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**Globalization, Professionalization, and Educational Politics in British Columbia**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Globalization is decried by some people as the spectre of capitalism on the eve of the new millennium and extolled by others as the inevitable consequence of removing the fetters that restrict capitalisms engine, competition. Among the most concerted efforts of those devoted to the cause of globalization is the elimination of restrictions on trade among nations, including the removal of restrictions on the flow of goods and services among nations as well as the free flow of capital and labour. The harmonization of occupational requirements across national boundaries is aimed at facilitating the free flow of labour. Because harmonization is unlikely to mean adoption of the most rigorous professional standards, globalization threatens to erode professional status, autonomy, and working conditions achieved in those jurisdictions.

Despite the fact that they are public employees in a bureaucratic institution, teachers in British Columbia, Canada, have achieved a measure of professional autonomy and influence unparalleled in other North American jurisdictions. This achievement is in part a consequence of conflict between the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) and successive provincial Social Credit governments, groups representing divergent views about education, the part education plays in the lives of citizens, about the relationship between citizens and the state, and about globalization.

The teacher professionalism that developed in British Columbia during the past 25 years was, in part, a consequence of an ideological struggle between a teachers organization animated by the spirit of social reconstruction through education and a government animated by the spirit of unfettered individualism and entrepreneurial capitalism. As this paper will show, attempts to harmonize the requirements for teacher certification in British Columbia with the requirements of other jurisdictions under NAFTA, while consistent with an ideology of individualism and laissez faire capitalism, are likely to meet with significant opposition from British Columbias teachers, who are led by an organization committed to its own ideology of democratic social justice and who enjoy professional status, autonomy, and working conditions which teachers in other jurisdictions do not.

**SOCIAL CREDIT AND THE BRITISH COLUMBIA TEACHERS'FEDERATION:  
CONFLICTING CONCEPTIONS OF THE STATE, CITIZENS, AND EDUCATION**

As with the debate about the desirability of globalization, the conflict between the BCTF and Social Credit is primarily ideological. Social Credits conservative ideology places primacy upon individuals, viewing them as autonomous, albeit unequal, moral agents who are responsible for the consequences which befall them. It accepts inequality and emphasizes the individual's own resources and resourcefulness. According to this ideology, inequality is a natural condition affecting all human relations and should be preserved to ensure social and economic progress. Equality is incompatible with progress because it is through competition among individuals, each seeking to increase his or her share of scarce resources, that progress is achieved. Personal denial and self-control are necessary for one to progress economically and socially. Those who possess resources and use them wisely win competitive advantages over those who are profligate and ill-disciplined. The competitive forces which produce progress are naturally occurring conditions which affect all human beings. As such, it is futile for the state to attempt to alter them and immoral for the individual to resist them.

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.

These differences came to the fore in 1967, when the Social Credit government of Premier W.A.C. Bennett passed legislation, amending the Public Schools Act which enabled the provincial government to exert tighter control over school board finances. The British Columbia Teachers' Federation responded by mounting a public relations campaign to inform members and the public about the consequences of the government's legislation. When the government called an election in 1969, the BCTF drew upon its special levy to mount what was called the "apple" campaign, an effort to inform the public about the effects of the government's policies regarding school financing. Although the campaign was promoted as "non-partisan" and even supported in its early stages by the Premier and other members of the Social Credit Party, the campaign was soon perceived as a direct attack on the Social Credit government The Social Credit party was re-elected with an increased majority.

When he addressed the BCTF annual general meeting in 1969, Tom Hutchinson, the Federation's president, argued that:

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...

What Hutchinson could not foresee was that 20 years of conflict and struggle would bring teachers increased authority in most, if not all, of the areas he mentioned.

The conflict between the BCTF and Social Credit was exacerbated by the perception that teachers were responsible for the electoral defeat of the Social Credit government in 1972. Teacher political activism at that time can be attributed to the inability of the BCTF to influence the Social Credit government of W.A.C. Bennett on a variety of issues, including compulsory membership in the BCTF, salaries, pension benefits, and the use of referenda to decide wage settlements.

