, before reaching an agreement with the government. Eleven other districts then went on strike during the first round of bargaining (“History,” 2008, n.p.). Ultimately, the B.C.T.F. was pleased with the results of the localized bargaining, as teachers won rights in contracts for class-size limits, preparation time, maternity leaves, tenure rights, and significant wage increases “allowing us not only to keep up with inflation, but also to recover some of the losses we
had experienced as a result of the wage control program of the eighties. Collective bargaining had truly come of age for teachers” according to the B.C.T.F. (“History,” 2008, n.p.).

In addition to the establishment of the College of Teachers in 1987, the B.C.T.F. found itself having to respond to another major government initiative: a Royal Commission on Education headed by Barry Sullivan (and thus, often referred to as the Sullivan Commission) conducted an extensive study of the B.C. school system between March, 1987 and July, 1988. The commission’s first report released in 1988, subtitled *A Legacy for Learners*, contains eighty-three recommendations for educational change, including changes to curriculum and assessment. Among the government’s responses to the commission were two documents: *Policy Directions* was produced in 1989; *Year 2000: A Framework for Learning* was published in 1990. The focus for education according to these documents is on meeting the individual needs of each student and on career development in addition to intellectual and social development. Increasingly more stakeholders, including business leaders, community members, parents, and various other interest groups were given much more opportunity for input into educational decision-making than ever before. The B.C.T.F. again found itself in the position of having to react to significant changes in B.C. education.

The decade of the 1980s was a time of change for the B.C.T.F.: it perceived the creation of the College and localized bargaining as attempts to undermine its power, but at the end of the decade felt that it was not only a strong voice on the new College, but also that with its strategy to coordinate bargaining efforts at the local level, teachers had won back most of what they had lost earlier in the decade. The decade of the 1990s
would bring more changes as the government’s new education policies were to be implemented, and as a new political party was soon to win an election in B.C.

B.C.E.T.A.

As the new decade of the 1980s began, the B.C.E.T.A. was continuing to work at re-inventing the entire English curriculum and to work out the logistics of how B.C. English/Language Arts teachers were to implement it. The Update of February/March, 1980 reports on the in-service for teachers on the new English curriculum in B.C. schools: from February 11 to 19, nine Curriculum Orientation workshops of two days each were held around the province. On the first day of the workshop, teachers were given “hands on” experience in planning units that followed the Scope and Sequence, that used the prescribed resources, and that allowed instruction to be tailored to the needs of students of differing abilities. Teachers were also given previews of some of the newly-prescribed texts that would be introduced in September, and were taught how to teach writing as a process. The second day of the workshop was devoted to the planning of future in-service days during which teachers would become familiar with the new resources. The government seems to have answered at least one of the concerns of English teachers and their associations: the need for in-service to implement the new programs.

The Update of May-June, 1980 has two items of interest: the first is the announcement that Berenice Wood is the next President of the B.C.E.T.A.; the second is that the Ministry is striking a new “K-12 Language Arts Advisory Committee on Learning Assessment and Curriculum.” This is the first committee for whom “assessment” is part of its mandate; this undoubtedly reflects the Socreds’ concerns with
the accountability of the schools in B.C. The committee has several functions, including but not limited to the examination of students’ transition from elementary to secondary school, setting up “vehicles for review of learning materials” for exceptional cases, and reviewing results of the government’s 1980 “Assessment of Reading” and suggesting new curriculum directions that arise from the results of the assessment. As one would expect, although the Ministry states that “committee recommendations provide a valuable source of reference for the Ministry” and that the new committee’s “recommendations will be taken under advisement and given careful study,” they also emphasize that the recommendations “do not, however, establish policy.”

Assessment is again a topic of discussion in the September-October, 1980 Update. Because of a Ministry decision, the B.C.T.F. was put in the position of vehemently defending its members: B.C. English teachers. In June, 1980, teachers of English 12 were directed by the Ministry of Education not only to give a writing test to all of their grade 12 students, but also to mark all of the tests. When English teachers complained, Jim Blakey, the President of the B.C.T.F., sent a scathing letter to Jim Carter, the Assistant Deputy Minister, describing the government’s actions as “absurd” and “outrageous.” He is further critical of the marking instructions, which he characterized as “complex” and requiring “extensive time devoted to each paper.” He also articulates the concerns of teachers that “names of students and teachers were to be included on the papers; some members questioned the ministry’s purposes for this.” He ends his letter by clearly stating his support for the English teachers: “Members who called us were informed that B.C.T.F. policy is ‘that BCTF members should not be compelled to mark provincial tests’ and the BCTF would fully support members who
chose to follow that policy.” After the conflicts between the B.C.T.F. and the B.C.E.T.A. during the 1970s, in which the B.C.E.T.A. felt unsupported and unvalued by the B.C.T.F., their support on this issue was undoubtedly appreciated.

As for updates on other issues involving the B.C.E.T.A., Dan Derpak, the editor of the newsletter during Berenice Wood’s term as President, reports little of curricular significance for many months. It is not until June, 1981, when Berenice Wood ends her year as President, sums up her year in review for the B.C.E.T.A. A.G.M., and then resumes her role as the editor of the B.C.E.T.A.’s Update that detailed information is again published.

Wood fills in the blanks of the previous eight months with a summary of the B.C.E.T.A.’s 1980-81 year. We know that several committees continued to operate, as she attended many meetings on behalf of the B.C.E.T.A., including a B.C.T.F. summer conference, P.S.A. Council meetings, and meetings of the Committee to Improve the Teaching of English and The English Teachers’ Group. In November, 1980, she wrote a brief outlining the concerns of English teachers and presented it to [Minister of Education] Brian Smith and [Deputy Minister] Jim Carter. She worked in concert with the B.C.T.F. to express concerns to the Ministry of Education concerning the English Placement Test, with the result that it was discontinued in March, 1981. She worked with U.B.C. to discuss the high failure rate of students writing the U.B.C. first year English 100 examination. Also noteworthy is that Wood continued the new practice of enlisting the help of the media to make the concerns of the B.C.E.T.A. known. She “wrote to the News Director of Channel 8, B.C.T.V., to protest their treatment of the issue [the English
100 exam failure rates] and to request time to present the English teachers’ point of view. No reply, unfortunately, was ever forthcoming.”

As Helen Zwick takes over the Presidency of the B.C.E.T.A., she outlines its plans for 1981-82. She reiterates the importance of their *Update*, the Journal, and the conferences. She plans to continue to work with U.B.C. on improving English 100 exam results, and to address the concern about reduced time for English instruction. Also of note is that the B.C.E.T.A. is encouraging English teachers to form Local Specialists Associations, or L.S.A.’s, and is setting aside a portion of their budget “for the development of local groups.” The B.C.E.T.A. believes that L.S.A.’s can be “instrumental in improving learning and working conditions in the English classroom at the district level,” especially one would assume in the context of decentralization now becoming entrenched in B.C. Wood adds that “new guidelines are being set up by the B.C.T.F. concerning the rights and obligations of both P.S.A.’s and L.S.A.’s” and seems to support this move, as she adds that “it is important to know where we stand, especially in dealing with outside agencies.” It seems as though the B.C.T.F. and the B.C.E.T.A. have continued to maintain a working relationship over the past months. As a final focus of the year to come, Wood uses some strong language to describe the Ministry’s method for prescribing texts:

The issue of censorship again rears its ugly head. As English teachers, we need to know beforehand how to deal with such problems when they arise. The BCETA is especially concerned with the textbook selection and deletion criteria employed by the Ministry. We are in the process of collecting information on how to deal with censorship effectively....

This is the strongest language we have heard from the B.C.E.T.A. towards the Ministry of Education in many years. Perhaps it is indicative that their relationship is becoming
more strained as English teachers are continually asked to implement new curriculum using new resources, and are also granted less time for English instruction in some schools. Compounding these issues is the ever-increasing number of children entering B.C. schools speaking little or no English. In the Update of September-October, 1981, both of these concerns are addressed by an interesting source, albeit in an indirect manner: Minister of Education Brian Smith. The previous year, Smith had toured the province and held both public and private forums at which he heard approximately seven hundred briefs. His summation of this tour, a 183 page brief entitled A Report from the Minister, addresses some of the concerns expressed about the implementation of the new curriculum in B.C. schools. Smith articulates the role he believes government should play in determining curriculum: “I firmly believe that...the Ministry must play a major role in curriculum development.” He further believes that the Ministry “must also assume some responsibility for the implementation of curriculum change.” He goes on to outline the activities of the Program Implementation Branch which according to Smith has held so many workshops that “by now almost every district in the province has at least one resource person with considerable knowledge in effective implementation.” He also estimates that one thousand more teachers will attend the upcoming workshops.

On the topic of less time for English instruction, Smith says that the time allotments outlined in earlier versions of the Administrative Handbook have been changed to “recommended ranges of time to be spent in teaching subjects. Furthermore, it states that the principal of a school has the responsibility to modify time allotments where it is in the best interests of the students in the school.”
Smith similarly acknowledges the challenge of teaching the increasing number of students for whom English is a second language:

Recent federal government decisions to increase levels of immigration have placed tremendous burdens on local school districts for the provision of programs and services for immigrant students. Indeed, some schools are facing population shifts resulting in a majority of students whose parents do not speak English in the home.

With the influx of refugees over the last two years and the immigration policy announced recently by the federal government, I anticipate an increased burden on the school system....

I will continue to press the federal government to provide funding to meet the increased educational needs for immigrants and refugees, but in the interim the Ministry will provide additional provincial funding in this area to school districts....

The B.C.E.T.A. makes no comments on the legitimacy of Smith’s report; Berenice Wood simply provides background information concerning the writing of the report, and says that it “merits careful examination by teachers...” that “the excerpts have been reprinted here for the information of English teachers who may find that the issues addressed...are very real aspects of daily life in their classrooms” and that teachers can contact the Ministry of Education for a complete copy of the report. It is therefore unclear whether or not the B.C.E.T.A. felt that the concerns expressed by their teachers were adequately addressed by Smith.

If the B.C.E.T.A. is accepting of the Ministry’s justification for its initiatives, its patience may soon be tried. A small Ministry item also in the September-October, 1981 Update states that

Achievement tests specific to subject areas have been developed by the Learning Assessment Branch of the Ministry. These cover a wide range of grades and subject areas. Achievement tests allow teachers to make comparisons against provincial norms. More importantly, however, these tests should provide students with the incentive to improve their achievement standards. Although province-wide
government examinations will not be reintroduced at this time, their potential usefulness may easily make them necessary in the future.

As B.C. teachers are to find out, the Sacred Ministry of Education’s propensity towards using large-scale assessment in B.C. schools was soon to be realized.

For several months, over the winter of 1981-82, the B.C.E.T.A. continued its work much as it had for the past decades: it put out copies of Update, of the Journal, and held conferences, as President Helen Zwick sums up in her report to the B.C.E.T.A. AGM in April, 1982. Zwick continued to serve on committees and to attend meetings of their affiliated groups. There is some news, however, on the English Placement Test. Although in 1981 the government agreed to discontinue the test after vehement protests from the B.C.T.F. and the B.C.E.T.A. on behalf of B.C. English teachers, the Ministry has had a change of heart:

English Placement Test
This has been an ongoing dialogue involving the B.C.E.T.A., the B.C.T.F., and the Ministry. In March, 1981, the Ministry agreed that the test would no longer be given in secondary schools. Last fall, under pressure from some colleges and universities, the Ministry reversed its position. The B.C.E.T.A. Executive agreed to back the B.C.T.F. position that English teachers should not supervise or mark that test and requested that a final decision be made regarding it. The Ministry has now made that decision—to continue the Test. As an Association, we must now reconsider our position in the light of this development.

One wonders how Zwick and her B.C.E.T.A. colleagues are feeling about this reversal. It was a victory for the B.C. teachers of English one year ago when the Ministry eliminated the test; now that the Ministry has re-instituted it because of “pressure,” Zwick’s comment is only that the B.C.E.T.A. must “reconsider their position.” The anger and the militancy that we have seen in the 1960’s and that we will see again in a few years’ time as the Ministry imposes more standardization on B.C. schools seem to be
lacking here, if Zwick's neutral language is any indication. Similarly, the issue of censorship, which did elicit some passionate language from Berenice Wood, is an ongoing concern, but it merits a very brief mention in Zwick's report. "A number of sub-committees were formed throughout the year to deal with specific concerns brought before the Executive. They include the following: the Censorship Committee, the Constitution Committee...." We will see how the B.C.E.T.A.'s reactions to the government change as they institute more measures affecting the B.C. education system in the next few years.

It doesn't take long. By the time of the October-November, 1982 Update, Berenice Wood writes about some of the implications of the Socreds' continuing "Restraint" program, which imposed massive cutbacks to the budgets of publically-funded institutions, including education. Wood's diction is perhaps indicative of the rising discontent felt by the B.C.E.T.A.:

The full effects of cutbacks in education funding may not yet be painfully visible to the public. However, the people who work within the system can testify to the potentially devastating results. Already there are significant losses. Consider, for example, the elimination of field trip funds....Equally disturbing is the clear distinction between education for children of the well-to-do and education for those children whose parents can't afford to foot the bill for all the extras....

In terms of our own professional association, the body count is beginning to add up. One of the first casualties was our fall conference....

With teacher morale so low and professional development opportunities virtually non-existent in many districts, the BCETA executive had to make the painful decision to advise the NCTE that the association would be unable to undertake the conference at this time....

Wood's choice of words like "painfully," "potentially devastating," "losses," "disturbing," "body count," "casualties," "painful," speak to the frustration felt by the
association. Although the B.C.E.T.A. is not yet ready to “battle” “at the barricades” as their colleagues were almost two decades ago, the emotionally-charged language of Wood’s report suggests that the B.C.E.T.A.’s fighting spirit may be returning.

Wood’s entire column in the January-February, 1983 Update is a satirical day-in-the-life of the last English teacher in the province. In it, she mercilessly lampoons Minister of Education Bill Vander Zalm:

...the last remaining English teacher now taught English to all the secondary students in the district. This economy measure saved a great deal of money in salaries for English teachers who had been found superfluous, but it had drastically increased class sizes. As a result, any group of more than fifty students was now known as a Vanderclass....All the teacher had to do was pull the day’s lesson plans from the vanderpak and motivate the vanderclass to absorb the contents....

It seems as though the effects of the Socreds’ Restraint Program, publically championed by Minister of Education Bill Vander Zalm, had raised the ire of the B.C.E.T.A.. Vander Zalm had also announced the previous November at a Socred rally that provincial examinations were to be reinstated in B.C. schools. If the B.C.E.T.A. executive in general, and Zwick in particular, were previously willing to “reconsider our position” when the government changed educational policy unilaterally, it seems that by the end of 1982, when funding for education was severely cut back, contracts ripped up, and teachers’ salaries rolled back, they had had enough. Below is a letter which clearly outlines the B.C.E.T.A.’s position in response to the government’s Restraint Program. It was written by Helen Zwick to the Vancouver Sun newspaper; excerpts of it were published it in the Vancouver Sun, but it is here produced in its entirety:

1982 11 15
The Editor
The Vancouver Sun
2250 Granville St.
Vancouver, BC
Dear Sir:

As President of the British Columbia English Teachers' Association, I am writing to express my concern about the effects of the restraint program upon the teaching of English in this province. Although the extent of the cutbacks varies from district to district, many results are common throughout the province.

My first concern is the rapid increase in class size and the detrimental effect this has on learning conditions. Regardless of statements to the contrary, many teaching positions have already been lost. Teacher aides, teachers with temporary contracts, and retiring teachers have been either "terminated" or not replaced. The number of students, however, remains generally constant, so that class size, especially in academic courses, increases. Larger classes increase pressure on both teachers and students, since little individual assistance is possible under "lecture hall" conditions. The larger classes also increase the English teacher's marking load, already the heaviest in the system. Surveys have shown that English teachers spend an additional 25 hours per week marking assignments and preparing lesson plans. On the labour market this makes an eleven-hour day.

To add to the burden, many districts have severely cut the services of substitute teachers so that classes of absent colleagues must be supervised by teachers who would normally use the time in lesson preparation. Substitute teachers then go without jobs; English teachers, many with seven years of university training, are being used to supervise classes in industrial education, mathematics, and science for which they are not trained; teachers come to classes when they are ill in order that colleagues will not be forced to supervise their classes. Everyone suffers.

Perhaps the most drastic effect is the lack of professional development, since funding in this area was the first thing to be cut. Very simply this means that teachers are not given the opportunity to become better teachers—to listen to experts in their fields, to familiarize themselves with new curricula and textbooks, and to exchange new ideas and teaching strategies with colleagues. This is particularly distressing to English teachers since four new or revised courses of study have been introduced by the Ministry at the English 11 and English 12 levels in the past two years. One new course, Composition 11, was designed to improve students' writing skills. Unfortunately, in-service is not available under the restraint program.

I have not mentioned the many incidental effects which increase stress daily such as cold classrooms, cuts in supplies, lack of necessary equipment, and elimination of valuable field trips. Add to these "incidentals" salary roll-backs, lack of job security, and constant
criticism by the Minister, and it is not surprising that teachers who have other job options are leaving the profession.

The foundation upon which the public school system rests is the enthusiasm, knowledge, and expertise that the teacher brings to his class. The most important factor in a student’s success in school is still the classroom teacher. The restraint program is increasing stress, lowering morale, creating a climate of uncertainty, and preventing teachers from doing the jobs that they were trained to do. As a taxpayer, as a parent, and as a teacher, I object.

Respectfully yours,
Helen D. Zwick, President
B.C. English Teachers’ Association

The poor relations between B.C. teachers and the Socreds continue over the winter of 1982-83. Wood’s opening remarks in the April-May, 1983 Update reflect the climate:

Spring! Even in B.C.’s current educational climate, a lyrical outburst or two would seem to be in order to celebrate the season. After a very bleak autumn and a bitter winter, signs are appearing of some regeneration throughout the province—at least, as far as English teachers coping with the crisis are concerned.

She goes on to outline some publications and conferences that are managing to go ahead, albeit with limited funding.

In Zwick’s report to her members, she characterizes her term as President as being a “difficult task” and summarizes the events of the 1982-83 school year, most of which have been negatively affected by the Restraint Program: “attendance at our Spring Conference was down by 50% and we lost a large amount of money”; “we were forced to cancel our regular Fall Conference”; “we were forced to renege on our commitment to host the NCTE Regional Conference in 1984”; “we are justly proud that we, unlike many other PSA’s, have been able to maintain the quality of our publications”; [The Committee to Improve the Teaching of English] “merits our continued support. Unfortunately our
delegates have been cut from two to one because of the restraint program”; “our affiliate relations with CCTE have continued to be good”; “the BCETA executive has taken a position in support of the BCTF recommendation that English teachers not supervise or mark the [English Placement] test. Larry Kuehn, president of the BCTF, has written to thank us for our support and indicates that funding for the test will not be forthcoming next year”; “...regarding the proposed provincial examinations, including English 12. We need to formulate a position as an Association regarding these examinations”; “in an attempt at cost cutting, we have been holding Executive meetings in members’ homes during the current year”; In conclusion, I would like to express my thanks to the 1982-83 Executive for their hard work and support during these difficult times.”

Zwick had the unenviable task of being President of the B.C.E.T.A. during one of its most challenging times in the history of B.C. education. As the Socreds continued to make decisions during 1982 and 1983 which the B.C.E.T.A. felt negatively affected education in B.C., she began to publically voice her displeasure with the government. Soon various groups from around the province would rally together to protest the Socreds’ policies. There were more dark days ahead.

By August of 1983, Bill Vander Zalm was Premier of B.C. and Jack Heinrich was the new Minister of Education; Heinrich unveiled the “School District Restraint” policy shortly after his appointment. The resultant hostility between the government and educators became known as “School Wars,” a term coined by Vancouver education critic Crawford Killian, and an allusion to the epic battles in the Star Wars movies. It was not only in education, however, that cutbacks were being felt. The Restraint Program implemented by then Premier Bill Bennett in 1982 was intensified in 1983 after the
Socreds won re-election in May: budgets continued to be slashed, contracts were torn up, and labour unrest in B.C. was high, finally culminating in a three-day general strike, the “Solidarity” movement, in the Fall of 1983. It is under this backdrop that Grace Klemovich takes over as President of the B.C.E.T.A., and Phillip Allingham and Steve Bailey take over as editors of Update.