One of the factors considered important in determining professional status is the ability to affect the ethical behaviour of the members of the professional group. Compulsory membership in the BCTF had been established in the Public Schools Act in 1947 to enable the profession to control the ethical behaviour of its members. The inclusion of compulsory membership in the Act was seen as one step toward the achievement of full professional status. Thus it was not surprising that the Federation responded negatively when the Social Credit government of W.A.C. Bennett introduced legislation to eliminate automatic membership in the BCTF and prohibit teachers from serving as school trustees anywhere in the province. Bennett was concerned about teachers serving as trustees on school boards because local boards bargained teacher salaries. The prohibition against teachers serving as local school trustees was eventually withdrawn, but compulsory membership in the Federation was removed through an amendment to the Public School Act. However, of the 22,000 teachers in B.C. at the time, only 69 withdrew from or failed to join the Federation.

A proposal to limit teacher salary increases and require a special referendum within jurisdictions which proposed to exceed the limit imposed on local school board budgets by the government was introduced in 1971. A self-confessed moderate, BCTF president Adam Robertson intimated that teachers might respond to the government's proposals with a "fight-to-the-finish" strike. The day after Robertson led a five person delegation to Victoria to meet with Education Minister Brothers to discuss 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.

The government pursued its attempts to place limits on teacher salaries by publishing a newspaper advertisement purporting to show that, while the consumer price index had increased 51.4 per cent between 1951 and 1971, teacher salaries had increased 256.1 per cent. The government's legislation was approved on March 25, 1972. The BCTF responded by forming the Teachers' Political Action Committee and asking each of its members to donate one day's pay to its efforts to drive Social Credit out of office. By May, Education Minister Donald Brothers said that he expected that the BCTF would spend a significant portion of the $1.25 million it expected to raise to unseat him in the next election.

When an interim restraining order was issued preventing the BCTF from collecting and distributing funds to oppose the government, members of the BCTF re-formed the Teachers' Political Action Committee as a separate organization. A joint statement by its co-chairs Gary Onstad and Bill Broadley read: "we believe the Social Credit policies in education and financing of education are disastrous for the children and youth of the province." The committee pledged to "carry on the former BCTF efforts to have another government elected." The Social Credit government was defeated on August 30, 1972 and the New Democratic government restored compulsory membership in the BCTF and its right to collectively bargain salaries and bonuses for its members.

When Federation president Jim MacFarlan addressed the annual general meeting of the BCTF in 1974, he referred to the discussion and debate about the nature of the provincial education system that had been taking place as a consequence of the governments study of education. He argued that the Federation should articulate its views about the kind of school system the province should have. A point of departure, said MacFarlan, should be to examine the traditional function of education - 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. "The school system," he said, "has been and continues to be an instrument for the inculcation of traditional, moral, political, ethical, and social values - ideological views if you like - in the minds of children."

MacFarlan worried that some of the apparent critics of the ". . . authoritarian, conformist, technological society" - writers like Fritz Perls and Ivan Illich - would unwittingly abet a return to " . . . the unfettered individualism, to the worst aspect of the laissez-faire idea, to the concept of absolute sanctity of the rights of the individual, regardless of the rights of the society...." MacFarlan called upon the membership of the BCTF to reject a return to the " . . . traditional authoritarian type of school . . . " and 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."

At its annual general meeting in 1974, the BCTF adopted a statement of purpose for public education and a set of goals reflecting the values to which its members subscribed. The statement of purpose read:

The broad prime 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 responsibility within a democratic society.

Included among the 10 goals articulated by the Federation was the goal to . . . ensure through the development of democratic processes professional autonomy for teachers and protection from capricious or malicious action, unjust regulations and the abuse of authority.

**TEACHING PROFESSION ACT PROPOSED**

In November 1974, following five years of study and debate, the Federation made a submission to the Minister of Education proposing a "teaching profession act." The submission, authorized by the members of the Federation assembled for its 1973 annual general meeting, was produced by a task force guided by a number of assumptions. Among them was the assumption that 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 a 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." The government took no action on the BCTF's proposal. The government changed in 1975, returning the Social Credit Party to power. The document was submitted to the new deputy minister of education in 1976 and to the Minister of Education in 1977.