The low morale of English teachers, the cancellation of professional development opportunities, and the cancellation of conferences undoubtedly had an effect on the number of English teachers joining or remaining as members of the B.C.E.T.A.. In the October-November, 1983 Update is the latest plea, this one from Don Olson, Membership Chairman, for teachers to support the association: “from an all time high of approximately 1,000, the current 1983 paid-up membership in the B.C.E.T.A. now stands at 438”; “certainly, the foul blows dealt all professional development in the 1982-83 year fell hard on the B.C.E.T.A.”; “in Black September ’82 uncertainty cut into registration for the Survival Skills Workshop. Then, amid crisis and despondency, the Fall Conference was cancelled”; “at its September 22 meeting, the B.C.E.T.A. Executive resolved not to be beaten by the combined circumstances of the darkening time March 1982 to September 1983”; “the Executive invites each of the member-readers of Update into the ring to assist in the fight against apathy, despondency and those more tangible forces in our provinces who would enjoy seeing professional organizations go down to defeat.”

The tone of the B.C.E.T.A., in the climate of hostility between teachers and the Ministry, has again become militant as it had twenty years previous.

In the December-January, 1983-1984 edition of Update, Phil Allingham summarizes a meeting held in November between the B.C.E.T.A. and the Ministry on the
reinstatement of provincial examinations. Because of the length of his report, only some selections are reproduced here; some of his parenthetical comments are also included, as they provide insight into the B.C.E.T.A.'s renewed tendency to criticize the government.

On hand to address our concerns was an official from the Ministry of Education whose current assignment is "Special Projects: School Division." This somewhat nebulous title would not immediately suggest that Mr. Toutant is the Ministry's apologist for the recently-railroaded province-wide Grade 12 final examinations, but such is the case. Whatever our view of these tests, members of the B.C.E.T.A. were impressed with Mr. Toutant's refreshing candor and interest in the concerns of the classroom teachers. For an hour Toutant deftly fielded questions from an audience ranging from cynical to outraged. As a result of this sometimes-less-than-amiable dialectic, the following facts emerged.

1. The Ministry's price-tag for the implementation of the new exams is $2.3 million, much of this being 'old' money (a cliche surely) which has been redirected from other programmes such as the Implementation Branch. (One might conclude that the Ministry now feels new exams are more important than course revision.)

2. E.R.I.B.C. will calculate each student's marks, then provide each secondary school principal with the appropriate Dogwood graduation certificates. (We can all have faith in this new system since it will be administered by those who so admirably safe-guarded the confidentiality of the Placement Test results.)

4. Once a student has perused his Dogwood certificate (whenever that will be), he or she may request a re-reading of a particular exam paper for a $25 fee. Should the re-reading result in an increase of five marks or more, the Ministry will cheerfully refund the fee. (The skeptical should refrain from pre-judgment.)

5. ...There will likely be an all-new, provincially-mandated and implemented English 12 M.E. (along with an English 11 M.E.) by September 24, 1984....

6. ...Toutant admitted that he has received "numerous" requests to reconsider this weighting [50%] from teachers, parents, trustees, and "concerned" students. Even in the Rainforest, where programmes sprout mushroom-like virtually overnight, this should surprise no one, least of all the reasonable Mr. Toutant: recent parent-student meetings with ministry officials over examinations have come to resemble lynch-mobs of late.

10. ...teachers of English Twelve are likely to decry this Ministry move towards a centralized, prescribed curriculum through the province-wide testing of specific pieces and terminology. If such testing of all Grade 12s in the province comes with the advent of the long-awaited
Orwellian year, can such testing of Grade 11s and 10s be long in coming? Arnold Toutant hedged on answering that one. For almost two decades, the B.C.E.T.A. strove to meet a barrage of government initiatives in a businesslike, objective manner, even when they were clearly in disagreement with the government. It seems that with the degree of unrest gripping the province during the early 1980's, not just within the education system but throughout the province, the B.C.E.T.A. feels free to air its displeasure with the Ministry of Education. While Allingham's tone is ironic, fellow editor Steve Bailey's tone is angry in his report on changes to Literature 12 from the same Update:

...is it not the job of the ministry's Curriculum Development Branch to set curriculum and announce significant curricular changes? Such has been the usual case. Curriculum development committees made up of teachers and ministry officials working in consultation with the province's teachers have been given the responsibility for keeping curriculum current and academically sound. Until now.

The proposed Literature 12 examination sets a dangerous precedent in this province that must be halted immediately. Without receiving any formal announcement from the Curriculum Development Branch, the teachers of Literature 12 have been informed through little more than a footnote in a circular from the ministry's Learning Assessment Branch that the course content of Literature 12 is to be adjusted to meet the needs of the proposed year-end exam....

He goes on to berate the government concerning its changing the prescribed Literature 12 textbook to an older text "that was judged dated and inadequate over a decade ago!" He believes the Ministry made this decision for logistical and not educational reasons:

Why...[return to] material that was last revised in 1952? The answer lies partly in the fact that the Learning Assessment Branch intends to resurrect items from pre-1972 Literature 12 exams (and English 91 exams) to test students in 1983. Who cares about literary scholarship and up-to-date social, historical, and biological information? Obviously the persons responsible for this decision do not.

The provincial examinations were to be a hotly-debated topic. By the time of the B.C.E.T.A.'s A.G.M. of March 3, 1984, it was clear that while most English teachers
disagreed with the examinations, they were a reality. The philosophical problem faced by the B.C.E.T.A. was whether to refuse to participate in the examinations as a matter of protest, or to accept that they had to become involved in order to have any control over them. Items six and seven of the minutes of the A.G.M. exemplify this debate:

6. **English 12 Examinations**: There were a number of questions from the floor concerning the position of the executive on the examinations. Some members believe that as the B.C.T.F. has advised that teachers not engage in the marking of these exams that we should abide by this request. Others stated that the B.C.T.F. recommendation was not binding and, therefore, a matter of conscience. Zwick/Allingham: “Although the B.C.E.T.A. is not in favour of the provincial exams, they are a political reality, and we should have as much control over them as possible by involvement in the setting and marking of them.”


The original motion was **Carried**. 18 for/ 6 against.

Geoff Madoc-Jones/Rod Brown: “That the B.C.E.T.A. urge the B.C.T.F. to enter into negotiations with the Ministry of Education for the purpose of negotiating an equitable solution to the problems raised by the government Grade 12 exams so that the negative effects of the exercise on students and teachers be ameliorated.” **Carried unanimously.**

7. Training of markers for government exams:
Sydney Craig/Nancy Carlman: “That steps be taken to train markers to handle future exams.” Defeated.

The debate over the role of the B.C.E.T.A. concerning provincial examinations is not clear. The topic of exams has the potential to become a divisive issue at a time in B.C.’s educational history when teachers need to unite. The debate also has implications for the relationship between the B.C.E.T.A. and the B.C.T.F., with only some B.C.E.T.A. members wanting to honour the B.C.T.F.’s recommendation. It is no wonder that Grace Klemovich in her President’s address to the A.G.M. states that “1983-84 has been a difficult year for the B.C. English [Teachers’] Association.”
A few unanswered questions are resolved by the time of the next Update of September-October, 1984. Grace Klemovich, returning for another term as President, tries to raise the spirits of English teachers, but has a difficult time doing so. She laments the much larger class sizes facing teachers as the new school year starts, and states that “we must strive to give those students as good an education as possible in increasingly difficult circumstances. That is our first challenge.” She also states that students “are not receiving the education that they deserve” and that teachers have “to fight for an improved educational climate and more satisfactory learning conditions for the students of tomorrow.” She feels that teachers have been unsuccessful in their attempts so far, but that they must keep fighting: “We seem to have lost a battle, but we cannot afford to lose the war.” She is similarly concerned with the content of the government’s two new M.E. courses, now called Communications 11 and 12. She is displeased that the Communications course, designed for students who do not plan to attend university, contains little literature and a lot of business English: “the greatest danger of this course is the assumption that students who are not planning to attend a post-secondary institution (i.e., the majority of students in my school, at least) do not deserve to share, except on a very limited basis, in our cultural and literary heritage.” She concludes her message with an attempt to encourage teachers not to lose hope when faced with another challenging year: “I apologize if my message appears to be pessimistic. I did not intend it to be. I have faith in the English teachers of British Columbia. We will meet the challenges of a difficult year, and meet them successfully.”

The minutes of the B.C.E.T.A. executive meeting of October 22, 1984 indicate that the B.C.E.T.A. is struggling: its membership is down to 329 teachers. Similarly, the
problems with government examinations and with Communications 12 continue to plague the B.C.E.T.A.. Some members advocate an intensification of B.C.E.T.A.'s efforts to address some of their concerns:

**Communications 11 and 12:** Geoff Madoc-Jones reported on the campaign to postpone the implementation of these courses, emphasizing the need for political lobbying by the PSA's....Discussion led to decisions to contact the PSA Council to structure support for BCTF members whose names are attached to publications of which they do not approve, and to provide the BCETA with a voice in screening applicants to curriculum committees....

**Ministry Examinations:** Taking umbrage at the revised marking procedures outlined by the Ministry and noting present BCTF policy, Steve Bailey and subsequently Geoff Madoc-Jones indicated their displeasure, and urged members to draw away from involvement with the provincial examinations....

Bailey/Allingham – "that we adopt BCTF policy re [boycotting] the marking and preparation of examinations." Carried.

In any case, with the Ministry's deadline for responses to the Communications 11/12 Draft due in a few days, the topic would not be resolved at this meeting; according to the Ministry’s Bob Overgaard, whose comments were reproduced in the Update of December, 1984-January, 1985, "as with other decisions about revisions in the secondary curriculum, the matter of a final exam will be resolved this November. Preparations for the first Communications 12 exam will begin in September, 1986." The Ministry’s confident tone concerning the examinations is further evidenced by Overgaard’s comment that "the Ministry anticipates no problem in recruiting markers since, for example, more people applied to mark the July exams than were actually needed” to which Phil Allingham adds parenthetically, "(Has the Ministry accurately assessed the effect of a recent B.C.T.F. policy boycotting the preparation and marking of provincial exams?)" Some of these questions will be addressed as the new year begins with the executive meeting of the B.C.E.T.A. on January 30, 1985.
According to the “British Columbia English Teachers’ Association Program—1984-85,” the B.C.E.T.A. has eight major objectives:

1. To promote liaison with other specialist associations in Canada and the U.S.
2. To encourage growth in membership among teachers of English and language arts at all levels.
3. To encourage investigation in the teaching of English.
4. To improve the quality of instruction at all levels.
5. To provide relevant information on professional issues.
6. To encourage the formation of new chapters and expansion of existing ones.
7. To develop a committee structure that will respond to the needs of teachers of English.
8. To provide the BCTF and the Ministry of Education with advice on matters affecting English instruction in B.C.

The main focus of the B.C.E.T.A. seems to be in increasing its membership, which is estimated to be at 392, according to the minutes of their January 30, 1985 executive meeting. There is no mention of the Ministry of Education until objective #8, which suggests that the B.C.E.T.A. provide to them “advice on matters affecting English instruction in B.C.”

For each of these objectives, however, the B.C.E.T.A. lists several “Activities” they plan to undertake in order to meet their objectives. Three of these do suggest the B.C.E.T.A.’s involvement in curricular matters:

➤ Activity 3.1: Form subcommittees to study particular concerns; for example, English 100 test, teaching of English by non-specialists, curriculum, learning conditions.

➤ Activity 4.3: Be available for consultation by the Ministry of Education, school boards, universities and colleges regarding new developments in English education.
Activity 8.1: Encourage active participation of qualified members in the BCTF and the Ministry of Education committees concerned with matters related to teaching English.

We will see how the B.C.E.T.A.'s objectives and activities change as the Ministry of Education changes the English / Language Arts curriculum, beginning with their introduction of two new courses: Communications 11 and 12.

The B.C.E.T.A. was unhappy with the standards proposed for the new courses, and a member of the B.C.E.T.A. executive, Geoff Madoc-Jones, drafted a letter entitled "Bonehead English," which was subsequently published in the B.C.T.F. newsletter. It caused quite a reaction. According to the January 30, 1985, minutes of their executive meeting, the B.C.E.T.A. sent a letter to Berenice Wood (now at the Ministry of Education) and the Communications 11/12 committee; Anne Pictou sent a letter to The Vancouver Sun; Muriel Morris (Chilliwack teacher of English Advanced Placement and English Literature 12) wrote a "letter of reproach" to the B.C.E.T.A.; and Geoff Madoc-Jones wrote a "placatory letter" to the editor and to the members of the Communications 11/12 committee.

Several months later, the controversy over the introduction of Communications 11 and 12 was still brewing, and the B.C.E.T.A.'s rather public opposition to the perceived low literacy standard proposed for these courses was evident. According to the April 17, 1985, minutes of the B.C.E.T.A. executive meeting, the war of words was on-going: the B.C.E.T.A. received a registered letter from Berenice Wood asking for "copies of letters sent to the Ministry regarding Communications 11 and 12"; a letter was written by Grace Klemovich (B.C.E.T.A. executive member) to Des Grady of the B.C.T.F., "enclosing all communication regarding Communications 11 and 12"; a letter from Des Grady was received by the B.C.E.T.A. "indicating he sees no evidence the executive acted
inappropriately.” The letter from Des Grady is significant in that it demonstrates the level of support the B.C.T.F. gave to the B.C.E.T.A. during this controversy. We shall see how the relationship between the two groups changes as the decades pass.

In addition to the B.C.E.T.A.’s involvement in the early stages of the Communications courses, they were also involved in another significant issue in B.C. education in the 1970’s and 1980’s: provincial examinations. Historically in B.C., all students had written final provincial examinations in their academic subjects. As early as 1968, however, the B.C.T.F. had been calling for their elimination. In 1970, the B.C. Department of Education formed a Subcommittee on Evaluation, which released a report in 1971 proposing three options concerning final provincial examinations: to discontinue all Grade 12 external examinations, to institute internal examinations for all students, or to create a new system of examinations in which students would write “specially constructed tests designed by high school and university instructors to select students on the basis of their intellectual merit” (Rexin, 1985, pp. 65-67). In November of 1971, B.C.’s Social Credit government decided to discontinue all but the optional scholarship examinations. Although this government was defeated in 1972 by the N.D.P., their decision concerning examinations was upheld by the new government, and the last regular provincial examinations were written in B.C. in 1974.

In the years that followed, the elimination of regular provincial examinations invited the opportunity for more traditionally-minded educators and members of the public to suggest that education standards were falling without the accountability provided by examinations. In response to some of the public’s concerns, the N.D.P. government was in the process of replacing traditional examinations with a new “core curriculum” and an
accompanying testing system for B.C. schools. They were unable to implement these, however, as the Social Credit Party defeated them in 1975. Instead, Pat McGeer, the new Minister of Education, instituted a new core curriculum and to test it, the P.L.A.P. (Provincial Learning Assessment Program) after a 1979 poll by the Canadian Education Association suggested that 53.9% of British Columbians believed that education standards were slipping (Rexin, 1985, pg. 81). Indeed, a back-to-the-basics movement was gaining momentum in the U.S.A. and in Canada during the 1980’s (which was more likely due to the incredible success of Japan as a world economic power rather than with our education system per se); but its effects were felt in our B.C. education system. When Bill Vander Zalm was appointed as B.C.’s new Education Minister in 1982, he announced at a Social Credit convention that three B.C. provincial examinations, algebra, chemistry, and English, were to be re-instituted in the spring. By August of 1983, new Minister of Education Jack Heinrich announced the complete reinstatement of provincial examinations: there would be required examinations in thirteen academic subjects, and the examinations would be worth fifty percent of the students’ marks in each course.

The B.C.E.T.A. was not in favour of the government’s approach to provincial examinations. According to the minutes of the B.C.E.T.A. executive meeting of April 17, 1985, the Canadian Council of the Teachers of English (C.C.T.E.) struck a commission to explore the testing of English, and Dr. Sydney Butler and Berenice Wood were appointed to the “CITE commission on external testing of English / Language Arts.” A B.C.E.T.A. motion by executive member Jon Terpening (seconded by executive member Helen Zwick) stated rather ominously, “that we support the idea behind this commission and also express our concerns to Syd Butler.”
Executive member and B.C.E.T.A.'s Curriculum Co-ordinator, Rod Derksen, at the same meeting "raised concerns over executive approaches to the government examinations," but unfortunately, no details follow. The subject of examinations, however, continues to be a major concern to the B.C.E.T.A., as the minutes of their future executive meetings will demonstrate.

In addition to the B.C.E.T.A.'s involvement in specific issues of concern to English educators such as the introduction of Communications courses and provincial examinations, another of their on-going concerns is the general curriculum taught in English / Language Arts in B.C. schools. Rod Derksen, at the April 17, 1985 executive meeting, suggests that four points concerning "the recent Reading Assessment done by the Ministry" need to be addressed:

1. a review by the Ministry of the Scope and Sequence
2. the establishment of entry-level competencies for streamed courses
3. the lack of literary competency demonstrated by students
4. critical and inferential thinking as the task of the English teacher

The general English curriculum will become a main focus of the B.C.E.T.A. as the curriculum comes up for review in 1986, and more importantly, as the Royal Commission on Education carries out its review in 1987-88 and writes a report in 1988 recommending significant changes to the entire B.C. education system.

At the executive meeting of September 18, 1985, neither the Communications courses nor the English curriculum are discussed, but examinations are. In his Curriculum Co-ordinator's report, "Rod Derksen circulated and spoke to a proposed agenda and a paper detailing the advantages of the Ontario province-wide examination system." It
seems that examinations were still of paramount interest to the B.C.E.T.A., and, one assumes, to its members.

By the December 5, 1985, executive meeting, Rod Derksen is suggesting that “A Sane Approach to Provincial Examinations” be one possible topic for an upcoming issue of the BC Teacher magazine’s curriculum issue. Also of concern to the B.C.E.T.A. executive as 1985 draws to a close is the upcoming revision of the English curriculum. Rod Derksen suggests that a possible topic for BC Teacher may be “Curriculum Revision of Literature 12.” Also, the B.C.E.T.A. had been in touch with Bob Overgaard, Ministry of Education, about two issues: academic electives offered in secondary schools, and resources for English classrooms. The following notes are from the minutes of the B.C.E.T.A. executive meeting of December 5, 1985:

Electives as Supplements to English 12: Grace [Klemovich] reported that Bob Overgaard has been approached with the idea of expanding the spectrum of academic electives, and has indicated he will forward the proposal, and, if accepted, implement it.


Correspondence: 1) a letter from Bob Overgaard responding to the questions on out-of-print materials and announcing the English course is up for review and new texts will be identified. A letter will be written suggesting teacher input be solicited from the executive of the BCETA.

We can see how the B.C.E.T.A. is affecting the English curriculum from these minutes: not only are they lobbying the government to expand English electives, but they are also suggesting at what levels they should be taught. They are also encouraging the
government to allow teachers some input, through the executive of the B.C.E.T.A., in the materials and texts that will be used in the classroom.

Similarly, the correspondence dealt with at the January 27, 1986, B.C.E.T.A. executive meeting demonstrates the B.C.E.T.A.'s continued involvement in curricular issues, teacher input, and evaluation:

**Correspondence:**
- a letter to Bob Overgaard of the Ministry of Education regarding designating Writing 11 (CW,J) to Creative Writing 12 and Journalism 12.

Dave Fisher/Helen Zwick: “that the letter be published in the next Update to encourage people to write the Ministry”

- a letter to Bob Overgaard of the Ministry of Education regarding BCETA representation on Ministry committees.

- a phone call from Harry Ratzlaff of UBC seeking a woman to serve on a panel discussing evaluation. Grace Klemovich has accepted.

At this same executive meeting, Rod Derksen (Curriculum Co-ordinator) reports that Dr. Syd Butler has consented to write the report discussed at the December 5th meeting: “A Sane Approach to Examinations,” to be published in an upcoming curriculum issue of the *BC Teacher*.

These minutes highlight several points: that the B.C.E.T.A. follows up on its intentions (*i.e.* to campaign for a change in electives); that it encourages its fellow teachers of English / Language Arts to get involved; that it tirelessly asks the government to be part of the decision-making process; that it works serving on panels and committees in the interests of teachers. Perhaps Jon Terpening, President of the B.C.E.T.A., summarizes this best in his President’s Report of April 18, 1986:
Regarding curriculum, the Executive has been represented on Ministry committees and made representation to Ministry committees and officials. David Fisher deserves recognition for his work on the brief regarding the changing of the level of the Writing 11 elective to Writing 12. Also concerning curriculum, Dr. Syd Butler has written an article on government exams and alternative ways of looking at them in other provinces for the BCETA and subsequent publication the *BC Teacher* while Helen Zwick has continued to represent the English teachers of BC on the Committee for the Improvement of the Teaching of English. The BCETA is now represented on the Western Canada Learning Materials Society by Avita Curry, has met with the Federation of B.C. Writers, and Grace Klemovich will be representing English teachers on a panel on evaluation at a Washington Educational Research Association conference.

The continuing debate about Communications, although not mentioned in the President’s report, had not been forgotten by the B.C.E.T.A.: at their September 25, 1986 meeting, Curriculum Co-ordinator Nan Ames “reported on the need to send a pertinent proposal to the Ministry to clarify the B.C.E.T.A. position on provincial examinations. Nan stated the need to continue to monitor curriculum, particularly our opposition to the Communications 12 examination and to its proposed 3-hour length.”

If the B.C.E.T.A. were hoping to effect changes in the Ministry of Education, their hopes were undoubtedly lessened following the provincial election. The election, called in September and held in October, saw Bill Vander Zalm’s Social Credit Party re-elected with a majority government.

As 1986 was nearing its end, the English curriculum was coming under review by the Ministry of Education. True to form, the B.C.E.T.A. wanted to be involved in the process. They invited several ministry officials to their November 6, 1986 meeting: G. Matthews, R. Syme, and B. Wood. According to their minutes, “a lengthy exchange
followed on curriculum concerns." After dinner, and the departing of the ministry officials, the B.C.E.T.A. executive passed three motions:

a) Moved by David Fisher and seconded by Judith Turner that the BCETA recommend to the Curriculum Development Branch of the Ministry of Education and to the BCTF that four representatives from the BCETA Executive be appointed to the Review Committee for the elementary Language Arts and secondary English programs. Passed. Subsequently, the following people volunteered: Ken Annadale, Dave Fisher, Virginia Smith, and Jon Terpening.

b) Moved by Ken Annadale and seconded by Joe Belanger that Steve Bailey, the vice-president of the BCETA, serve on the selection committee. Passed.

c) Moved by Judy Turner and seconded by Edna Widenmaier that the Executive support a proposal by Dave Fisher on behalf of the Literature 12 preparation and review committees regarding the modification of the Literature 12 scholarship specifications. Passed.

The B.C.E.T.A. now had representation on committees dealing with the English and Literature 12 curricula. Shortly thereafter, the B.C.E.T.A. supported proposed changes to the scholarship component of the Literature 12 examination. According to the minutes of the B.C.E.T.A. executive meeting of December 16, 1986

Dave Kelly, Ladysmith Secondary School, B.C., on behalf of the Literature 12 preparation and review committees, requested that consideration be given to a proposal to modify the Literature 12 scholarship specifications. The proposal that the specialty areas currently designated for the Literature 12 scholarship exam be phased out in the 1987-88 school year and subsequent years was unanimously supported by the BCETA executive.

By March of 1987, not only was the English curriculum under revision, but the entire B.C. school system was also under review by the Royal Commission on Education. Between March of 1987 and July of 1988, the Royal Commission headed by Barry Sullivan carried out an extensive study of the B.C. school system. As the English / Language Arts curriculum was to be studied and revised, several committees were
operating with representation from the Ministry of Education, the B.C.T.F., the B.C.E.T.A., English teachers, and others.

One area of concern for the English / Language Arts review committees was still the Communications courses. There had continued to be intense debate about the course composition and the evaluation of both Communications 11 and 12, as is evidenced by Curriculum Co-ordinator Nan Ames’ report to the B.C.E.T.A. executive at its meeting of March 4, 1987:

BCETA Executive list of points to Ministry for revision and endorsement [sic]
- Nan Ames gave a report:
  - Materials are not available for Communications 11 and 12.
  - Status of Comm 11 and 12 should be clarified.
  - Some institutions, such as PVI, are accepting a high mark in Comm 11 and 12 for entrance requirements.
  - There should be a definition of what is a Comm 11 or Comm 12 student.

Although over two years had passed since the introduction of Communications 11 and 12, some basic questions apparently still remained about its status. Also of concern to the B.C.E.T.A. was the question of Literature 12 resources now that the course curriculum was being re-written: the minutes note that “some schools are wondering what is going to happen with the old edition of English Literature” [the authorized text], and “the present English Literature textbook is only intended to be used for three years.” Overall, the B.C.E.T.A. wanted the ministry committees to address some of their concerns, and they wanted assurances that they could continue to have a dialogue with the government concerning changes to the English curriculum:

Dave Fisher moved that we send the list of points to the Ministry saying that these points are some of the things the BCETA executive discussed
and that we would like to leave the door open to further submissions. Seconded by Helen Zwick. Ken Annadale will write the letter. Dave Fisher moved that we strike a committee to examine further points we may wish to communicate to the Ministry. Joe Belanger seconded the motion. Carried. A sub-committee was appointed: Dave Fisher, Nan Ames, Helen Zwick, and Jon Terpening.

Unfortunately, just as the Sullivan Commission began its survey of the B.C. school system in March of 1987, a time at which B.C.E.T.A. committees were poised to have significant input into decisions affecting the English / Language Arts curricula in B.C., politics impacted the B.C.E.T.A.'s participation in ministerial committees. The government was proposing several changes to the structures in place in our education system, including teachers' optional membership in the B.C.T.F. and the establishment of a College of Teachers. The B.C.T.F. felt that they were under attack:

The BCTF reacted to the introduction of the Teaching Profession Act and the inclusion of the Federation under the labour code by launching two province-wide job actions: a one-day study session in April and involvement in a provincial general strike. Although Bill 19, The Industrial Relations Act, granted teachers long sought-after expanded bargaining rights, the legislation was reputed to be an attack on labour. Bill 20, the Teaching Profession Act, was interpreted as a direct attack on the Federation by once again eliminating compulsory membership in the BCTF and establishing a college of teachers with a mandate that intruded into the domain of the Federation in the area of professional development. (Ungerleider, 1986, pg. 1)

When Bills 19 and 20 were introduced by the government, the B.C.T.F. launched a campaign to rally support from its members:

In April, 1987, the BCTF distributed a two page circular to its members addressing the question "Why Don't Teachers Want a College of Teachers?" The circular spelled out the Federation's eight good reasons under headings that proclaimed:
It will be divisive and disruptive. Education will be the loser.

I. Freedom of association: Teachers structure should be agreed – NOT IMPOSED.

II. A college isn't needed. The job's being done.

III. Cost and bureaucracy will be added to education.

IV. Professional certification: There is a better way.

V. The college puts teachers in double jeopardy.

VI. All other provinces agree: A college isn't necessary.

VII. It won't work.

(Ungerleider, 1986, pg. 1)

The B.C.E.T.A. fully supported the B.C.T.F. in its cause. Following is the full text of a letter written by David Fisher, President of the B.C.E.T.A., to Elsie McMurphy, President of the B.C.T.F., on May 4, 1987, outlining various motions passed in support of the B.C.T.F.:

Dear Ms McMurphy:

I have been asked by the British Columbia English Teachers' Association Annual General Meeting to send to you the following motions which were passed unanimously. The AGM was held on May 1 in conjunction with the Northwest Regional Conference of the National Council of Teachers of English and was attended by over 600 teachers.

The motions read:

1. that the BCETA opposes the introduction of Bills 19 and 20,
2. that the BCETA reaffirms its support for the BCTF as the sole body representing public school teachers in British Columbia.
3. that the BCETA reaffirms its support for the BCTF as the organization best suited to representing the professional interests of public school teachers in British Columbia.
4. that the BCETA reaffirms its support for the BCTF action plan which asks teachers to withdraw from all Ministry of Education committees, including marking committees, until the current dispute is resolved, and
5. that copies of the above motions be sent to Elsie McMurphy, Premier Vander Zalm, and Minister of Education Brummet.
Yours sincerely,
David Fisher
President, 1987-8

Similarly, on May 10, 1987, Jon Terpening (past president) and David Fisher sent a letter to all English teachers asking them to withdraw from exam marking committees, prompting a letter of thanks from J. Alan Crawford, First Vice-President of the B.C.T.F.

Just as the B.C.T.F. fully supported the B.C.E.T.A. in 1985 when it publicly criticized the government for its conception of the Communications courses, so the B.C.E.T.A. fully supported the B.C.T.F. when it criticized the government for its perceived attack upon them.

As it turns out, the B.C.T.F.’s fears of losing the support of its members when their participation was optional were unfounded:

In the ensuing sign-up and certification drive, necessitated by the end of compulsory membership, the Federation message called for teachers to resist this attack on its collective voice. The BCTF mobilized its significant resources, including release time for local association presidents, to encourage teachers to choose union status. All 75 local associations chose the union option and some 98 per cent of the teachers in British Columbia re-joined the BCTF. (Ungerleider, 1996, pg. 1)

By June of 1987, Dr. B. Frankcombe (Ministry of Education) in response to a letter of concern from Dave Fisher and Jon Terpening concerning the composition of the Language Arts / English Review Committee, “re-iterated his desire ‘that there be strong and open communication between your Association and Ministry personnel as the Language Arts / English curriculum is reviewed,’” as reported in the minutes of the B.C.E.T.A. executive meeting of June 6, 1987. It seems that fences were being mended,
even as political unrest was the norm in B.C. during those turbulent years. It is noteworthy, however, that the B.C.E.T.A.'s method of responding to Ministerial directives seems to have changed somewhat. For example, at the B.C.E.T.A. executive meeting of October 22, 1987, the executive were responding to the government's latest curriculum change: that a new component of "Family Life" education be incorporated into existing classes in B.C. schools. The minutes of their discussion follow:

6. Family Life Curriculum: There was discussion on the offering of this course within the present curriculum. Grace Klemovich moved that the BCETA oppose the use of English time and/or English teachers in the implementation of the Family Life curriculum if the time is taken out of the English time allotment. Steve Naylor seconded. Carried.

Dave Fisher will write letters to the B.C. school Superintendents, the Principals, and the English Department Heads. This correspondence will be followed by a letter to The Sun.

What is significant here is that historically, the B.C.E.T.A.'s action after passing a motion involving curriculum would have involved sending correspondence to the Ministry of Education; here we see that they send letters to superintendents, principals, and English department heads. They seem to be targeting those at district and school levels, and not the Ministry. Perhaps even more significant is their decision to similarly send a letter to The Sun. What is their motivation for taking this concern public? Does this signify a new direction for the B.C.E.T.A. during troubled times with the government, a return to a more radical stance?

If so, their next decision would seem to contradict it. The next item on the agenda concerns the Sullivan Commission:
Royal Commission: Ken Annadale moved that the BCETA prepare a written submission on the teaching of English and send this report to the Royal Commission. Judith Turner seconded the motion. Carried. Additionally, it was moved that the BCETA authorize a three-person committee and that this committee be given two days’ release time to prepare the written submission which will be presented to the December 3 Executive meeting for approval. Ken Annadale/Judith Turner. Carried. Dave Fisher (with power to delegate), Joe Belanger, and Grace Klemovich agreed to work on this committee.

If the B.C.E.T.A. is trying to avoid correspondence with the Ministry of Education, they chose an inconvenient time to implement the practice. They took the opportunity to write a brief to the Royal Commission on Education outlining some changes they would like to see implemented in B.C. schools. What follows is a rather significant sampling from their sixteen-page brief. It is suitably included here if for no other reason than its being one of the most complete documents still existing produced by the B.C.E.T.A. from this era; as an artifact it is an excellent representation of their philosophy. It is also a testament to the quantity and quality of work that three people, Dave Fisher, Joe Belanger, and Grace Klemovich, produced with only two days of release time.

Although this brief concentrated on what the BCETA sees as needed changes, we wish to stress that we see much that is excellent in the present system. For example, English teachers are relatively happy with the curriculum, particularly because many of the minor problems are being addressed by the Review Committee that is presently examining the Language Arts/English curriculum from kindergarten to grade 12 (“A Brief,” 1988, pg. 1).

“The major problems are those of class size, teacher workload, and curriculum overload; too much to teach in too little time” (ibid).

...students are being encouraged to stay on in school in increasing numbers. English teachers are now expected to produce a higher proportion of students prepared for post-secondary institutions. Even students who do not go on to colleges are expected to attain a degree of
literacy far above the historical norm. The technological revolution has also had an effect on what is expected of English teachers. Video, computers, and film have been added to an already bulging curriculum. The same technological revolution has created a student far different from the traditional student, one raised on television rather than on print, to cite a major difference. These are not the students envisaged by the traditional curriculum (pg. 2).

The great majority of teachers feel that the resource-based course should be retained. However, such a course must be adequately funded....The past few years of restraint have created difficulties in textbook supply. Also, the BCETA views with grave concern the move to “decentralize” textbooks. While this may result in direct savings to the government, it will increase costs to the individual boards. The B.C.E.T.A.’s prime concern is that quality textbooks are put into the hands of students, and it is difficult to see how “decentralization” will help to do this.

For the past year, the Language Arts Review Committee, which is made up primarily of teachers, has been re-examining the curriculum, starting with the Needs Survey that already has been mentioned. The BCETA commends the committee for the work that is has done so far, and hopes that the committee will be able to recommend and allowed to implement the curriculum of its own design (pg. 4).

B. Curriculum Overload

The English curriculum has grown to encompass many new areas, such as film study, video, advertising, speaking and listening skills, word processing, journalism, and propaganda, as well as the more traditional strands of reading and writing. To cover all these areas is difficult, if not impossible. Modern theory suggests that students learn more from a “less is more” approach. Dashing through a novel or a unit on speaking is unlikely to help students much. Yet teachers feel that they should at least make some attempt to cover every strand in the curriculum. English teachers face a dilemma: there is too much material to cover in too short a time. There are two obvious solutions to this problem:

1. Give more time to English,

or

2. Divide English into different courses.
If followed, both recommendations have implications for the present structure of course selection and graduation requirements in B.C. Schools (ibid).

D. Implementation

Curriculum implementation presents another problem. Although a section of the Fiscal Framework is reserved for implementation, little money is spent in that area, with the provincial government maintaining it is the responsibility of the local board, and the boards believing the reverse. A new curriculum imposes clear strains upon the classroom teacher. The new English curriculum, which should be ready by 1990, should have funds attached to it for implementation which would guarantee adequate teacher preparation.

E. Communications 11 and 12

English teachers are divided about the practice of streaming. The introduction of Communications 11 and 12 has meant that teachers who are opposed to streaming find it more difficult to implement their philosophy. In addition, there are three specific problems with the present courses which must be addressed.

1. Literature

Literature is the storehouse of our cultural heritage and all students should have access to it. We should not deny any student, even a student weak in English, the right to share in the great works of our past. The Communications curriculum guide recommends that 30% of class time be devoted to the study of literature. This allotment should be increased, and, in order to meet the needs of the weaker students, a greater variety of resources should be made available.

2. Lack of Definition of Clientele

There is no standard definition of the students for whom these courses were created. Communications courses were created to solve the problem of inconsistent Minimum Essentials credit; the new courses, if anything, have made the problem worse.
3. **Failure Rate**

The failure rate in the English 12 final exam is significantly higher than the failure rate in the Communications 12 exam. The discrepancy between the two standards must be examined. The BCETA is concerned that a student in Communications 12 may pass and graduate, while a student of equal ability in English 12 may fail and not graduate.

F. **Province Wide Examinations**

In general, teachers are opposed to provincial exams. Sixty three percent of secondary teachers responding to the Needs Survey said that they did not wish part of a student’s evaluation to be based on such an exam. Nevertheless, many English teachers recognize the political reality of the exams. Consequently, English teachers have worked on the creation, review, administration, and marking of these exams to make them better exams. Two concerns remain, however:

1. Many statisticians suggest that no one instrument of evaluation be worth more than 33 1/3% of the final grade in a course. The present weighting of 50% can be reduced without compromising any of the aims of the exam.

2. The exams should be piloted, perhaps in sections, to guarantee their validity. This procedure is standard practice in good evaluation (pp. 5-6).

“Class size is by far the biggest concern of most English teachers...” (pg. 6).

“The BCETA endorses the idea of a multicultural society and suggests that this fact should be reflected in the curriculum” (pg. 12).
ESL Students

The problem of the ESL speaker in the English classroom is increasing. Cutbacks to ESL programs have meant that ordinary English classroom teachers must teach students whom they are not trained to teach. To make matters worse, the ESL student is part of a class where the numbers are rising year by year. Quite often, the only solution that the school can see is to push these ESL students into modified or Communications course, both of which were not designed for ESL students.

Even in ESL classes there remains a problem which is likely to grow. The trend seems to be for older children to come into class from nations where they had no formal schooling. It is difficult to incorporate enough literature into such programs to guarantee some minimum level of cultural education. Very often these students come from non-Christian backgrounds, which compounds the difficulty they have with literature. Many students have cultural problems in acquiring a knowledge of the writing process as it used [sic] in B.C. schools, and, in some cases, the the [sic] type of thinking skills they use in their culture are quite different from the thinking skills used in North America (pg. 12).

Illiteracy
Students who have not achieved a minimum degree of literacy must be identified and be given help at all levels. The level of service offered such students has declined due to cutbacks (pg. 13).

Conclusion
The goal of the BCETA, and of every English teacher it knows, is to produce the most literate graduates possible, and to ensure that all students get the education they deserve (pg. 16).

This brief is important not only in that it provides insight into the needs of teachers during the decade of fiscal restraint, the 1980's, but also because it provides insight into the philosophy of the B.C.E.T.A. It represents English/Language Arts teachers, and is brief highlights the main concerns teachers have with class size, teacher workload, and curriculum overload, but it also addresses many other concerns: retention of students, preparation for post-secondary, the technological revolution, lack of funding and
resources, streaming, examinations, E.S.L., illiteracy. The brief is comprehensive yet concise, critical yet constructive, heartfelt yet scholarly. It is reflective of its era: the Sullivan Commission presents a new opportunity for teachers to express what they feel is important in education in B.C., after a decade of poor relations with the government in general, and the Ministry of Education in particular. There seems to be a sense of hope that teachers’ voices will be heard. Perhaps David Fisher says this best in his President’s newsletter of February, 1988:

My position on the Commission has changed. I’ve moved from thinking that it was a complete waste of time to prepare anything to a position now where I think it possible that a submission might make a difference to the future of education in British Columbia...I don’t think we can ignore a possible chance of influencing future policy.

His apparent optimism, however, is tempered somewhat by his feelings that the B.C.E.T.A. has been forced to be more reactive than pro-active:

...[A]s I look at the brief now, I still have a few concerns about how we have been forced to react to events, rather than take the initiative.

The brief is rooted in the restraint years, which are shaping our outlook almost as much as the depression years shaped the philosophies of our parents or grandparents. To some extent, it’s natural that our view of the future takes into account our experiences in the past. However, I think we have become too reactive. Many of the reasons for this are not within our control. For example, the Family Life program is suddenly imposed on many English teachers, and we are forced to react. The textbook distribution branch is to be closed, and, again, we are forced to react. The Royal Commission is formed, and we produce a brief in less than six weeks. All of these are necessary reactions, but, if that is all we do, we are defining a very narrow role for ourselves in education.

We must step back, take some deep breaths, and calmly examine our present situation. We must then stop and look into the future.

Fisher’s cautious optimism defines the 1980’s era of the B.C.E.T.A. Their working on committees, letter writing, conference planning, etc., over the years had well represented
the voices of English teachers in B.C.; yet he notes that there have been few significant changes in English curriculum as a result. He still concludes with the thought that “the choice for me is a simple one: either we decide to play a role in shaping the future, or we will be shaped by that future. I’m optimistic we’ll choose the former role.”