**BCTF MAKES FULL BARGAINING RIGHTS ITS FIRST PRIORITY**

In November 1980, Larry Kuehn, then first vice president of the BCTF, wrote an article in The Vancouver Sun responding to an article about teacher dissatisfaction with the Federation that had been published a few days earlier. Kuehn said that the existence of the conditions under which teachers worked was a "damning indictment of the BCTF, as a bargaining agent for teachers, for failing to protect its members." He went on to explain 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.

The BCTF would demand the rights that would allow it to support and protect its members. The BCTF, no longer content with bargaining only salaries and bonuses, made the attainment of full bargaining its first priority and established a Bargaining Division, replacing its Learning Conditions and Economic Welfare Divisions. Teachers made modest gains in bargaining in 1980 and even more substantial gains in 1981. A variety of agreements included provisions about lunch time supervision, non-instructional time, personnel practices, as well as an average salary increase of 17.25 per cent. In February 1982, the government of British Columbia announced a two-year restraint program for all sectors of the public economy, including education.

Larry Kuehn began his presidential address to the BCTF delegates assembled for the Federation's annual general meeting by asking "What's the news?" He then answered his own question by reciting a list of school closures, teaching jobs eliminated, and programs reduced or eliminated. Throughout his speech Kuehn did not stray from his theme of governmental parsimony and interference in education. He closed his address on an increasingly familiar note:

Ten years ago another Social Credit government found out that they could push the teaching profession only so far and it paid the consequences. They do not seem to have learned their lesson. Teachers have always sacrificed and will continue to sacrifice much for the sake of children, but we will not sacrifice our children's future on the altar of Social Credit edifices and injustices. Let them beware.

A year later, in April 1983, delegates attending the BCTF's annual general meeting voted 378 to 267 in favour of a resolution calling on the organization to seek legislative changes enabling them to be included in the B.C. Labour Code.

The Social Credit Party was re-elected with a majority in May, 1983. In the throne speech, delivered in June, the Lieutenant-Governor reiterated three tenets in the philosophical position advanced by the Social Credit government: the necessity of personal denial and self-control as means of achieving higher productivity; the inefficiency of the public sector brought about by excessive size and regulation; and the belief that growth and development can be achieved through private sector activities.

The next Lieutenant-Governor developed the same themes in his opening speech to Parliament in February, 1984, describing as "significant progress" reductions in the size of government, the streamlining of public agencies and the transfer of functions from the public to the private sector. The philosophical disposition of the government articulated was clearly evident in the legislation introduced in the 1983 and 1984 sessions; legislative changes which seemed designed to reduce the power of organized labour. Although it eventually died on the order paper, the Public Service Labour Relations Amendment Act sought to remove the right of government employees to negotiate job security, promotions, job reclassifications, transfers and other working conditions, including the number of hours of work. The following bills became law in September and October 1983: The Public Sector Restraint Act enabled employers in the public sector to fire employees when their contracts expired; The Compensation Stabilization Amendment Act extended public sector wage controls, established guidelines for wage settlements (- 5 per cent to + 5 per cent) and made the employer's ability to pay the principal criterion for adjudicating wage settlements; The Employment Standards Amendment Act removed certain employment standards from all collective bargaining agreements; and The Pension (Public Service) Amendment Act altered the funding of public service pension plans by increasing the unfunded liability of such plans.

**BRITISH COLUMBIA COLLEGE OF TEACHERS ESTABLISHED**

In 1987, the government proclaimed two pieces of legislation that radically altered relationships among teachers and between teachers and their employers. The Teaching Profession Act (1987) 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. The government also removed the legal recognition that was given to compulsory membership in the British Columbia Teachers' Federation. Under previous legislation, every person who was a teacher on November 29, 1973 or thereafter was required to be or become a member of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation as a condition of employment. By establishing the College and removing the historical recognition of the BCTF, the government attempted to separate the professional concerns of teachers from their economic concerns.

Following its 1974 mandate to take a broad view of education, the BCTF adopted positions about issues which were perceived by some of its own members to be beyond the professional purview of the organization, setting the BCTF apart from medical and legal professional organizations in British Columbia. Given the explicitly partisan stance of the Federation toward the Social Credit government and its political orientation toward the issues it favoured, when the government's philosophy of privatization suggested that it should rid itself of the branch responsible for certification, it did so in a way that would prevent the BCTF from exerting direct control over entry to the profession, professional preparation, and the judgment of competence.