The curriculum revisions underway in 1988 did not seem optimistic, however. At the March 7, 1988 executive meeting of B.C.E.T.A., Berenice Wood from the Ministry of Education reported that “the Elementary Language Arts / Secondary Provincial Needs Assessment committees are appointed and working, but that progress is being kept confidential.” Unfortunately, no discussion or further information follows.

Similarly, in the President’s Newsletter of June, 1988, there is more evidence of decision-making being carried out at the Ministry level with little or no input from any specialists’ associations:

**Textbooks**

The Ministry’s new textbook policy has been revealed...As this is very similar to the plan that the BCETA was investigating, I was initially quite pleased with the announcement...Oscar Bedard [is] the Ministry official responsible for the plan. Mike’s [Zlotnik of the B.C.T.F.] concern was that the first the BCTF had seen of the plan was in the papers, like the rest of us. This process did not seem in keeping with the Ministry’s new policy of consultation.

Although both the B.C.T.F. and the B.C.E.T.A. are not being kept well informed of governmental policy, and may therefore share some common concerns, there is some indication that the two organizations are not as fully supportive of each other as they had been in the past. This may stem from a difference of opinion concerning the marking of provincial examinations, a topic on which the two groups had shown solidarity previously:
Government Exams

The Spring Representative Assembly of the BCTF brought some logic to the B.C.T.F.’s policy on government exams. The motion that I have sent to two consecutive B.C.T.F. A.G.M.’s was finally considered and passed without much debate. Markers of government exams are no longer incarnations of the beast....

More evidence that the relations between the B.C.E.T.A. and the B.C.T.F. may have been strained during this time is that there is a decrease in communication between the two. Historically, the B.C.E.T.A. had kept the B.C.T.F., its parent organization, well informed of not only its meeting minutes, but also its correspondence. There is a lack of significant information housed in the B.C.T.F. file from June of 1988 to March of 1989. One can assume from the minutes of the B.C.E.T.A. executive meeting of March 13, 1989, however, that much had transpired. For example, their minutes refer to a “draft response” the B.C.E.T.A. had apparently sent to the Ministry (one might guess in response to *A Legacy for Learners*, the Sullivan Commission’s report containing eighty-three recommendations for B.C.’s education system), but no evidence of this draft response was filed with the B.C.T.F.

One can also infer from the minutes of this meeting that the B.C.E.T.A. is similarly not communicating well with the Ministry of Education:

…the Language Arts / English Review Committee was told that it was disbanded, although its task has not yet been completed. The committee would be replaced by a new integrated committee. But then some Ministry people told an implementation plan committee that the Review Committee wasn’t disbanded, they just weren’t meeting for a while. I attended a meeting where Jack Fleming, as Assistant Deputy Minister, answered questions from the BCTF Executive, staff, and three PSA presidents. He was very good, but, while he soft-pedaled on many of the key issues, I still was not terribly clear on what was planned for the future. In short, our draft response hit the mark.
Given the turbulence of the 1980s, it is not surprising that the decade was typified by increasingly poor communications and strained relations between the B.C.E.T.A. and the Ministry of Education; and with a tenuous relationship between the B.C.E.T.A. and the B.C.T.F. as both groups endeavoured not only to keep up with the many changes imposed by the government, but also to have more input into decisions affecting the curriculum. More changes were to come, however, as a new political party was soon to be elected, and as the philosophy of B.C. schools was to undergo significant changes with the government’s Year 2000 document to be released in 1990.

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9: CHAPTER EIGHT: THE 1990S

The B.C.T.F.

The decade of the 1990s began with a new era in B.C. politics. The Social Credit government, after being in power in B.C. for thirty-seven of the previous forty years, was defeated soundly in October, 1991, by the N.D.P., dropping from forty-seven seats in the house to seven. The B.C.T.F. was very pleased with the result, as they had mounted an extensive political-action campaign to defeat the Socreds (Novakowski, 2004, n.p.).

The new N.D.P. government introduced several new reforms and policy documents that “collectively set the agenda through to the end of the decade. The key issues raised were deprofessionalization and vocationalism; diversity and inclusion; accountability; and violence and security” (Chan et al, 2007, pg. 17). The B.C.T.F. took an active role in addressing how these changes affected teachers in their classrooms, as the new initiatives affected teacher certification, as skilled trades people were now permitted to teach curriculum in schools; class size issues, as an increasing number of special needs and English as a second language (ESL) students were being integrated into regular classrooms; accountability, as new province-wide assessments were being introduced; and curriculum, as new multi-cultural, anti-racist, anti-bullying, and aboriginal issues were to be incorporated into course materials. The B.C.T.F. addressed some of the teachers’ concerns such as teacher certification through proposed changes to the College of Teachers; they addressed class-size issues through bargaining; they addressed accountability issues through lobbying; they generally supported the inclusion
of multi-cultural and anti-violence issues in schools. In short, the B.C.T.F. continued to exercise its dual function as both a professional and a union organization.

As a union issue, the B.C.T.F. had always made teachers’ pension plans a priority, and in 1992, a new Teachers’ Pension Plan Advisory Committee was created to administer teachers’ pensions, and B.C.T.F. members were amongst those on the committee.

As a professional issue, the B.C. College of Teachers was becoming more established and developing its own approaches and methodologies. One effect of this was some conflict between it and the BCTF. In March, 1992, for example, “the BCTF adopted a motion calling for the repeal of the Teaching Profession Act and the closure of the College created by Bill 20. In place of the College, a Teachers’ Professional Certification Council was proposed, composed of fifteen members appointed by the BCTF and five members appointed by the provincial government” (Sheehan & Wilson, 1994, pg. 9). The government did not respond to this motion. Instead, in May, 1993, the government amended the composition of the College’s governing council, so that instead of fifteen elected teachers and five government appointees, there would be twelve appointees and eight teachers. “Teachers assert that the legislation makes them the only profession in the province without control of their own college.... According to Gordon Comeau, the president of the British Columbia School Trustees Association, school boards are being caught in the middle of a battle between the teachers’ union and provincial government for control of the College” (Hui, 2003, n.p.). The B.C.T.F. believes that “the government attacked the professionalism of B.C. teachers by legislatively taking over the B.C. College of Teachers” (Novakowski, 2004, pg. 2). The
B.C.T.F. was similarly concerned that the College was given control over the professional development of teachers, which had formerly been exercised by the B.C.T.F. The College asked the government to amend the legislation and to instead create a Standing Professional Development Committee. The result was the Teacher Education Programs Committee which was struck later that year (Sheehan & Wilson, 1994).

Although there were clearly still some conflicts between the B.C.T.F. and the government, times were not as turbulent as they were during the years of Restraint in the 1980s. Teachers’ main concerns in this new decade were more with meeting the needs of their increasingly diverse students. A B.C.T.F. research report lists the top eleven causes of stress for teachers and contrasts their responses from 1986 to 1993. The “attitude/actions of provincial government” was the number one stress of teachers in 1986, but ranked only fourth in 1993; the number one stress of teachers in 1993 is “unmet needs of students” (Kuehn, 1993, n.p.).

The B.C.T.F. continued to be concerned with another of its major roles: bargaining. However, bargaining at the local level was not as successful as it had been at the end of the 1980s. In the spring of 1993, both Surrey and Vancouver teachers were on strike, hoping to win some of the contract rights secured by other districts. According to the B.C.T.F., the “economic climate had changed and the public was not as receptive to our cause as it had been in earlier rounds [of bargaining]” (“History,” 2008, n.p.). Both districts’ teachers were ordered back to work without settlements. Localized bargaining was no longer working well. The next year, in 1994, the Public Sector Labour Relations Act was introduced by the government, which made the B.C.T.F. the bargaining agent for all teachers, and which also created a bargaining agency for school boards called the B.C.
Public School Employers’ Association (BCPSEA) (Chan et al, 2007). Bargaining was to be moved to the provincial level, where teachers retained the right to strike; locals were able to negotiate some matters, but were no longer permitted to strike locally (“History,” 2008). Although contracts were eventually negotiated, mediators had to be brought in as the B.C.T.F. and the B.C.P.S.E.A. could not negotiate an agreement.

Later that year, the government announced accountability contracts: school districts were to use assessment of students’ performance to show the government that districts are improving their practice by meeting set goals in the contract. The B.C.T.F. was opposed to the concept of accountability contracts, in part because of the government’s reliance on students’ scores on standardized tests to measure achievement: “a fundamental disagreement exists between the BCTF’s view of accountability as appropriateness and validity of the learning processes and the Ministry’s reliance on measurable outcomes and standardized tests for students” (Chan et al, 2007, pg. 25).

As the first half of the 1990s passed, the B.C.T.F. and its teachers were still finding that they were in conflict with the government over some of the same issues from the past such as pensions, bargaining, and imposed curriculum, and with some new issues, such as the College of Teachers and accountability contracts. Teachers in Prince Rupert were so frustrated that they brought a motion to the 1996 Annual General Meeting of the B.C.T.F. asking for the B.C.T.F. to affiliate with the B.C. Federation of Labour. The B.C.T.F. organized a campaign and teachers voted in 1996: the motion to affiliate was rejected by fifty-nine percent of the members (“History,” 2008).

With more emphasis on skills in education during the 1990s, and with the government’s giving parents and other various community stakeholders increasing input
into educational decision-making, perhaps some conflict was to be expected. Fleming suggests that beginning in the 1970s and continuing into the 1990s, the Ministry of Education was undergoing an identity crisis of sorts:

Although provincial authorities entered the 1970s still confident in their capacity to control and direct public education, the Ministry of Education found itself before the decade ended, like Napoleon’s army retreating from Moscow, bewildered by an unfamiliar landscape and harried on all sides by adversaries who seemed to materialize from nowhere, each with its own special brief for provincial schools. By the 1980s, the province’s education bureaucracy, once the dominant and solitary voice in school affairs, was obliged to compete on the public policy stage with a chorus of others eager to contest the province’s right to speak on behalf of children. By the mid-1990s, the rising power of the teachers’ Federation, increasing parental and public demands for participation in educational decisions, and the Ministry of Educations’ ambiguity about its own purpose had all served, in various ways, to reduce the province’s leadership in public education (Fleming, 2003, pg. 1).

As the Ministry of Education tried to please all stakeholders and sometimes passed policy initiatives with little or no consultation with teachers, the B.C.T.F. appreciated that it was often thrust into the role of reacting to government initiatives and that several negative consequences resulted. Charlie Naylor (1996) from the B.C.T.F. Research department published a report articulating his concerns and suggesting a new approach for the B.C.T.F.

Teacher unions have traditionally reacted to initiatives from governments or school boards rather than initiating inquiry into educational issues in order to influence educational change. By being predictably reactive, unions are often viewed as negative forces, critics of educational innovation with narrow vested interests to protect. While educational change initiatives are frequently child-centred, or at least claimed to be so, union reactions are often portrayed as teacher-centred...We are perennially reactive, frequently negative, and we usually lose (Naylor, 1996, n.p.).
Naylor believes that “three key imperatives” (ibid) should motivate teachers to address these negative perceptions:

We are losing our ability to influence educational change with provincial governments and school boards...We are losing the confidence of many parents and the public, not in terms of individual teachers’ ability to teach, but in terms of teachers’ collectively addressing structural educational change issues...With the changing demographics of the teaching population, a new approach is crucial to engage younger teachers in the union movement (ibid).

Naylor states that a factor limiting the success of teachers unions is “the limited professional focus of teacher unions” and suggests that teacher unions must improve their “professional focus through inquiry and research” and develop “a new research role”; he believes the result would be improvements in influencing educational change, in gaining the confidence of parents and the public, and in expanding the professional role of teacher unions (ibid). It seems that the B.C.T.F. is endeavouring to focus more on its professional role, perhaps as a result of the College of Teachers becoming more established each year as the institution responsible for teachers’ professional concerns.

In its union “welfare” role, the B.C.T.F. was kept busy with significant changes that affected education during the 1990s. Alice McQuade provides a list of “facts and figures” in the B.C.T.F. newsmagazine of January/February, 1997:

Education budgets in the 1990s have not kept pace with population growth and inflation.

The Student/Educator Ratio (SER) has increased. We would need to add 1,279 teachers to reach the SER of 1990-91.

Forty percent of education employees are not teachers.

The number of special-education teachers' assistants increased 173% between 1988 and 1996.
Teachers' salaries are only 49.5% of the education operating budget, down from 49.9% last year.

The number of students funded for special education has more than doubled over the past decade.

English as a Second Language enrolment has quadrupled in the past decade.

As the B.C.T.F. works at its dual role in the late 1990s, it seems to appreciate the fact that it had evolved into an increasingly political organization. It considers itself to be in its “full maturity phase” and states that one criterion separating this phase from earlier phases is that “the president, the political leader, has assumed full leadership” and that “the president has become an experienced political leader” (“History,” 2008, n.p.); similarly, in this last phase of its development, “the president and the executive committee are very much more politically accountable to the membership than was possible” earlier (ibid). As B.C.T.F. media relations officer Nancy Knickerbocker states in the B.C.T.F. April, 1998 newsmagazine, “Like an activist’s rite of spring, the BCTF Annual General Meeting is always a dance of politics and pedagogy.”

Indeed, as the B.C.T.F. increasingly involves itself in discussions about globalization, the North American Free Trade Agreement, and international teaching practices, it almost necessarily becomes more politicized. In July, 1998, for example, B.C.T.F. President Kit Krieger attended the second Congress of Education International, which is comprised of teacher unions from 150 nations and is “dedicated to promoting the rights and welfare of the 22 million teachers in the member organizations” according to his report in the September, 1998 newsmagazine issue. Attendees discussed concerns that are not only educational, such as career education, the impact of technology on education, and limited access to education for some girls; but also concerns that are more
political, such as “the neo-liberal agenda that is curtailing all things public, including public education.” Although Krieger states that “We must continue our focus on B.C. schools” he believes that “our privileged place in this world incurs responsibilities.”

Similarly, several B.C.T.F. members including Larry Kuehn, then the B.C.T.F.’s director of research and coordinator of international programs, attended the fourth Tri-National Conference in Mexico in November, 1998. The conference has a seemingly political agenda. Knickerbocker reports in the November/December newsmagazine that “Despite the many differences among schools of North, Central, and South America, teachers throughout the hemisphere all face similar threats to public education from the neo-liberal corporate agenda.” She reports that Kuehn “warned of the proposed expansion of NAFTA [the North American Free Trade Agreement] into all the countries of the hemisphere by 2005,” and that “outside the conference hall, demonstrators called for freedom for Mexican political prisoners, especially Prof. Sergio Jeronimo Sanchez, a high-school history teacher jailed last February for his political activism.” In addition, “Jan Eastman, president of the Canadian Teachers’ Federation...spoke of public education as the hope for the future of democracy and social justice....”

Closer to home, Krieger reports in the October, 1998 newsmagazine that “the BCTF has proposed that the Ministry of Education develop a strategic plan for the future of public education, and that teachers, among others, play a role in developing priorities”; some priorities for the B.C.T.F. include assessment, evaluation, and reporting; the role of technology; mainstreaming and integration; education funding; and curriculum.

The decade thus closes with both frustration and hope. Although the B.C.T.F. continues to react to various government initiatives, they are being pro-active in
suggesting a strategic plan to the government. Although teachers had been only marginally successful in contract negotiations during the 1990s, indications are that better times are coming. In its final newsmagazine of 1999, Garry Litke reports that “teachers across Canada have had a disastrous decade of salary decline. In B.C., we will have lost more than 6% to inflation between 1992 and the expiration of our contract in 2001.” However, he continues,

But there is hope. Rollbacks, freezes, and excessively modest wage settlements appear to be coming to an end....we are beginning to see a new Canadian trend toward reasonable settlements, along with union members’ willingness to take action and submit to public criticism in order to achieve their objectives.

The decade of the 1990s, though not as turbulent as the 1980s, saw the B.C.T.F. work to maintain its dual role as both union and professional organization, particularly after the establishment of the College of Teachers in 1987; it also seemed to become increasingly more politicized as the globalization of education became more pronounced.

**B.C.E.T.A. / B.C.T.E.L.A.**

1990 was the start of a new decade, and perhaps the start of more optimism for the B.C.E.T.A.: in 1989, the Language Arts / English Review Committee had produced the *Language Arts—English (Grades 1 to 12) Curriculum Guide (1989)*, which was well received by B.C. English teachers and endorsed by the B.C.E.T.A., who recommended that it be published and authorized for use in B.C. schools. Also in 1989, however, the Ministry of Education produced the *Year 2000: A Curriculum and Assessment Framework for the Future* draft as its response to the Sullivan Commission’s recommendations of the year before. The B.C.E.T.A. was not supportive of the *Year 2000* draft.
In fact, the new president of the B.C.E.T.A., Judith Turner, devotes most of her January, 1990, president’s newsletter to this topic:

The main substance of this newsletter is the response from the B.C.E.T.A. to the draft of Year 2000: A Curriculum and Assessment Framework. Please take time to read it carefully since it represents hours of writing and consultation. The subcommittee (John Ormond, Virginia Smith, David Fisher, Judith Turner) is especially grateful to the fifth member – Joe Belanger, of U.B.C., whose expertise and computer skills expedited our task considerably.

(response sent to Dr. Oscar Bedard, Executive Director, Program Development Division, Ministry of Education; Marlene Recchi, George Matthews, Intermediate Committee, Graduation Committee, all at Ministry of Education; B.C.T.F., attention Mike Zlotnik)

The B.C.E.T.A. draft makes very clear that not only the B.C.E.T.A., but also the English teachers in B.C. support the 1989 Curriculum Guides and not the Year 2000 document:

Fundamental to the nurturing of the mind, the integrated development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes as three facets of learning is the primacy of language. We feel that the draft document Language Arts/English: Grades 1-12 Curriculum Guide, establishes a central position in the curriculum for the language arts, a position which we strongly endorse. This guide gives clear direction about how teachers can help students become more adept in the use of language. Unlike the Year 2000, the draft language arts curriculum details changes which will make our students more effective users of the English language. Also unlike the Year 2000, the language arts draft curriculum has already received the general support of teachers in B.C. (Response to Year 2000, 1990, pg. 3).

The draft goes further, suggesting that the Year 2000 document, unlike the Curriculum Guide, does not keep to the spirit of the Royal Commission’s findings:

As presented in Year 2000: A Curriculum and Assessment Framework for the Future, however, the curriculum model and the programs depart significantly from the Royal Commission Report and would make it difficult for teachers and students to attain the goals outlined in Language Arts/English: Grades 1-12 Curriculum Guide (Response, 1990, pg 4).
Of particular concern to the B.C.E.T.A. is that contrary to the Curriculum Guide, the Year 2000 document proposes that “English” not be taught as a separate course in grades 11 and 12, but that instead it be integrated into a “Humanities” strand which is made up of several courses. Its draft response includes five recommendations to the Ministry of Education as a result of this concern:

1.1 That the centrality of language arts in the learning process be recognized in our education system.
1.2 That a clear, appropriate, and flexible definition of integration based on the principles outlined above govern all future curriculum decisions on integration.
1.3 That the option of English as a separate course in grade 11 and grade 12 be retained, the form of the course to be governed by the Language Arts-English (Grades 1 to 12 Curriculum Guide (1989).
1.5 That the placement of health and guidance within the humanities strand be reconsidered (Response, 1990, pg. 5).

The B.C.E.T.A.’s draft response to the Ministry’s Year 2000 document also suggests that the proposed delivery model of instruction, that of mini-modules of twenty-five classroom hours, is not conducive to instruction in English / Language Arts, and makes two recommendations on this topic.

The integrity and coherence of a course of study cannot be guaranteed, we maintain, when that course is fragmented into modules of 25 classroom hours and when those modules are being presented as separate entities which may or may not reflect the implicit objectives of the discipline.... (Response, 1990, pg. 6).

Recommendations:
2.1 That systematic, sequential instruction be the foundation of any curriculum designed on the basis of modules.
2.2 That the draft Language Arts-English (Grades 1 to 12 Curriculum Guide (1989 provide the foundation for that systematic, sequential instruction in language arts (ibid).
A third major concern in the B.C.E.T.A.'s draft response is that if the *Year 2000* proposals were implemented, students would receive less instruction time in English / Language Arts:

One of the main concerns raised by both integration and the module system is the potential loss of instructional time in language arts. For example, each graduating student, according to the Graduation Program outlined in Year 2000, will be required to complete 8 credits in humanities. Four credits will be awarded for Humanities 1 and four credits for Humanities 2, each course being comprised of four specified modules of 25 hours each. The two mandated courses, then, will involve approximately 200 hours of instruction devoted to English, social studies, and health and guidance.

At present, each graduating student receives approximately 100 hours of instruction in Communications 11 or in English 11 and 100 hours of instruction in Communications 12 or English 12. As well, she receives a further 100 hours in Social Studies 11, another required course for graduation….English instruction will inevitably be reduced by at least 100 hours over a two-year period. That loss accounts of one-half of the time currently devoted to English instruction in the two final years of public schooling (*Response*, 1990, pg. 7).

Recommendation:
That students receive no fewer than 100 hours of instruction in language arts during each year of schooling (ibid).

A fourth, rather prophetic concern of the B.C.E.T.A., is that the *Year 2000* document allows for a de-emphasis on literature in secondary English classes (prophetic as in the intervening decades, B.C. provincial examinations in English and Communications have become completely skills-oriented rather than literature-based):

Literature is one of the principal means by which students make sense of their worlds. Yet the *Year 2000* makes little mention of literature. For example, neither Humanities 1 and 2 nor Career Communications refer to literature….Skills with language cannot be learned in a curriculum devoid of meaningful and appropriate content. If language is to be a meaningful tool for learning, the context and content of that language needs to be significant. The strength of our literary heritage can be maintained only when our children are taught to appreciate, indeed honour, the variety of works which it contains. The proposals in the *Year 2000* document do not specifically exclude the canon of literature from the Intermediate and Graduation programs, but they do not specifically provide for it either, and, consequently, there is a
danger of the broad range of literature now studied in British Columbia schools being lost or significantly diminished, and with it its humanizing effects and ideals.

Recommendation:
4.1 That the central role of literature be affirmed, not only in the philosophical statements regarding curriculum change, but also in provision of adequate time and materials to make this role a reality (Response, 1990, pp. 7-8).

A fifth concern expressed in the B.C.E.T.A.'s response draft is that the Year 2000 document proposes that students choose a particular strand to follow during their final two years of high school, the "graduation program," which effectively determines their educational futures:

The Year 2000 firmly opposes streaming and yet in the graduation program proposes a rigid system of streaming. The result would be that the students' learning would be limited completely by the track they choose at the beginning of grade eleven.

Recommendation:
7.1 That the Graduation Program be made less rigid.
7.2 That the consequences of choosing the various options be explained clearly to students with make-up work required to change options specifically listed (Response, 1990, pg. 10).

Once again, as in 1988, the B.C.E.T.A. prepared an extensive, thoughtful, and thorough draft response to the Ministry of Education on behalf of the English / Language Arts teachers of B.C. One can only imagine whether they believed their recommendations would be taken seriously, given the troubled decade preceding their draft. Their cautious optimism at the end of the 1980's would have been justified had they the luxury of knowing the effect that the B.C.E.T.A. draft, and others like it, had on the Ministry of Education. Now, almost twenty years later, we know that four of the five proposals which caused the B.C.E.T.A. the greatest concern in the Year 2000 document were never implemented: English 11 and 12 are taught as separate courses, we do not teach in mini-modules of twenty-five classroom hours, hours of English instruction have not decreased,
and students are not streamed into a program choice at the beginning of grade 11. Only one of the B.C.E.T.A.'s concerns has been partially realized: a de-emphasis on literature and an emphasis on skills are becoming increasingly more prevalent in English courses as each decade passes.

Perhaps buoyed by the opportunity once again to affect English curriculum in B.C., the B.C.E.T.A. executive offers to work with the Ministry of Education in early 1990. Three motions passed at their executive meeting of February 3, 1990 indicate that the B.C.E.T.A. is working at ensuring they have a voice in the future:

Other business:

a) A discussion of the new Resource List followed.
Fisher/Jones: that at the next meeting a sub-committee be set up to look at resources and how they are selected. Carried…

c) Turner/Smith: that a letter be sent to the Ministry (M. Recchi, with copies to B. Carbol, G. Matthews) stating that the B.C.E.T.A. is always concerned about changes to English courses, that we are representative of a large number of English teachers, and that we are willing to be involved in any revision. Carried.

d) Archer/Ormond: that we prepare a statement in pamphlet form outlining our perspective of the nature of English. Carried.
The draft statement will be prepared by L. Archer, S. Jones, Ormond, by June 1, 1990.

Judith Turner in her president’s report of April, 1990, seems again to reflect a cautious optimism as she mentions both on-going challenges and accomplishments:

We are beginning a season of bargaining in locals across the province, as well as waiting for draft two of the Year 2000….Last summer, the BCETA produced a pamphlet on English class size, “Lost in the Crowd.” This winter, we submitted a full, reasoned response to the first draft of the Year 2000. We are now planning a pamphlet on English teaching, a definition and/or defense of what we do, and why. Members of the BCETA executive and many other English/language arts teachers participate in ministry meetings and working sessions on curriculum and assessment.
In short, we take our work seriously—both in the classroom and in the preparation for the classroom. We are taking every opportunity to say our piece and to say it in measured tones. I hope that someone is listening.

By the time of the next executive meeting of the B.C.E.T.A. on September 22, 1990, several events had taken place: President Judith Turner became Judith Blakeston, the Ministry put out its second draft of the Year 2000 document, and the English curriculum was undergoing changes. Several points of discussion and three motions at this meeting address the ministerial developments:

Curriculum (S. Jones)
Report attached.
Questionnaire will be distributed at conferences, soliciting opinions about the Intermediate and Graduation [sic] to be incorporated in our response. Committee to put together the questionnaire: S. Jones, J. Blakeston, V. Smith, B. Underwood.
Fisher / Belanger: that the Presidents ask the universities to support us in our concerns. Carried.
Response to be written by committee consisting of G. Ponsart, V. Smith, S. Jones, and J. Blakeston.

Literature Revision: (B. Underwood)
Curriculum changes will be contracted out to districts. Proposals will go out to the field in early November.
Fisher / Terpening: that a letter be sent to Barry Carbol at the Ministry stating that the B.C.E.T.A. would like to take part in a broad discussion of senior English electives before contracts for revision are drawn up. Carried.

Novel packages: (J. Terpening)
N. Ames has agreed to act as a clearing house for distribution of novel resource packages.
Terpening / Smith: that the B.C.T.A. act as a clearing house for resource packages to be made available to the districts. Carried.

The minutes of this meeting are interesting in that they reflect the dual functions of the B.C.E.T.A. which were articulated by David Fisher in 1988: the B.C.E.T.A. is not only a pro-active body, trying to affect English curriculum before it is developed, but it is also
re-active, trying to work within the new policies and procedures put in place by the Ministry of Education. It is pro-active in soliciting responses from its membership in order to write its response to the government’s latest Year 2000 release, and in striking a committee to write the response; it is pro-active in asking the universities to support it in its concerns; it is pro-active in writing a letter to Barry Carbol at the Ministry asking to be involved in the discussion about English electives. It is also (necessarily) re-active in that its members need to write a draft response in the first place; it is (necessarily) re-active to the contracting out of curriculum changes; it is also (necessarily) re-active in that its members agree to distribute new novel resource packages. Perhaps as David Fisher stated in 1988, the B.C.E.T.A. is often forced to be re-active, but needs to keep an eye to the future.

Two weeks later on October 4, 1990, Judith Blakeston, president of the B.C.E.T.A., took the rather unusual step of putting out a news release outlining to the public of B.C. some of the major changes being contemplated by the Ministry of Education in English / Language Arts instruction, including their proposal to abolish English 11:

Uppermost in many teachers’ minds, however, will be the changes proposed in the Intermediate and Graduation programmes slated for the Year 2000. For instance, the study of language and literature as a separate course will disappear entirely from the Grade 11 year. Its replacement is to be General Studies, a theme based course integrating materials from Humanities, Sciences, Practical and Fine Arts....

Blakeston makes several other statements in her news release that attract attention: “Many English teachers feel that losing the focus on English in a critical year of a student’s education is a mistake”; “The B.C.E.T.A. is preparing a response to the draft programmes urging the retention of the best of traditional philosophy and practice....”;
"We’re hoping that parents will look carefully at what their children are learning and respond as well.” If Blakeston’s goal was to attract attention to the cause(s) of the B.C.E.T.A., she was successful. In her November 13, 1990 president’s report, she states that

It was our decision both last June and this September that we pursue our concerns with changes in the Intermediate and Graduation Programmes as directly and fully as possible. There seemed to be no movement on the part of the Graduation Working Team on the issues of Grade 11 English, Integration, unitization, and there was genuine apprehension and questioning on the part of those attending the summer institutes about those issues.

The press release...attracted attention particularly in Victoria, but in Vancouver and Kelowna as well. I was pleased to speak on behalf of English teachers on the radio in Victoria and Kelowna, and on Bruce Steele’s Morning Show on the C.B.C.

I understand that some ministry personnel were not pleased to have the issue of Grade 11 English aired publicly; I can only hope that it was seen as what it was and is: a legitimate means of letting everyone who is interested know why English teachers are concerned. Our members and colleagues expect us to defend the cause of literature and language taught by trained English teachers throughout each year of the Graduation programme....

Rather than have negative reaction dissuade the B.C.E.T.A., however, the executive members decided to distribute the release more widely:

Recommendation:
That the B.C.E.T.A. send copies of the responses to the Graduation and Intermediate drafts to every member of the G. & I. steering and working committees, to the university and college English and Education faculties, to the appropriate ministry personnel, and to those newspaper and radio stations who have expressed interest in the issue.

The B.C.E.T.A.’s decision to go public with its concerns over the government’s proposals in the Year 2000 document is an indication of the strained relationship that existed between the government and the B.C.E.T.A. Relationships between the
government and teachers would not improve, and indeed, would worsen in March of 1991 with the government’s introduction of Bill 82, “The Compensation Fairness Act”:

The Act allowed for the determination of wages for public sector employees by the employer and a government-appointed Commissioner, on the basis of “ability to pay,” with reference to “any fiscal or financial policies adopted by the government.” The Commissioner was given broad powers to override existing collective agreements, impose wage settlements, dictate the manner of calculation of compensation and impose enforcement orders not subject to appeal. (“Collective Bargaining,” 2007, pg. 1)

In April of 1991, the executive of the B.C.E.T.A. sent its members a letter which sounded both pessimistic and optimistic. On one hand, the B.C.E.T.A. was clearly concerned about the political climate in B.C. and the effects it may have on their ability to work with the Ministry of Education on educational matters:

With April has come political upset and the immediate distressing possibilities of Bill 82. All the good liaison work between ministry and B.C.T.F. seems a little fragile when balanced against the political and economic actions of the government.

On the other hand, they were pleased to summarize for their members the B.C.E.T.A.’s responses to the government’s Year 2000 drafts of the Intermediate and Graduation Programmes:

**Intermediate Program:**
1. Specialist knowledge is needed to meet the goals of both the Intermediate Program and the Language Arts/English curriculum.
2. Literature should be read and appreciated for its own merits and should not be used merely as a vehicle for studying a theme or organizing a unit.
3. Learner-focused instruction should not be equated with individualized learning packages or skills that students must master.
4. The Language Arts/English Curriculum must remain as the central document for English teachers to be used in conjunction with the goals of the Intermediate Program.
5. The role of language and literature as worthwhile areas of inquiry and study should be strengthened in the Intermediate Program.

6. The approach to assessment and evaluation described in the Intermediate Program will require a reduction in the number of students that teachers teach, particularly in the later years of the program. Teacher accountability and the role of summative evaluation should be addressed more clearly in the document.

7. The theory and philosophy of the Intermediate Program must exist in harmony with the goals and learning outcomes of the Language Arts/English curriculum.

Graduation Program:

1. General Studies be made a collection of courses bearing some relation to each other, with the precise configuration being left to individual teachers and departments. English 1, therefore, would have a provincially-described, separate curriculum, although a group of teachers might decide to teach English 1 in conjunction with another course or courses.

2. The creation of single credit units be made clearly optional for particular courses rather than general for all courses.

3. The description of English in the Graduation Program be made consistent with the Language Arts/English Curriculum (1990) and with research in English. The changes needed are an explicit inclusion of literature in the program and a more accurate, more complex description of the role of language.

4. English 12 or Communications 12 should become English 2 and be a prerequisite for graduation.

Most of these points have been discussed previously, and there is no need to re-iterate.

The B.C.E.T.A., does, however, make one interesting final point, perhaps in response to criticism that English teachers are rejecting the Year 2000 philosophy because they are more comfortable with what they already know:

It would be simplistic to say that we recommend the status quo. What we suggest is caution and a sense of reality: caution in legislating changes before teachers have had the opportunity to understand, approve, and prepare for them, and reality in specifying necessary resources to implement the changes....A pared down Year 2000 might well include the advice of our members.

Again, the B.C.E.T.A. is in the position of having to react to a ministry-prescribed document, and having to ask the government for the opportunity to have some input in
the decision-making process. At its May 3, 1991 AGM, Sylvia Jones, Curriculum Chairperson of the B.C.E.T.A., reported that the draft responses to the Year 2000 proposals had been completed based on the feedback English teachers had given on a questionnaire, and that “the BCETA is also representing its members’ interests on the Graduation Steering Committee.” Unfortunately, no details follow.

Similarly, the correspondence between the B.C.E.T.A. and the B.C.T.F. slows down considerably for the next several months. Perhaps it was the provincial election that was consuming people’s time and energy: the election, called in September and held in October, saw Bill Vander Zalm’s Social Credit Party soundly defeated by Mike Harcourt’s N.D.P., and, rather surprisingly, Gordon Wilson’s Liberal Party winning enough votes to form the official opposition.

The next significant B.C.E.T.A. correspondence is not until its executive meeting minutes of January 17, 1992. Present at that meeting was George Matthews, Assistant Director, Curriculum Development Branch: Curriculum Development and Contract Opportunities. We can see by his title that the process for contracting out curriculum development to districts, previously suggested by the Social Credit government, had become a reality. Steve Naylor, new president of the B.C.E.T.A., “requested more information regarding contract specifications and proposals.” Matthews’ responses are rather vague, perhaps because under the new N.D.P. government, some of the previous policies and procedures were under review. For example, there was “discussion about contracting out guidelines,” and Matthews stated that the “procedure has been to send contract specifications out to the field and interested parties submit proposals to the Ministry,” but he states that the “new government is reviewing current contracting out
procedures.” Of concern to the B.C.E.T.A. is Matthews’ statement that the government is “thinking about advertising contracts throughout Western Canada and North West U.S.A.” which the B.C.E.T.A. notes “raises questions about Canadian and B.C. integrity.” Similarly, Matthews offers little concrete information on the on-going curricular changes to the Literature 12 course, stating that there is a “Literature 12 contract opportunity”; there was at the meeting “discussion about what a revised Literature 12 might look like”; but he was “unable to provide specific information about Literature 12 revision.” It seems as though Ministry of Education business had stalled somewhat as the N.D.P. tried to define its new role.

Nine months later, progress in English curriculum change is still very slow. In a letter written September 11, 1992, Judith Blakeston, now Assistant Director, Professional Development Division, B.C.T.F., states to Steve Naylor that

Jim Gaskill [Ministry of Education]...wants names of British Columbia university English department faculty members who might be appropriate to contact as scholarly resources in examining the Literature 12 revision. Their role is as background scholars and they would not, as I understand it, be part of the committee....

It seems as though not only the Literature 12 curriculum, but also responses to the Graduation Program document are still in the early stages:

I am circulating the preliminary BCETA response to the Graduation Steering Committee BCTF reps, and internally to PD staff. You have touched on issues that continue to be of concern to Language Arts/English teachers and your comments will be helpful in formulating a BCTF organizational response later on in the year....

Further evidence of the slow pace of curriculum change is evidenced by the Minutes of the B.C.E.T.A.’s executive meeting of September 19, 1992: a second draft of the government’s Graduation working paper is not due until October; “many issues are still
in a state of flux”; there is a need to clarify what “units” are; there is a need to clarify the concepts of “school leaving certificate” and “transcript of grades.” The B.C.E.T.A. agrees to have their existing sub-committee meet and prepare a response to the government’s second draft by November. Given that the questions and concerns of the B.C.E.T.A. have not changed since the first draft, and given that the new government had seemingly made little progress in the clarification or implementation of some of the proposals in the Year 2000 documents, one would expect the B.C.E.T.A.’s second draft response to be similar to its first.

By November of 1992, the government’s second draft should have been out for a month; however, as we see by the B.C.E.T.A. president’s newsletter of November, it had been delayed:

By now you will have received the first Update of the 1992-1993 school year. In it is the B.C.E.T.A.’s preliminary response to the Working paper of the Graduation Program. I hope you have had a chance to look this over and see the areas of concern that the BCETA had identified. The next draft of the Graduation Program should be available any time now. The BCETA will prepare a formal response to this draft and would encourage you to submit your own personal, departmental, or district response….

The B.C.E.T.A. would have a busy winter, in that they are writing another response:

Through the BCTF, the BCETA has been able to secure a small grant from the Ministry of Education in order to respond to the English/Language Arts Curriculum/Assessment Framework document which came out last spring. A group of BCETA members from around the province will be meeting early in December to prepare a response to this English Framework.

In addition to being put in the position of responding to two government documents, the B.C.E.T.A. was endeavouring to give English teachers some input into the resources used
in their classrooms. It is interesting to note Naylor’s tone of cautious optimism that the
government and teachers may be able to forge a stronger partnership:

I spent five weeks this summer at the Learning Resources Branch
taking part in the evaluation of new resources for grades eight through
ten. Approximately thirty people (classroom English teachers,
librarians, learning assistance teachers, ESL teachers ) made up the
English/Language Arts committee....Several important issues arose at
this summer evaluation. One is that all of the materials that we looked
at had been submitted by publishers in response to the call sent out by
the Learning Resources Branch. This is of course the policy of the
Branch....We discussed the role that teachers might have in future calls
to ensure that as wide a variety of material as possible is evaluated. I
was encouraged to hear that the Learning Resources Branch is
interested in working more closely with P.S.A.’s as a way of increasing
the dialogue between the Branch and the practicing teacher....

During the winter of 1992-93 the B.C.E.T.A. prepared its two draft responses and sent
them to the Ministry; it seems as though they had heard little back by spring. On April
23, 1993, Steve Naylor wrote a letter to Ellin McCarthy, Humanities Coordinator,
Curriculum Development Branch, Ministry of Education and Ministry Responsible for
Multiculturalism and Human Rights. In his letter, he states that Virginia Smith attended
the B.C.E.T.A. executive meeting [minutes not available] and “mentioned developments
regarding Language Arts / English Curriculum in the Graduation Program. She told us
that meetings were taking place at which the role of English in the Graduation Program
would be discussed.” One can tell that the B.C.E.T.A. was not included in these
“meetings.” The B.C.E.T.A. executive therefore decided to submit to Ms. McCarthy all
of their draft responses previously sent to the Ministry of Education. Naylor
diplomatically states that “you may already be familiar with these documents, although it
is possible that you or some of your colleagues are not.” He attached copies of the
following for her perusal:
2. Response to the first draft of the Intermediate Program, 1991
3. An internal document which uses quotations from the original Royal
   Commission to support the role and importance of English.
6. Response to the Primary Through Graduation Curriculum / Assessment
   Framework for Language Arts / English.

He also asks for the opportunity for the B.C.E.T.A. to be involved in the decision-making
process:

The BCETA would very much like to be involved in any discussions
you may have planned regarding the curriculum for Language
Arts/English. There are, of course, protocols established with the
BCTF involving the selection of teachers to sit on various ministry
committees. However, as the professional voice of English teachers in
BC, the BCETA would like you to know that we are eager to be part of
the dialogue concerning the English curriculum.