**TEACHERS PERMITTED TO UNIONIZE**

In addition, the government permitted teachers to organize under the terms of the Industrial Relations Act (1987) and to expand their bargaining rights. Principals were now considered to be administrative officers responsible for managing schools and excluded from membership in the BCTF.

The act contained in its statement of purpose sentiments which were radically different from the sentiments of previous legislation. Historically the purpose of such legislation had been to achieve harmony in industrial relations. However, instead of harmonious relations between workers and employers, the Act stated that it was intended to secure " . . .the rights of individuals and the rights and obligations of the parties . . . and recognizing the desirability for employers and employees to achieve and maintain good working conditions as participants in and beneficiaries of a competitive market economy . . . ." With the Act, economic interests and individual rights rather than social harmony became the animating force in industrial relations and in the relations between teachers and their employers. In effect, the Act changed the emphasis from the collective interests of labour to the interests of the individual as circumscribed by provincial economic conditions.

The Minister of Education announced the provisions of the legislation at a meeting with superintendents, secretary treasurers and teacher association presidents. He stated that, in offering teachers the option of forming an association or unionizing, the government was responding to requests from some teachers that they be granted expanded bargaining rights and from others who wished to see themselves as professionals. The inference was that unionism and professionalism were incompatible.

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.

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.

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 BCTF The Federation focused almost exclusively on what it perceived to be an attempt by an ideological adversary to dismantle the BCTF.

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.

**BCTF SEEKS CONTROL OF THE B.C. COLLEGE OF TEACHERS**

The membership of the College Council, the governing body of the British Columbia College of Teachers, was designed to include 15 members elected by teachers and five members appointed by government of whom two would be representatives of Cabinet, two representatives of the Minister of Education, and one representative of the deans of education. To ensure that persons sympathetic to its point of view were elected to the College Council, the BCTF identified and endorsed candidates in each of the 15 zones from which the teacher members would be elected. In each zone, the Federations' endorsed candidates were successful. Bill Broadley, a former President of the BCTF, was elected Chairperson of the College Council and Debbie Gregg, a teacher activist from Coquitlam, was elected Vice Chairperson. The Council hired Doug Smart, a teacher from Prince George and former Vice President of the BCTF, as the Registrar of the College.

**SOCIAL CREDIT GOVERNMENT ADVANCES ITS VALUES IN EDUCATION**

On September 1, 1989, the Government of British Columbiaœs new School Act was proclaimed. The Act began with a preamble which contained the government's "mandate" statement for education. The preamble said:

. . . 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 mandate statement was an issue of contention between the BCTF and the government. The BCTF favoured a statement of purpose for public schooling that it had adopted in 1974:

The broad prime 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.

In addition to the preamble, the legislation contained clear statements of the Social Credit ideology of choice based on competition. For example, the Act sanctioned home schooling and provided home schoolers with access to textbooks, materials, and assessment devices of the public school. Implicit in support for home schooling was the notion that everyone can teach; the government posed no test of the competence of home schoolers. Legal recognition of home schooling was simply an extension of the government's efforts to provide alternatives to public education. By funding private schools, the government had created increased competition between public and private schools, reducing the impediment that economics imposed upon people who wanted private schooling but who might not be able to afford it.

Public funding of private education was opposed by the BCTF because it provided public funds to those who were not publicly accountable and had the potential for decreasing public school revenues. Furthermore, the BCTF had adopted as policy [47.B.01.8(a)] that teacher training for certification in the public schools should be taken in accredited institutions and all practica should be completed in public schools.

**TEACHER PROFESSIONALIZATION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA IN CONTEXT**

Despite the ideological gulf between teachers and the Social Credit government, teachers secured from Social Credit many, if not all, of the elements Tom Hutchinson identified in 1969 as central to their professional authority. In creating a College of Teachers, the Teaching Profession Act gave teachers control over entry to the profession, the preparation of its members, and the judgment of their competence. In permitting certification under the labour code, Social Credit gave the British Columbia Teachers' Federation the ability to bargain the material conditions and terms of the employment of teachers, including their professional autonomy.