There is little evidence that the B.C.E.T.A. or its members were ever asked to be part of
the dialogue. As it turns out, it would mostly have been for naught: several months later,
in September of 1993, Premier Mike Harcourt announced that many of the Year 2000
changes already in place in B.C. schools were “failing,” and that the majority of the
remaining Year 2000 initiatives would not be implemented. Whereas the B.C.E.T.A.
may have seen this as welcomed news, given that they had tirelessly lobbied the
government for over two years requesting changes to the documents, the executive were
dismayed by their perception that the premier was blaming teachers for the lack of
success of the newly-mandated changes. On October 14, 1993, new B.C.E.T.A. president
Greg Ponsart sent a scathing letter to Premier Harcourt expressing their frustration:

I am...more than disturbed with the tone set by your comments about
the state of public education....Your comments only serve to dishearten
further teachers who are tired of having to navigate the interminable
maze of documents and programs supplied by various Ministries of
Education in their less than consistent attempts to implement mandated change in British Columbia schools….
I found myself so disillusioned when I heard your comments about the Year 2000 receiving a “failing” grade. Personally, I heard in your statements an indictment of the system, and, more damaging, an implicit criticism of those of us who work within it. The subtext of your message seemed to be that this mysterious “Year 2000” was somehow the creation and, therefore, the fault of those of us who have been asked to implement it. The disappointingly shallow level of analysis ignored the recent history of educational change. For years the British Columbia English Teachers’ Association has expressed reservations about aspects of the proposed changes outlined in the Intermediate and Graduation programs. We have expressed concern about the implementation process. Many of our members have spoken and written of the frustration that both they and parents feel as rumours of changes proliferate. I think what has to be answered at this juncture is who owns the “problem”? Your comments imply that the origins of educational problems reside outside government, that your role is to be that of the no-nonsense problem solver. This, I believe, is unacceptable political manipulation of a very serious situation.

Appreciating the fact that some of the Year 2000 initiatives could still be implemented, the B.C.E.T.A. sent a letter to English teachers in October, 1993 encouraging them to continue to lobby the government for changes to the document that they felt were necessary. The B.C.E.T.A. didn’t believe that Harcourt would scrap the entire Year 2000 initiative:

Despite the Premier’s comments to the contrary, indications are that many of the substantive principles of the Year 2000 will form the basis of programmatic changes at the Intermediate and Graduation levels. I have no doubt that we are going to be asked to respond to and, sooner or later, implement new initiatives. In the next little while, we should see the release of the Intermediate Program and the final response draft of the Graduation Program. One of the priorities of your executive is to continue to resist any unwarranted compromise of the principles of our Language Arts/English Curriculum Documents. My reading of the most recent incarnation of the Graduation Program forces me to conclude that our compulsory literature based English courses in grades 11 and 12 may be in jeopardy….

Ponsart also states in his letter that the B.C.E.T.A. has decided to re-organize:
Another of our priorities this year is to continue to increase the direct involvement of the membership in B.C.E.T.A. affairs. To this end we have restructured the executive so that there are standing committees dealing with curricular matters, membership services, liaison with outside agencies, publications, and conferences. In the next few months, these standing committees will be advertising for member participation.

It seems as though the frustration felt by members of the B.C.E.T.A. has given them more reason than ever to make sure their voices are heard by the government.

By the B.C.E.T.A. executive meeting of Friday, January 28, 1994, it seems as though it was back to business as usual. One cannot tell by the minutes that any substantial announcements had been made by the government, or that the role of the B.C.E.T.A. was significantly different than it had been for years, although their minutes state that they received a response from their letter sent to Mike Harcourt; they noted that it was a “form letter that said little.” Members of the B.C.E.T.A. were still working on committees: they “participated in selection of people for the English revision Committee”; the “Steering Committee of Humanities and Social Sciences Consortium” has met. Twelve teachers from six districts will be seconded to work on humanities and social sciences curriculum development”; they have organized “Curriculum Working sessions to develop Curriculum Planning Guides on February 22-25. J. Terpening, S. Naylor, and V. Smith will attend.” They continued to respond to draft proposals from the government: “Invitation from Ministry to discuss Intermediate and Grad Program on February 3. L. Archer and S. Naylor will attend”; “responses to the Intermediate and Graduation Programs must be in by April 31, 1994.”
Similarly, at the B.C.E.T.A.'s next executive meeting of April 11, 1994, their minutes show that they are once again trying to become actively involved in curriculum changes:

BCETA needs to become involved with the Ministry Forum that discussed Humanities. We need to reply to the report this committee has put out. This committee will continue to meet and will draw up recommendations to ensure that Language Arts English education will not receive short shrift in a Humanities course.

**Curriculum Revision**

Language Arts English Curriculum is currently under revision. Curriculum Planning Guides will be developed by the Ministry to accompany Curriculum Guides, i.e. suggestions for implementation and resources.

The B.C.E.T.A. is also working on its latest draft responses to the government: “The Graduation Program Response, written by G. Ponsart, was accepted” and “L. Archer and K. Puharich will do the final draft of the Intermediate Program Response.” In addition, the B.C.E.T.A. is encouraging its members to create novel packages for the new curriculum, as the following motion demonstrates: “Ponsart / Duke: the B.C.E.T.A. will fund the development of new novel packages up to a maximum of $600.00 or four release days per novel package. Carried.”

Shortly after this meeting, the B.C.E.T.A. submitted its draft proposals to the government. A copy of Ponsart’s Graduation Program draft has been preserved in the B.C.T.F. records, but the draft of the Intermediate Program response has not. Ponsart’s Graduation Draft is interesting not only in that it re-iterates the same four main points that the B.C.E.T.A. presented to its members and the Ministry in 1991, three years previous, but also in that it goes further and explains the philosophy behind the points. A rather substantial sampling from this draft is therefore worthy of study:
BCETA response to The Graduation Program (Draft)

Introduction
The British Columbia English Teachers’ Association (BCETA) welcomes an opportunity to respond The Graduation Program (Response Draft) [sic]. We recognize that we are taking part in an ongoing process of creating a new program for the last two years of schools, and we are conscious and appreciative of the fact that The Graduation Program is offered as a draft, suggesting rather than prescribing. In developing the BCETA response, we have been guided by the Year 2000: A Framework for Learning, which we have regarded as a foundational and guiding document.

The BCETA has chosen to respond to specific proposals which, we suggest, need to be modified, rather than to spend time reinforcing those proposals with which we agree. The BCETA recommends four changes. These are:

1. General Studies be made a collection of courses bearing some relation to each other, with the precise configuration being left to individual teachers and departments. English 1, therefore, would have a provincially-described, separate curriculum, although a group of teachers might decide to teach English 1 in conjunction with another course or courses.

2. The creation of single credit units be made clearly optional for particular courses rather than general for all courses.

3. The description of English in the Graduation Program be made consistent with the Language Arts/English Curriculum (1990) and with research in English. The changes needed are an explicit inclusion of literature in the program and a more accurate, more complex description of the role of language.

4. English 12 or Communications 12 should become English 2 and be a prerequisite for graduation.” (“B.C.E.T.A. Response” 1)

Background
As research shows and as Michael Fullan emphasized at Bold Visions II, real change is only successful when it is translated into the classroom practices of individual teachers. Whether this happens depends on the teachers’ judgments about the appropriateness of the change. This judgment depends on many factors which cannot be directed from outside the classroom. Any change involving interdisciplin ary teaching, for example, is dependent on teachers changing the way they define their role in school, changing the way they regard their subjects, and changing what they believe to be the norm about relating to staff and students. A program that offers choice is more likely to be implemented. The BCETA, therefore, favours provincial policies and programs that offer the teacher choice as opposed to those that restrict choice; we believe that it is programs that offer choice that are most likely to be implemented (B.C.E.T.A. Response, 1994, pp. 1-2).

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The next four sections of this draft are called “General Studies,” “Units of Study,” “The View of English,” and “English 2 as part of the Common Curriculum,” which correspond to the four main points outlined above at the beginning of the brief and provide the rationale and philosophy behind each.

From “General Studies”:

Teachers in individual schools can then make the decision about the precise form of interdisciplinary approach they choose to adopt. They may well consider the following criteria:
1. Respect for the integrity and knowledge of the individual disciplines, and respect for the knowledge of the individual teachers.
2. The extent teachers wish to collaborate with other teachers. This decision would be based on:
   a) the competencies of the teachers involved,
   b) the personalities and philosophies of the teachers involved, and
   c) the time available for collaboration.
3. The support and resources available in the school, or from the district or Ministry to support implementation.
4. An assessment of the needs of the students.
This proposal would have the clear benefit of supporting change at the level at which research indicates it is most effective, the school level, with teachers choosing the type of program most suited to students’ needs.
*(B.C.E.T.A. Response, 1994, pg. 3)*.

From “Units of Study”:

To fragment English courses in this way runs counter to the *Language Arts/English Curriculum Guide*, which describes how the various strands of the English curriculum—writing, reading, speaking, listening, viewing, and representing—should be integrated. That is, they should be taught together, each leading to the other, rather than broken up. Thus, units on “writing,” “reading,” or “speaking” would go against the existing curriculum and against the advice of virtually every piece of research in English. While the practice of breaking courses into units might be valid in some particular areas, the rule should not be a general one that is applied to English....The BCETA recommends, therefore, that *The Graduation Program* be changed to reflect the choice that should be available to schools and to teachers in various subject areas. English 2 should be a four credit course, as we see the
one credit unit of study in English leading to incoherent, disjointed courses  (B.C.E.T.A. Response, 1994, pg. 4).

From “The View of English”:
The B.C.E.T.A.’s third concern is with the view of English implied in The Graduation Program. The first point is that English is scarcely mentioned, a strange omission in view of the importance of language in learning and in view of the recent publication of the Language Arts/English Curriculum Guide (1990). When English is mentioned in The Graduation Program, it is referred to as a set of “skills,” either communication skills or literacy skills. Literature is virtually ignored. And yet English in schools is the stories, poems, and plays read by students and written by students....Literature, so essential in the Primary Program, should be no less important in The Graduation Program.

The view of language in The Graduation Program seems to the BCETA to be limited and limiting. The inference we draw from The Graduation Program is that language consists of skills that can be applied instrumentally in any context and that language is a transparent, neutral vehicle for thought. Such a view is completely at odds with current research (ibid).

From “English 2 as Part of the Common Curriculum”:
The B.C.E.T.A.’s final concern is with the possible multiplicity of English 2 courses. One Graduation Program document describes a range of courses that would qualify as English 2 credits, including a new course, Information Management. The BCETA recommends that the common curriculum, that is, those courses which are required for graduation, include English 2 (either English 12 or Communications 12) and that the other courses remain electives (B.C.E.T.A. Response, 1994, pg. 5).

Although it seems that there had been some minor changes in the Ministry’s curriculum proposals in the three years since the B.C.E.T.A.’s last draft response (for example, the creation of a new course called “Information Management”) it is interesting to note that the major concerns of the B.C.E.T.A. have remained unchanged. Its responses indicate that the Ministry’s proposals were still to make “English” part of a larger group of courses, to de-emphasize the importance of literature, and to fragment instruction. One wonders if the B.C.E.T.A. was getting frustrated after repeating its concerns for several
years, with no substantive changes on the part of the government. However, it still remains open to consultation and willing to serve on committees in order to discuss curricular changes, as is demonstrated in the conclusion of its draft:

The BCETA recommends these four proposals as being consistent with the philosophy and practice of Year 2000. We offer them in the spirit of the draft proposals, as part of a continuing dialogue. The BCETA would be happy to meet with any group, the Graduation Team or the Steering Committee, to discuss these proposals, which, if accepted, we believe would increase the likelihood of a successful implementation of a new program. More importantly, we believe that the acceptance of these proposals would benefit the students of BC ("B.C.E.T.A. Response" 5).

There is a dearth of correspondence between the B.C.E.T.A. and the B.C.T.F. for almost a year after this draft proposal was submitted. One interesting development, not necessarily related to curricular changes, but interesting nonetheless, is contained in a November 4, 1994, letter from Sylvia Jones, the new president of the B.C.E.T.A., to Sue Ferguson of the P.S.A. Council Executive:

The [sic] is a request by the B.C.E.T.A. to the P.S.A. Council Executive to change the name of our organization to the British Columbia Teachers of English Language Arts (B.C.T.E.L.A.). The motion to change the name was proposed and carried unanimously at a General Meeting called for the specific purpose of changing the name.

Whether there is any significance to the decision or to its timing has been lost to posterity.

The next important development in changes to the B.C. English curriculum takes place in January and February of 1995. We can assume from the President’s newsletter of February 6, 1995, that English teachers, including members of the B.C.T.E.L.A., and Ministry officials were again clashing. As we have seen, the re-working of the English /
Language Arts curriculum had been an on-going project for years. During the early part of 1995, committees contracted by the Ministry were working on developing the new curriculum, which included prescribed learning outcomes (P.L.O.s) and Integrated Resource Packages (I.R.P.s).

The basis of the disagreement about the P.L.O.s is that teachers are not comfortable with naming specific skills every student at each grade level is supposed to master, given their philosophy that students do not all learn at exactly the same rate. They believe that writing P.L.O.s for "grade clusters" of students would be more sound (for example, "students in grade 5-7 should be able to...").

The disagreement concerning the I.R.P.s is less specific, but suggests that teachers believe the I.R.P.s lead to a more skills-based approach to English. Sylvia Jones reports to her members about the impasse in her February 6, 1995 newsletter:

In the last six weeks, two committees of teachers contracted to develop the revised English language arts curriculum have been asked by the ministry to do things which contradict these teachers' beliefs about the nature of English language arts. Both committees ultimately refused to comply with ministry directives. The committee in Trail completed their contract to write grade cluster learning outcomes for the English language arts curriculum but refused to change these into single grade outcomes. At the moment, single grade learning outcomes are being written for English language arts by ministry personnel and two teachers appointed by the ministry. The committee contracted to work on the Integrated Resources Package, which the ministry intended to publish with the revised curriculum, have told the ministry that they cannot work within the guidelines laid down for this project. The vision the ministry has of the I.R.P. would lead to a less integrated more skills based and less rich model of our subject than the vision we all share at the moment. Therefore, the I.R.P. committee have told the ministry that they cannot continue at present.

...Both curriculum development committees went as far as they could to compromise and negotiate but came up against a basic philosophical difference between themselves and the ministry about how children and young people learn English language arts. I have been told that in this province, the ministry is involving teachers in curriculum change more
than the other western provinces and it is not my intention in this newsletter to vilify the ministry. However, we are saying “enough is enough” when it becomes obvious that ministry policy is so at odds with language arts teachers’ beliefs about their subject area.

Ministry officials are meeting with the B.C.T.E.L.A. this week in response to the letter we sent to Art Charbonneau a week ago (printed below). The letter was prompted by the events just described, but specifically by the directive from the ministry to the Trail curriculum development committee to change their completed revision of the curriculum.

The B.C.T.E.L.A.’s letter to [Minister of Education] Art Charbonneau referred to in the newsletter outlines the same concerns as those stated above (“We are particularly concerned about the inclusion of single grade learning outcomes and the design of the Integrated Resource Packages”) and also reminds him that the B.C.T.E.L.A. is not opposed to curriculum change, per se (“The B.C.T.E.L.A. has always supported curriculum development and to this end we took an active part in the implementation of the 1990 English language arts curriculum”), but goes on to explain that the P.L.O.s and the I.R.P.s are contrary to the philosophy of B.C. English teachers.

If the B.C.T.E.L.A. was hoping for a quick resolution to this impasse, it was not to be. In her president’s newsletter of April 10, 1995, Sylvia Jones reports that neither problem had been adequately resolved:

The executive met with Sam Lim, Assistant Deputy Minister of Education, Dave Williams, Acting Director of Curriculum Branch and Valerie Collins, then Language Arts Coordinator, to discuss our concerns about the revision of the English Language Arts curriculum. As a result, the ministry are holding a meeting to discuss the Integrated Resources Packages. The ministry will not change the form of the curriculum from Single Grade Learning Outcomes to a form more representative of the developmental nature of English language arts. However, they have used due process in recruiting a representative committee to develop the Integrated Resource Packages. You have probably seen the advertisement for this committee in your school.
To further complicate matters, Jones reports that according to the Ministry of Education, "there will be changes to the grade 12 English courses after 1995-6." The B.C.T.E.L.A. was undoubtedly caught off guard, then, when in August of 1995, the government announced that Communications 11 and 12 were to be phased out, and at the same time introduced a new grade 12 English course, Technical and Professional Communications 12, which was to be offered as an alternative to English 12. The B.C.T.E.L.A. was upset with the content of this new course, but was equally or perhaps more upset with the process by which this course was introduced. On September 22, 1995, the B.C.T.E.L.A. executive presented a motion to the P.S.A. Council which was passed unanimously: "B.C.T.E.L.A. call upon the ministry of education to change Technical and Professional Communications 12 from an alternative to English 12 to a selective studies option at grade 12."

This motion was followed on September 27, 1995 with a three-page letter from Sylvia Jones, a copy of which was sent to Alice McQuade, president of the B.C.T.F. Jones' hand-written cover sheet to McQuade says that the B.C.T.E.L.A. will send the letter to "interested groups such as parents' associations, administrators, superintendents, and [it will be] used to inform us in any contact with the media." The letter is a thorough indictment not only of the new course but also of the Ministry's process in mandating it. A significant portion of the letter is reproduced here, articulating the B.C.T.E.L.A.'s objections with "the process by which the course was developed and the content of the course itself" and concluding with four recommendations:

This letter is prompted by our concern about the Technical and Professional Communications course signed off in August by the Minister of Education, Mr. Arthur Charbonneau. This course will be an alternative to English 12 for graduation purposes. The present
Communications 11 and Communications 12 will be phased out. Below we have outlined the reasons for our disquiet. We hope that after reading this you will agree that this course should not be an alternative to English 12 but an elective (selected option) which can be studied in addition to English 12.

Our objections are about the process by which the course was developed and the content of the course itself.

1. The process:
   - Due process agreed upon with the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation to involve teachers in the design and planning of curriculum has not been followed by the Ministry of Education.
   - Advice was sought by the Ministry of Education and then ignored.
   - The speed of development has been far too fast and has not allowed for reflection or wide consultation.
   - The Ministry did not follow agreed upon procedure for involving teachers in the initial design and development of this course so there were no representatives from English Language Arts teachers’ organizations in the initial stages of conceptualization. The speed of development of the conceptual framework has been precipitous: a conceptual plan was put together during August and a conceptual framework or outline of the course was presented to the English Language Arts/Communications Overview Team which met on September 15th.

The English Language Arts/Communications Overview Team is to be the major forum for decisions pertaining to the English Language Arts curriculum in the province. The British Columbia Teachers’ Federation was not given time to follow protocols agreed upon with the Ministry for the selection of teachers to this committee. In fact, the deadline for teachers to apply for the Curriculum Overview Team was September 20 and as noted above the team met on September 15th. Three other new English Language Arts curricula were also examined that day so the overly hasty process of development and review continued. The development and review of curricula for an area of learning as important as English Language Arts should not be undertaken in such a flawed manner, especially if the Ministry wants the new curricula to be implemented by 1997.

2. The nature and content of the course:
   Unlike English 12, which has students examining a broad range of texts, writing in a variety of formats, and developing communication skills for a range of purposes, Technical and Professional Communications 12 has only four curriculum organizers:
   - Documents and Presentations for Specific Audiences and Purposes;
   - Research Analysis and Data Organization;
   - Collaborative Strategies; and
Communication Technology (including such matters as E-mail).

The B.C. Teachers of English Language Arts executive object to this course for the following reasons:

- This highly limited curriculum is unsuitable as the only twelfth-grade course to be taken by students intent upon graduating and pursuing post-secondary studies;
- It may not be suitable for many of the students who at present enroll in Communications 12 (thereby preventing such students from achieving B.C. secondary school graduation);
- It lacks the broad organizers of the present English 12 course: reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and representing;
- It will not provide the intellectual challenge, academic preparation, development of communication skills and strategies, and imaginative stimulus currently offered through the broad range of texts and writing assignments in English 12;
- Unlike English 12, Technical and Professional Communications will not inculcate social mores and develop knowledge of our democratic traditions and the Canadian multi-cultural heritage.