By creating the College of Teachers, the Social Credit government may have unintentionally provided one of the most effective obstacles to the deprofessionalization occurring in the United States and Britain. In the former, alternative certification processes enable people to teach without benefit of professional course work or practica and, in the latter, teacher education has been removed from institutions of higher education. By vesting in the B.C. College of Teachers responsibility for certification and discipline and the right of review of teacher education programs, the government provided teachers with the legal and organizational basis for resisting incursions to their professionalism.

**BRITISH COLUMBIA TEACHERS RESIST GLOBALIZATION**

Given their ideological predilections, it is not surprising that British Columbiaœs teachers are concerned about globalization and have taken steps to resist incursions upon their autonomy. In May, 1993 representatives of the British Columbia College of Teachers met with the Minister of Education of the New Democratic government to discuss the implications of the North American Free Trade Agreement. According to the analysis of officials in the Ministry of Education, there would be no requirement to move toward harmonizing the requirements for teacher certification. A month later, the President of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation wrote the Minister of Education expressing grave concern about the Ministry's analysis, arguing that the Federation's view was:

the intention of those who drafted NAFTA which now is, or is about to become, the supreme law of the land in this country is to have public education, including certification and all of the other relevant matters pertaining to the provision of professional services, covered by the treaty.

The letter urges that the Minister and her cabinet colleagues to indicate to the Federal government:

that the infringement on provincial rights, including the right to control public education; the serious threat to the Canadian economy; and the loss of sovereignty contained in the agreement means that the NAFTA agreement is unacceptable to the government of British Columbia.

Thus far, the provincial government has not responded to the Federation.

Pressures for the harmonization of requriements for professional certification to ensure the mobility of labour are not entirely international. The Deputy Minister of Education recently requested that the British Columbia College of Teachers share its perspective with her concerning the implementation of the Labour Mobility Chapter of the National Agreement on Internal Trade as it applies to teachers. In its response to the Deputy Minister, the British Columbia College of Teachers enunciated the following position: The College plays an important role in ongoing efforts to raise standards of teacher education. Within British Columbia, the College has the power to approve teacher education programs which lead to certification.

The College also has the responsibility to cooperate with teacher education institutions in the design and evaluation of these programs. The standards applied to the preparation of teachers within the province have changed over time. This means that the preparation of some applicants for certification from outside British Colubmia may be deficient in some respects. The Council believes that it is important that the College continue to evaluate applications for certification from the perspective of our current standards.

Larry Kuehn, former president of the BCTF and currently its Director of Research, is among the teacher activists who have written about free-trade and globalization. In Pandoras Box: Corporate Power, Free Trade and Canadian Education, Kuehn and his co- author have written:

Although misleadingly described as trade deals, neither the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement nor NAFTA are primarily about trade in the conventional sense. Rather, they are about establishing up (sic) a new legal, regulatory and investment framework for international business -- one which will protect corporate interests and guarantee a stable business climate through imposing new, and permanent, restrictions on future government in Canada and Mexico . . . .

Both deals are also about advancing the commercialization of our society: transforming culture, intellectual life and a wide variety of public programs and institutions into commodities whose value and, in some cases, very existence is determined in the marketplace.

However, due to its broadened scope . . . NAFTA is much more of an assault on Canadas mixed economy and its public traditions, including education, that the FTA.

Kuehn advocates for the development of an institution to counter the North American Free Trade Commission, one which can œ. . . monitor the proposals and actions of the NAFTA commission as they affect education and the social and economic context within which education is based. In an injunction to other Canadian education activists, Kuehn writes:

In the face of globalization we must not let ourselves be overwhelmed. We must keep focused on the politics of possibility, taking the individual and the collective actions that are true to our ideals as educators -- actions that support individual development and social justice for our students . . . and the society we share.

It is activists like Kuehn who continue to provide leadership to the members who make up the BCTF. The involvement of Kuehn and like-minded individuals among the leadership in the BCTF and the BCCT make resistance to globalization and attempts to harmonize the requirements for teacher certification in British Columbia with the requirements of other jurisdictions under the National Agreement on Internal Trade or the North American Free Trade Agreement a likely feature of educational politics in British Columbia for the foreseeable future.