It is our opinion that Technical and Professional Communications 12 will be inappropriate as post-secondary preparation for the following reasons:

- Requires little more than a knowledge of a variety of business-writing "templates" and fails to provide for genuine problem-solving;
- Presents little intellectual and emotional stimulation;
- Imposes limited rhetorical contexts for student writing assignments;
- Encourages uniformity of expression rather than the development of an individual, engaging style and the discovery of a personal voice in writing;
- Provides an extremely limited range of writing models and activities;
- Presents no literary texts and no media study in its present form
- Assumes that all students require a similar, limited range of skills and competencies, and thereby deviates from the Ministry of Education's primary objective to create educated citizens;
- Fails to provide the kind of intellectual flexibility that English 12 encourages, a flexibility that will be invaluable for young people who may have to change careers a number of times as a result of economic developments and technological innovation.

Therefore, the B.C.T.E.L.A. urges that:

- B.C. colleges and universities not accept Technical and Professional Communications 12 as a substitute for English 12;
- The B.C. Business Council reiterate its position that technical communications skills and business formats are best studied within the regular English curriculum;
➢ The Minister of Education consider implementing Technical and Professional Communications 12, and any other new English course, only after sufficient consultation with parents, students, and English teachers has occurred;
➢ The Ministry of Education change the designation of Technical and Professional Communications 12 so that it is an adjunct to (rather than a replacement for) English 12 within the Selected Studies Program, paralleling such electives as Literature 12.

If there was any response to Jones’ letter, it has not been filed with the B.C.T.F. (One may have expected a written response from Alice McQuade, if nothing else.) We do know now that some of Jones’ recommendations were partially realized: some B.C. colleges accept Technical and Professional Communications, but universities do not; the Ministry has not implemented any new English courses since 1993, but they did retain Communications 11 and 12; the Ministry did not change the designation of their new course, so that even today students may take it instead of English 12, although very few schools offer it. Were Jones’ recommendations for greater consultation being heard?

Her newsletter a few weeks later, October 16, 1995, would suggest not; it begins with the following words, the first section bold as it appears in the newsletter:

**Grade 11 English is the last English language arts course students will be required to take for graduation purposes. The new English language arts curriculum now only applies to K to grade 11.**

This information was given to me a few days ago. At the point of writing, it is unclear whether English 12 will follow the English language arts curriculum in the new course structure for the senior courses.

Jones does not say from whom she received the information. She expands on this news only with general comments such as “We do not know if English 12 will be based on the English language arts curriculum when the new senior English courses are in place,” and “The decision to exclude all Grade 12 English courses from the English language arts
curriculum was made without any reference to B.C.T.E.L.A.” It is unclear whether or not her information was from a solid source. (We know now that the removal of English 12 from the language arts curriculum never happened.) She does attempt to get clarification when she writes a letter to Richard Lord, Curriculum Branch, Ministry of Education, on October 30, 1995. She writes that she is seeking clarification on whether “the English Language Arts curriculum no longer informs grade twelve English” and whether the English 12 course will have to follow this curriculum after the authorization of the new English language arts I.R.P. If not, what principles of English language teaching will English 12 follow? If you tell us that English 12 will follow the English language arts curriculum guidelines, how can this be if the curriculum no longer applies?

During this time, it is clear that Jones is feeling frustrated with the Ministry’s announcements and rather helpless to effect any changes. There is also evidence that she is not feeling supported by the B.C.T.F. One telling communication on file with the B.C.T.F. is a note hand written by Jones on a sheet of paper. It has no addressee and no date. It reads, in its entirety

Help: Does anyone in the senior ranks of B.C.T.F. care? My exec. has given up hours of work over all this stuff, but without the support of BCTF Exec, we are wasting our time:
1. Single-grade learning outcomes for L. A. curriculum went through against our better judgment.
2. Technical + Professional Communications—going ahead.
3. Now—without any warning or consultation, the ministry has removed the control of the L.A. curriculum (in which B.C.T.E.L.A. did have input) from Grade 12 English courses.
The technocratic, autocratic forces in society are weighing down heavily on our humanistic and student-centred subject,...and I have heard absolutely nothing from the BCTF exec.
What should we do?
Sylvia Jones.
There is no response on file at the B.C.T.F. to Jones’ letter. There has been evidence in the past of somewhat strained relations between the B.C.T.E.L.A. (then the B.C.E.T.A.) and the B.C.T.F., but none so straightforward as this.

The tension continues as Jones must defend herself in early November against allegations that she broke a confidentiality agreement with the Ministry of Education. She hand-wrote a letter to Alice McQuade, and sent a copy to Mike Zlotnik (B.C.T.F. Professional Development) asking him to copy it for Anita Chapman (B.C.T.F). Below is her letter in its entirety. (Please note that she refers to the Technical and Professional Communications course as “TPC” the first time, then transposes the letters to “TCP” from then on.)

Dear Alice,

Anita Chapman called me last night to say that there had been concerns about BCTELA not respecting ministry policy on confidentiality, specifically a letter to post-secondary institutions about Technical + Professional Communications 12.

1. The ONLY letter which we have sent out publicly on this topic is the letter which you were shown via Anita Chapman, and therefore have a copy. This is the letter which went to the post-secondary institutions.
2. The letter was composed by a sub-committee of the BCTELA Executive in September 16th-23rd before I had been selected to sit on the Technical and Professional Communications (TPC) Learning Outcomes committee. At that point, we had received absolutely no information about TCP course from the ministry.
3. We (BCTELA) are on the mailing list for “requests for resources” by Resource Branch. At the end of August, we received a request for resources for the T.C.P. course. In this request was an outline of the T.C.P. course which we used to inform our letter about the course which was mailed to post-secondary, principals, superintendents + English departments. All this happened before BCTF selected people for committees.
4. After I signed the confidentiality undertaking, I did not divulge anything that happened at the Learning Outcomes sessions regarding T.C.P.
What I want you to know is that the resistance to this course is coming from many people (teachers, principals, consultants and post-secondary) who are not part of B.C.T.E.L.A. They are acting independently in their lobbying. The item in the “Vancouver Sun” by Sue Balcom is an example of this. I did not initiate that. Sue Balcom rang me for confirmation of what she had learned from another source—she said “another English teacher.”

I know that the Vancouver department heads of English have been lobbying post-secondary institutions about T.C.P. Therefore, I really need to talk to you. By now, you may have received a letter from me (mailed Sunday Oct 29th). The tone of the letter is meant to be collegial; my executive need to know that we have the support of the BCTF Executive at this point when the institution of the T.C.P. course is becoming a public debate. We are an association of BCTF and we need a bit of dialogue with you to make sure we are on track. If you give me a couple of options for a meeting this week, I’ll book a sub a come in.... [cut off]

This letter is interesting for many reasons: the fact that she has to prove her innocence to the B.C.T.F. is awkward; the fact that she is now sitting on the T.P.C. Learning Committee and that the B.C.T.E.L.A. is now on the mailing list for “requests for resources” both may be indications that the Ministry is listening to the concerns of the B.C.T.E.L.A.; the very fact that the Ministry requires committee members to sign confidentiality agreements is worthy of debate; the fact that the Vancouver Sun is writing about the story speaks to its public interest; but perhaps most interesting of all is Jones’ reference to the letter she mailed on Sunday, October 29th to the B.C.T.F. This undoubtedly refers to the “Help” letter quoted earlier in which Jones was clearly frustrated and upset by the B.C.T.F.’s lack of support for B.C.T.E.L.A. Now she says that “the tone of the letter is meant to be collegial”; it certainly doesn’t read that way. Her tone has changed from “Does anyone in the senior ranks of B.C.T.F. care? My exec. has given up hours of work over all this stuff, but without the support of BCTF Exec, we are wasting our time...” to “we need a bit of dialogue with you to make sure we are on
track.” Relations between the B.C.T.E.L.A. and the B.C.T.F. seem to be at a low point, but it seems as though Jones is attempting to initiate more constructive dialogue.

Just as there was a dearth of meaningful correspondence during the election year of 1991, so there was during the election year of 1996. Premier Mike Harcourt had resigned amid allegations of a fundraising scandal, and his successor, Glen Clark, won the May election handily over Liberal Gordon Campbell.

There seemed to be no significant correspondence concerning curriculum issues until early in 1997, at which time there was a flurry of activity. One item the B.C.T.E.L.A. was involved in was a curriculum development project first introduced to the B.C.E.T.A. executive by George Matthews in 1992: the N.D.P. government had become involved in the Western Consortium project. On February 7, 1997, Valerie Collins, English Language Arts Co-ordinator, Curriculum and Resources Branch, Ministry of Education, sent a letter to Anita Chapman of the B.C.T.F:

This is a formal request for BCTF approval to invite Lynn Archer, President, BC Teachers of English Language Arts Association, to mail out a draft copy of the newly developed Western English Language Arts (WELA) 10-12 outcomes for review by selected teachers. This work is part of the existing Western Consortium project to develop a Common Curriculum Framework of Outcomes K-12.

I would like to invite the English teachers’ PSA to solicit responses from additional teachers in order to include as much teacher advice as possible. I would suggest that approximately 25 teachers with experience at the Grades 10, 11, and 12 level be identified to respond to the material. Once I have received BCTF approval by phone or fax, I will send the draft documents to Lynn with a 2-page Response Form and Undertaking of Confidentiality to be signed by the teachers.

The N.D.P.’s vision of a common curriculum for Western schools was coming to fruition. In the previous months, it would seem that the B.C.T.E.L.A. had been participating in the formation of this common curriculum, and they are being given the opportunity for more
input now that a draft document is ready. We are given more information about the scope and possible effects of the consortium's framework at the March 14, 1997 B.C.T.E.L.A. executive meeting. Lyn Archer reported the following:

- These outcomes will provide a framework for curriculum in Western Canada.
- While Alberta will use them as curriculum, others will use them as a "template."
- Comments are permitted on specific outcomes only—too late to change 5 main ones.
- Difficult to see continuity from grade to grade as the document stands.
- Consortium is determined to have three 'levels': general, applied, literary.
- These are to become alternate "pathways to graduation" in Grades 11 and 12.

It will be interesting to see how the B.C.T.E.L.A. responds to this draft. Five years previously, the B.C.E.T.A. was concerned that a general, western document "raises questions about Canadian and B.C. integrity." The B.C.T.E.L.A. may also be concerned that the W.E.L.A. report contains some recommendations that they had previously rejected, such as streaming students into particular graduation programs at the beginning of grade eleven.

However, this report was not the only item of concern at their executive meeting: Becky Matthews from the Ministry of Education joined the executive members for a roundtable discussion, and several points were raised:

- Becky outlined common issues to the paper Addressing Student Differences among the 264 responses received (still in draft); some are obvious (money, time, and human resources are necessary for curricular change), other not (e.g., provide three types of school-leaving certificates: occupational, general, university; retain IP)....
- The "common" curriculum does not meet the needs of all students.
- Prioritize [sic] learning outcomes from IRPs: mandatory vs. enriched (justifies the retention of Communications 11/12).
The Ministry now acknowledges that roughly 20 per cent of the student population is “grey area”—as much as 50 per cent in some schools.

The Ministry must now face the fact that it has produced too much curriculum: a Grade 5 teacher has seventeen IRPs and 500 learning outcomes to implement.

Lyn stated and Becky acknowledged the importance of core courses and the mistake of assigning equal blocks of time to all subjects at secondary.

1993 Reading Assessment suggests there is a place for instruction in reading at secondary.

**Developments:**

- Math A stream and Communications 11/12 are to continue for 1997-8.
- If Communication is to become a fixture, it will need a thorough revision and its own IRP.
- The Ministry plans to investigate how useful teachers are finding IRPs.

Other than the announcement that Communications 11 and 12 are to continue as courses, there are two main points of interest in these notes: one is the emphasis on differentiated instruction, and the other is the Ministry’s admission that their system of P.L.O.s and I.R.P.s may be cumbersome. On the topic of differentiated instruction, the government has asked teachers for input on addressing student differences, and Matthews appears to have been listening to the responses of teachers, making the point that the common curriculum may not apply to up to fifty percent of students in some schools, and acknowledging that for some students, more time spent in core subjects, to improve reading, for example, may be wise. (Some of her comments were clearly informed by her work on the *Addressing Student Differences: Next Steps* paper that she and a provincial working group had drafted, and that would be published by the Ministry of Education in June.) Matthews also admits that the number of P.L.O.s is overwhelming, and that the Ministry wants to know whether or not teachers find I.R.P.s useful. Perhaps this is evidence that the Ministry of Education is responding to feedback from the teachers of
B.C. The fact that she attended the executive meeting of the B.C.T.E.L.A. seems to be a positive sign.

The collaborative atmosphere seems to have continued according to the minutes of the B.C.T.E.L.A. executive meeting of May 31, 1997. A “Literacy Standards Meeting” was previously held between Becky Matthews and the B.C.T.E.L.A. executive, and many worthwhile points were discussed, including the following:

➢ A private brainstorming session revealed some good news: Communications 11/12 will receive its own IRP (development to begin in the fall).
➢ Becky’s premises: closed-door discussion, written literacy focus, Ministry commitment to review of all senior English courses in 1997-8.
➢ Becky’s questions: Is a common exam for all three Grade 12 English courses possible, or for that matter, desirable? Can we describe common performance standards for all three exams (English 12, TPC 12, and Communications 12), and should we bother?
➢ Becky attempted to diagram the overlap in the three courses: English 12 contains all the skills and processes of Communications 12, and most of TPC 12, despite its narrow focus and limited range (even in the oral dimension).
➢ Our contention that TPC 12, English Literature 12, and Writing/Journalism 12 are off-shoots of English 12, and are therefore not equivalent to English 12.
➢ Liz and Mary developed a list of common learning outcomes: 80% of the TPC outcomes occur in English 12; TPC has unique formats, procedures, and technologies, but English 12 has aesthetics of language and broader audience, topics, purposes, and more diverse formats.
➢ The challenge is to have business formats and “practical” language taught alongside literature in English 12.
➢ Common performance standards are problematic because Communications 12 has lower minimum expectations. A common literacy exam would therefore require two minimum performance standards; otherwise, a common exam would be too challenging for most Communications students. Technical formats and readings could be embedded in the revised English 12 Provincial exam.
➢ BCTELA recommends that English 12’s general organizers and outcomes serve as models for those in the Communications 11/12 IRP, but that specialized resources and teaching strategies be emphasized.
There are many points to discuss here. To get a sense of whether or not the Ministry really listened to the concerns of the B.C.T.E.L.A., it may be interesting to see which of their suggestions to Matthews affected changes in the English curriculum. Communications 11 and 12 did indeed get their own I.R.P.s. English courses were reviewed, and the English and Communications examinations did change in 2000. English Literature 12 and Writing/Journalism 12 are still considered “off-shoots” of English 12, and are therefore still elective courses today; however, Technical and Professional Communications is still considered equivalent to English 12. English and Communications still have different examinations. It seems as though the recommendations of the B.C.T.E.L.A. were indeed taken into consideration by Matthews and the Ministry of Education, at least on these points.

On other points, however, there still seems to be a lack of communication. At this same meeting of May 31, 1997, Lyn Archer reports

Journalism 12, Writing 12, and Composition 11: The Ministry was dropping these as provincially-approved courses after the deadline for approval of locally-developed courses. Alerted by us, Valerie Collins [Coordinator, Student Assessment and Program Evaluation, Ministry of Education] mentioned the problem to Dave Williams [Curriculum and Resources Branch, Ministry of Education]. Now, these courses are still provincially-approved, but their fate will be determined in a review of all senior electives to be conducted in 1997-8.

Steve Naylor’s report on the Western Consortium also seems to indicate that the government is continuing to support its work, even though B.C. English / Language Arts teachers had concerns about its philosophy of streaming and its lack of focus:

Curriculum Overview Team, Western Consortium, met in April in Edmonton (Steve):
Outcomes: (general, literary, and transactional) had already been created before the meeting. Although they are non-parallel and lack
clarity, they may well become Alberta's English curriculum. An Atlantic Consortium is working on a similar document.

The Ministry of Education's support of the Consortium's Western English Language Arts (W.E.L.A.) document is evident many months later, when Liz Orme sends a letter to Minister of Education Paul Ramsey on December 10, 1997:

I would like to take this opportunity to express our concerns over the decision of the Ministry of Education to have the process of identifying recommended resources for English Language Arts (K-9) guided by its Western English Language Arts (WELA) document rather than the B.C. English Language Arts (BCELA) Integrated Resource Package (IRP).

The letter concludes, "We would welcome an opportunity to meet with Ministry staff to look for solutions to this problem." The B.C.T.E.L.A., as it has so many times before, is offering its services to the Ministry in order to have some input into curriculum and resources. We will see whether or not the Ministry responded to the concerns of the B.C.T.E.L.A. in a few months' time.

In the meantime, there was some good news from the Ministry, according to Liz Orme's president's newsletter of April, 1998:

News from the Ministry: I was recently contacted by Ron Basarab at the Ministry of Education and he gave me some good news about some of our English electives. Three senior English Selected Studies courses, Composition 11, Writing 12, and Journalism 12, will continue to be offered in the 1998-99 school year. Composition 11 will be based on the Composition 11 Curriculum Guide and Resource Book for Teachers 1982, and both Writing 12 and Journalism 12 will be based on the Writing 11 Curriculum Guide 1981.

Along with that, however, came bad news. The Ministry of Education had decided that the P.L.A.P., first introduced by Pat McGeer over twenty years ago, was to become an annual assessment:
PLAP
We appear to be headed in the same direction taken by the United States several years ago. A craze for assessment will bring us, as it brought them, a graph of where we are. It won’t begin to improve anything and could cause harm, as test results can so easily be misunderstood and misused and such testing diverts millions of dollars away from the classroom.... There seems to be a belief that if we test more (PLAP is to be an annual event now), kids will learn more. Wrong. As Eliot Eisner said, at our recent AGM, you don’t fatten a cow by putting it on the scale.

Orme’s comments are interesting in that they anticipate the focus on assessment in B.C. schools that most educators would agree became one of its hallmarks in the following decade.

The P.L.A.P. and the Western Consortium become two of the major foci of the B.C.T.E.L.A. in 1998 and 1999. Orme’s president’s newsletter of July, 1998, informs members that the Ministry of Education, contrary to the advice of English / Language Arts teachers in B.C. “has announced that resource materials rejected by the Western Canadian Protocol Common Curriculum Consortium (WCP) will NOT be considered for use in B.C.” Orme states that this is “problematic” for B.C. teachers because resources they request may be rejected “because an external group decided they didn’t meet the guidelines of a curriculum that isn’t ours in the first place.” We will see that the B.C.T.E.L.A. continues to lobby the government to reverse its decision.

At the same time, the Ministry is seemingly not listening to the B.C.T.E.L.A.’s concerns about the use of the P.L.A.P.; indeed, as the president’s newsletter of October, 1998 reports, the P.L.A.P. may soon be playing a more significant role in assessing B.C. students and schools:
Plans for next year are already underway at the Ministry of Education. Skills in mathematics and problem solving will be added to the current reading and writing assessment. PLAP week this school year is from May 3 to 7, 1999. Although the final shape and time length of the test has yet to be decided, there is talk of making it a five hour (!) examination by simply adding an hour each for the new topics to the current three hour format. Up to half the items from the 1998 PLAP will be repeated on the 1999 assessment in the interest of being able to compare results from year to year. This data collection over time will, it is believed, assist teachers, administrators, schools and districts in the school accreditation process and otherwise help them be accountable.

The B.C.T.E.L.A. is cautiously optimistic, however, that their concerns may be heard, when Liz Orme reports in her January, 1999, newsletter that “Charles Ungerleider, former Associate Dean of the UBC Faculty of Education is now our Deputy Minister of Education. One of his plans is to review the entire PLAP process.”

Concerning the W.C.P. having the power to reject resources for B.C. schools, however, little progress had been made. Just as she had written a letter to Paul Ramsey in 1997, Orme reproduces in her January, 1999, newsletter a copy of the letter she sent to David Williams, Manager, Program Standards and Education Resource Branch, Ministry of Education, outlining teachers’ concerns and characterizing the consortium’s veto power over resources as a “poor decision” on the part of the Ministry of Education:

I am writing to you about my concern with current resource evaluation practices in B.C. It appears to me that B.C.'s Ministry of Education, by allowing the Western Canadian Protocol (WCP) textbook approval process to limit what books will be reviewed for use in B.C., is neglecting its responsibility for thorough in-house text evaluation. I understand that currently this is true only for grades K-10, but because the plan is to extend the policy to include grades 11 and 12 as soon as the WCP completes evaluating relevant texts, it is only a matter of time before all grade levels are affected by this poor decision....

B.C. teachers need to work with texts recommended and selected by other B.C. educators. A small committee of people from four provinces
will not serve us as effectively as a group of local professionals cognizant of our provincial context.

If the Ministry won't review something for potential use simply because the Western Protocol didn't first provide approval, it makes it very difficult for school districts that have no in-house approval process to access new resources and will create additional work for the districts that do have such processes.

...I urge you to reconsider the practice of using the WCP to filter textbooks for B.C. The Ministry of Education should independently review newly published textbooks, thus ensuring the best, most relevant resources are available to the students and teachers of British Columbia.

If the B.C.T.E.L.A. received a response from the Ministry, it is not on file.

Six months later, the B.C.T.E.L.A. was similarly disappointed with the Ministry’s response to its concerns about the P.L.A.P. and its increasing use in measuring students’ achievement. According to the president's June, 1999 newsletter, the Ministry had indeed made some changes, but for the worse:

PLAP, PLAP, Fizz, Fizz

Oh, what a relief it . . . isn't. The Ministry of Education listened to our complaints about the inappropriate blending of program assessment with individual student assessment and, instead of getting rid of the "new" PLAP, simply changed its name. Next year you can expect the annual reading, writing, and numeracy skills test to be called FSA (Foundation Skills Assessment). The MOE also plans a return to tracking school scores and individual student scores as well as district scores. You will see PLAP again also, but in its original guise as a program assessment. Every few years, there will be a science PLAP, a Social Studies PLAP, etc. So - we get two assessments instead of one. Time to take an Alka-Seltzer.

As the decade of the 1990's drew to a close, questions concerning the P.L.A.P. (or its new incarnation, the F.S.A.) and the Western consortium still concerned B.C.T.E.L.A.; but as they had historically, they continued to try to work with Ministry officials in order to affect the curriculum of B.C. schools. In the September, 1999, president's newsletter,
Orme reported, “At our last executive meeting, we had the pleasure of meeting Margaret Haughian, the Ministry’s new Language Arts Coordinator” who “kindly offered to write a few words for this Bulletin.” Haughian states in the newsletter, “I welcome this new challenge and I look forward to working with the English Language Arts teachers of British Columbia.” One of her tasks would be to listen to the continuing concerns of English teachers over the resource issue, which had not yet been resolved:

Another topic of conversation at our last meeting was the Western Protocol English Language Arts Framework Document and the impact it is having on textbook selection for B.C. English teachers.

We heard separately from Jane Gardiner, of the Ministry of Education, on this topic and from Marian Marsh, who works for Oxford University Press and represented BCALMER, the B.C. Association for Learning Materials and Educational Representatives (most of the textbook companies, in other words). The two views on the success of the English Language Arts textbook selection process were very divergent; we hope to publish more information from both perspectives in our January Update. Essentially, however, the Ministry thinks everything is fine while BCALMER, in general, does not.

The decade of the 1990s ended, then, much as it had begun: with the B.C.T.E.L.A. and the Ministry of Education at odds about what is best for the English / Language Arts curriculum in B.C. schools. As curriculum change became the norm throughout the decades of the 1980’s and 1990’s, the B.C.E.T.A./B.C.T.E.L.A. became an organization primarily concerned with curriculum. Their change in name, from the “British Columbia English Teachers’ Association” to the “British Columbia Teachers of English Language Arts” may be indicative of this shift in focus. What had not changed in its forty-one year history, however, was the B.C.T.E.L.A.’s constant struggle for the voices of English teachers in B.C. to be heard, and it continual cautious optimism that soon they would be.

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Conclusion

From S.A.T.E.'s inception in 1959 to the turn of the new century in 2000, the B.C. education system underwent many changes. The Royal Commission of 1960 stated that the major aim of B.C.'s public schools was "that of promoting the intellectual development of the pupils, and that this should be the major emphasis throughout the whole school program" (Report, 1960). In 1989, the year of the next Royal Commission, the Public School Act was revised and so was the mandate for B.C. schools, which was to remain unchanged until after the turn of the century:

The purpose of the British Columbia school system is to enable learners to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy society and a prosperous and sustainable economy.

The philosophical shift from "academic excellence" (Report, 1960) to a more skills-based, instrumental, economic mandate is unmistakable.

The English teachers' association similarly underwent many changes from 1959-2000. Primarily, it changed from an association almost solely concerned with the professional interests of its teachers and in being the united voice of those teachers; to an association which in its later years became increasingly concerned with efforts to influence government policies concerning the English/Language Arts curriculum. A review of its objectives over the decades illustrates this shift.

In S.A.T.E.'s first journal in 1959, its president, John Sutherland, states that the efforts of the S.A.T.E. executive have been concentrated on two objectives: "to help the teachers professionally in the classroom and to help the teachers organize themselves so that they may speak with one voice through their own local bodies on those matters
which they feel need attention.” In its early days, then, S.A.T.E.’s efforts focused on coordinating and uniting the efforts of English teachers throughout the province.

By 1966, the association has already taken on a more militant tone as it responds to new curriculum initiatives implemented by the government. Its president, J. W. Satterthwaite, indicates that he is prepared to lead S.A.T.E.’s “battle” against the Department of Education, as he reports that the association is “at the barricades” and lists three “point of battle” for the S.A.T.E. executive:

1. To prepare a brief on the workload of English teachers for presentation to the Department of Education.
2. To utilize every possible means to make public the state and aims of English teaching in British Columbia.
3. To continue our program of in-service education (this year focusing especially on the new English 11 course).

We can see that S.A.T.E. not only plans to represent the professional interests of its teachers but also that it is responding to government policies concerning class-size and the new English 11 course curriculum instituted by the government. The accompanying shift in tone from 1959 to 1966 is clear.

By 1974, the association, now called the B.C.E.T.A. has adopted a new constitution which outlines an increasing number of objectives:

2.A. To improve the opportunities of students in B.C. schools to experience the widely varied uses of English as a communicative medium through:
2.A.1. advice to school boards and the Department of Education regarding purposeful new developments in English education;
2.A.2. active participation of qualified members on B.C. Teachers’ Federation and on Department of Education committees concerned with matters relating to the teaching of language arts/English;
2.A.3. continuing efforts to improve learning and teaching conditions in the language arts/English classroom
2.B. To provide for professional growth of all language arts/English teachers and instructors from kindergarten to university by:
2.B.1. sponsoring workshops, seminars, meetings and similar activities to inform teachers/instructors of new approaches in English as a communicative medium;
2.B.2. encouraging experiments and projects conducted by teachers/instructors and directed toward improving classroom learning;
2.B.3. supporting the principle that only qualified teachers of English be assigned the responsibility of teaching English in secondary schools.

2.C. To provide an official channel of communication between teachers of language arts/English in B.C. schools and the BCTF, the departments of English/communications in community and technical colleges, the faculties of English and education in the provincial universities, the Department of Education, and the general public.

The goals of the B.C.E.T.A., particularly those concerning teachers’ professional interests, have been expanded and better articulated than in previous decades. It is interesting to note, however, that its first objective is focused on the students, the second is on responding to government “developments in English education” and the rest focus on traditionally “professional” concerns of its teachers. Although the professional interests of English teachers make up the majority of the association’s objectives, the first two objectives anticipate its focus in later years, especially after the Restraint years of the 1980s.

Also interesting is that the language of these objectives is markedly different from that used a decade ago when S.A.T.E. was “sharpening the attack” on the government, being “at the barricades,” and “criticizing” the government. In 1974 they want to “advise,” to sponsor, to encourage, to support: a much more conciliatory tone.

A decade later, the association, now called B.C.T.E.L.A., outlines its mission statement for 1984-85:

The goals of the B.C. Teachers of English Language Arts are to improve the opportunities of students in B.C. schools to experience the widely varied uses of English as a communicative medium; to provide for professional growth of all English Language Arts teachers; and to
provide an official channel of communication between teachers of English Language Arts in B.C. Schools through the B.C.T.F. and the departments and faculties of post-secondary institutions, the Ministry of Education, and the general public.

Again, their three foci are articulated: students, teachers as professionals, and liaison with the Ministry of Education and other groups. Although their mission statement seems to emphasize its role as the "official channel of communication,” the majority of its goals and objectives still focus on its teachers’ professional concerns. According to the "British Columbia English Teachers’ Association Program—1984-85,” the B.C.E.T.A. has eight major objectives:

1. To promote liaison with other specialist associations in Canada and the U.S.
2. To encourage growth in membership among teachers of English and language arts at all levels.
3. To encourage investigation in the teaching of English.
4. To improve the quality of instruction at all levels.
5. To provide relevant information on professional issues.
6. To encourage the formation of new chapters and expansion of existing ones.
7. To develop a committee structure that will respond to the needs of teachers of English.
8. To provide the BCTF and the Ministry of Education with advice on matters affecting English instruction in B.C.

Of the B.C.E.T.A.'s eight goals, five concern its association membership and affiliation(s), two concern English instruction, and only their last goal pertains to effecting changes in curriculum (and even then, its focus is on "instruction” and not "curriculum”).

For each of these objectives, however, the B.C.E.T.A. lists several "Activities" they plan to undertake in order to meet their objectives. Three of these do suggest the B.C.E.T.A.'s involvement in curricular matters: form subcommittees to study particular
concerns; be available for consultation by the Ministry of Education, school boards, universities and colleges regarding new developments in English education; and encourage active participation of qualified members in the B.C.T.F. and the Ministry of Education committees concerned with matters related to teaching English. Also notable is that the tone, much like that of a decade earlier, is more passive than assertive: “form subcommittees,” “be available for consultation,” “encourage active participation.”

However, as curriculum change became the norm throughout the decades of the 1980’s and 1990’s, B.C.T.E.L.A. became an organization primarily concerned with curriculum. Their change in name, from the “British Columbia English Teachers’ Association” to the “British Columbia Teachers of English Language Arts” may be indicative of this shift in focus. It is interesting to compare their goals and objectives from 1999-2000 to those of 1984-85. Their five new goals are

1. To represent the interests of English Language Arts teachers in B.C.
2. To provide service to our members through conferences and publications.
3. To inform the public, (parents, students, business, labour, media) about the English Language Arts Classroom.
4. To promote the needs of English Language Arts students in the areas of media, humanities and technology.
5. To support new and non-specialist English Language Arts teachers.

These five new goals are very interesting. The number one goal has become to “represent the interests” of English teachers; as we shall see by its accompanying “activities,” curriculum concerns are of major interest to the B.C.T.E.L.A. Goal #2 pertains to association concerns, as had four of the 1984-85 eight goals. Goal #3 suggests a new focus for the B.C.T.E.L.A.: perhaps it has learned to appreciate the power of educating many people about the concerns of English teachers, especially during times
when they felt that they or the education system was under attack by the government. Goal #4 seems obvious, but is interesting in that it highlights the fact that none of the 1984-85 goals specifically mentioned students. Goal #5 focuses on supporting new and non-specialist teachers, as both groups were increasing due to Baby Boomers retiring and government cutbacks respectively.

Perhaps even more indicative of the changed focus of the B.C.T.E.L.A., however, are the number and type of “activities” it lists as priorities for 1999/2000. As we saw fifteen years earlier, only three “activities” focused on curriculum or specifically mentioned working with the Ministry of Education. Listed below are seven such “activities” from 1999/2000:

- Advocate the primacy of English Language Arts and literature as essential in the development of critical, thoughtful, and responsible citizens in a democratic society (#1.1).
- Continue discussion and feedback with the Ministry of Education on curriculum, assessment, and instruction (#1.3).
- Participate in the process of the selection of English Language Arts representatives on Ministry of Education committees through the BCTF (#1.4).
- Initiate and/or respond to pedagogical issues such as course modifications, course challenge, equivalency, assessment, modularization, electives, provincial exams, provincial assessments (PLAP and FSA), class size, work load (#1.5).
- Continue to monitor implementation in TPC 12, Communications 11 and 12, Journalism 12, Writing 12 (#1.6).
- Continue to develop and expand the curriculum packages (#2.1).
- Advocate and promote best practice in the teaching of English Language Arts in all areas, including literature, media, humanities, and technology (#4.3).

Not only are there seven “activities” devoted to curriculum instead of three, but we may also note the difference in tone. Whereas fifteen years earlier, the B.C.E.T.A. offered to be “available for consultation” involving curriculum, the 1999/2000
B.C.T.E.L.A. will “advocate,” “continue discussion,” “participate,” “initiate,” “continue to monitor,” “continue to develop and expand,” “advocate and promote.” It seems that during the fifteen years of strained relationships between the teachers and the government, perhaps out of necessity, the association was taking on a more pro-active role in affecting the English / Language Arts curriculum. David Fisher, then B.C.E.T.A. president, saw the beginning of this, when in his February, 1988, newsletter, he stated,

I see a broadening of purpose, a renewed interest in matters outside our own classrooms. I see this in the increase in the number of the L.S.A.’s, the interest expressed in the curriculum review process, and the number of times I’ve had people volunteer to serve on the B.C.E.T.A. executive.

He felt that the B.C.E.T.A. was at a critical time in their history: “either we decide to play a role in shaping the future, or we will be shaped by that future. I’m optimistic we’ll choose the former role.”

He should be pleased.

References


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10: CONCLUSION

Three main themes permeate this study concerning English teachers in British Columbia during the latter part of the twentieth century: their attempts at professionalization, the growth in the political power of the B.C.T.F., and the effects of the B.C. government's changing educational policies concerning secondary English/Language Arts curriculum.

1. The professionalization of B.C. English/Language Arts teachers

One of the goals of the B.C. English teachers' specialist association since its inception has been to increase the professionalism of its teachers based on the belief that this status increased their ability to influence curriculum decisions made by the B.C. government. This study shows that although B.C. English teachers have sometimes been given the opportunity for input into curriculum decisions, they have had limited success in affecting the curriculum of secondary B.C. English/Language Arts classrooms, particularly when the Social Credit government was in power in B.C. Therefore, it may be concluded that the English teachers of this province through their specialist association have not attained the full professional status for which they have been fighting since 1959.
2. The growth in the political power of teacher associations in B.C.

B.C. English teachers as a group have had limited success in increasing their political power. Although they have made advances over the decades in working with the government in an advisory capacity, primarily through their curriculum committee work, teacher input was seldom considered when the government actually made its decisions.

The B.C.T.F., on the other hand, has made some significant advances in political power since its inception. It has made union or "welfare" gains in that it has at various times won bargaining, contract, and pension concessions for its members, sometimes through its affiliations with other labour groups in B.C. It may also have been instrumental in affecting the professionalism of B.C. teachers with its advocating for teacher autonomy and input, and perhaps with its strong ties to members of the board of the B.C. College of Teachers.

There is some evidence of increasing tension between the B.C.T.F. and the English teachers' association from 1959-2000 because of differing ideologies. The B.C.T.F. is a generalist association, and it perceives that its role is to be the voice of every teacher in B.C.; while the English teachers' association is a specialist association, and it perceives that its role is to advance the cause of English/Language Arts teachers collectively. This difference in roles sometimes caused the two groups to conflict; for example, while the B.C.T.F. lobbied the government for decentralization of education and individual teacher autonomy, the English teachers' association felt that some centralization and common content in English were necessary. Consequently, during some of its battles with the government, the English teachers' association felt unsupported by the B.C.T.F.
3. The effects of the B.C. government’s changing educational policies in secondary English/Language Arts classrooms

This study reveals that from 1959-2000 the B.C. government made many significant changes to the English/Language Arts curriculum in B.C. secondary schools. The changes were affected by many factors, two of the most prominent being economics and philosophical shifts not only in Canada, but also in the world. The overall effect of the government’s changing educational policies from 1959-2000 has been a philosophical shift in its primary mandate for schools: a shift from academic excellence to economic instrumentalism. There has been an accompanying shift in the English/Language Arts curriculum from a content-based to a skills-based approach.

This study also documents the typical process of curriculum change specific to secondary English/Language Arts in B.C. from 1959-2000. A pattern that emerges is that of the government announcing a change in curriculum, then teachers being given an opportunity for input into the changes, and then of the government making whatever changes it sees fit, with little seeming evidence of advice from the teachers. Overall, the government’s changing educational policies from 1959-2000 have had a tremendous effect on the curriculum of secondary English/Language Arts classrooms in B.C. schools and these have happened independent of teacher input.

Recommendations

As a result of this investigation it may be concluded that English/Language Arts teachers in B.C. may need to consider a different approach to attaining the goal of professionalization. They may either subscribe to one of the newer definitions of
professionalism, several of which suggest that to be a professional teacher means to be a skilled implementer of curriculum developed by others; or they may persist in their belief that professionalism implies having significant input into B.C. government curriculum decisions.

If they choose the former, conflicts between the government and the English teachers' association may indeed cease, or at least significantly lessen, as most of their battles in the past have been around this issue. If the passion of the English/Language Arts teachers in this study to fight for their beliefs about curriculum is any indication, however, this is unlikely to happen.

If they choose the latter, the English teachers' association needs to find more effective ways of influencing curriculum decisions in B.C. schools. It may need to strengthen its ties with the universities, as traditionally the two groups have had a strong professional working relationship. It may need to strengthen its ties with the parents, perhaps through the Parent Advisory Councils at each school. Parents need to see English/Language Arts teachers, and not the government, as the curriculum experts. Perhaps when the opportunities arise for English/Language Arts teachers to develop local courses, for example, they need to seize the opportunity and promote their successes to parents and the community. The B.C.T.E.L.A. may also need to work more closely with other English/Language Arts associations across Canada to further their collective causes. It may also explore the possibility of working with other provincial specialists' associations within B.C.: if teachers from all disciplines in B.C. work together to establish themselves as curriculum specialists, they may have a stronger voice in affecting first public opinion, and then the government. English teachers' association
members may also need to become more politically active, if not in the B.C.T.F., which has historically had some success in furthering its agenda with the government, then in the government itself: perhaps English/Language Arts teachers and/or their association needs to change the government's historical practice of curriculum change from the inside out. The association certainly has to make its concerns about curriculum change known to a broader range of English teachers in B.C.: a continuing theme over the decades has been the lack of membership in the English teachers' association. It seems clear that despite continuing efforts of the association from 1959-2000, it has had limited success in influencing the government's decisions. Something has to change.

**Future Research**

Given that few studies have been done on the efforts of teachers' associations to have input into curriculum change in B.C. specifically or in Canada generally, more work needs to be done in this area in order to determine whether or not the English/Language Arts teachers' situation in B.C. is unique.

Studies could also be done comparing generalist and specialist groups both provincial and national, as there is some evidence that these two groups may have differing ideologies and therefore different approaches to affecting changes in curriculum.

Most of the educational conflicts in B.C. from 1959-2000 were between the teachers and the Social Credit government, as they had significantly different philosophies about the purpose of education. A study of teacher-government relationships across Canada could correlate teacher unrest to the ruling political party.
This type of study may reveal to what degree the conflicts are caused by fundamental philosophical differences between the two groups.

More work also needs to be done within Canada on similarities and differences between provincial education systems. The relationship between teachers and the government in B.C., for example, has been and continues to be extremely volatile compared to other provinces. The reasons for this animosity need to be explored if we want this relationship to improve.

In conclusion, the study of teachers’ input into curriculum change in B.C. and in Canada has been under-reported, and as a result, there is a lot more to be learned about this important part of educational history. It is a field that invites further research, especially as the role of teachers is being redefined, as curriculum continues to be re-written across Canada, and as the process of globalization continues to fundamentally change the interaction among culture, language, and education.