THE LABOUR HISTORY ASSOCIATION

BRITISH COLUMBIA TEACHERS' FEDERATION
105 - 2235 BURRARD STREET
VANCOUVER, B.C. V6J 3H9

NEWSLETTER

ISSN: 0703-1238

Editor: Tom Morton

January 1980

In Memory of Al Parkin

The following is the text of a service delivered by George North in memory of Al Parkin, 68, who died in Vancouver on Saturday, October 27, 1979. The service, attended by over 125 friends, was held on November 3 in the Ironworkers' Hall in Vancouver.

Al Parkin has brought clarity and understanding with his incisive analysis, his unparalleled mastery of language, and his crisp clear manner of speaking and writing. Al was without question an outstanding editor and easily the finest labor journalist it has been my privilege to know. It was not only a natural and great talent that made him such a fine journalist but his experiences as a worker, as a union organizer, as a scholar and as an educator among his fellow workers and as a teacher of children and young adults. It was this tremendous link between theory and practice that made his writing so relevant, that gave it such an impact. Al had only scorn for those ivory-tower philosophers who offered gratuitous advice to working people. The term "scissorbill" springs to mind.

One of my first experiences with him came when I was named the editor of the *756 Review*, published by the Aeronautical Lodge 756, which Tommy Parkin and a number of other people here remember, a local of the International Association of Machinists. This was during the war in the early 40's. My experience with newspapers was less than minimal; I was a reader, not a writer. Al agreed to initiate me and I took a bus across town with a bag full of notes, clippings and the like in one hand, and a big old black Underwood in the other. I recall trudging through the snow the two blocks or so past the end of the street-car line, the typewriter getting heavier by the minute. That was my first day at school with the person I regarded as the master craftsman, and if that month's edition of the *756 Review* was one of our best it was because Al had played a major part in its production. His help in this case was typical, he was always available to advise, to assist many others besides myself.

Ernie Dalskog will tell you about Al's years as a IWA builder and a *B.C. Lumber Worker* editor. I want to recall just one aspect of his early years, his brief association with *The Fisherman* paper as an editor. His influence on the editorials and the news stories was clear even without a by-line to identify the author. Few will remember the 1938 salmon-seiners' strike that helped pave the way to union agreements in the fishing industry but here are a couple of paragraphs of Al's story on that particular event:

'For a few short minutes whiles a bright September sun broke through fog banks, Vancouver's harbour and thousands of on-lookers witnessed a rare sight, sixty powerful seineboats with a complement of 420 men, diesels pounding and whistles screaming, forging their way through the tides in the First Narrows towards the docks in perfect naval formation, two flag ships leading the long line which stretched from Lions Gate Bridge to Campbell Avenue." and in a few minutes, "crews were streaming toward Union headquarters for a mass meeting, but not before the entire fleet had swung in close to the Gore Avenue docks and given the offices of the Canadian Fishing Company a derisive toot on the whistles which sounded to listeners like one mass Bronx cheer."

This brief part of the story is labor reporting at its colorful best. The 1946 IWA strike was a major victory for woodworkers, in fact, for the whole labor movement. Al wasn't content simply to record the victory but drew lessons from the strike. First, he said, "negotiations are not an end in themselves. To be fully successful, negotiations must be backed by the widest kind of union activity, including strong and militant picket lines and the conducting of mass political struggles which bring the strike message to the people as a whole and enlist their support behind the strike demands." Second, "When workers are forced to take strike action to defend their living standards, they inevitably run up against not only the opposition of the employers but of the government and the whole state apparatus." As a current footnote, Canada's postal workers can testify to Al's statements of many years ago.

Almost as a postscript nearly 30 years later, Al explained to Co-op Radio's Howie Smith that "Many people wonder, especially nowadays, why workers fight for trade unions and they cling to them so tenaciously. They simply don't realize it wasn't just wages we were after, it was democracy. We wanted to be in a position to tell the boss what they wanted in reasonable terms without him firing us for some puny little excuse."

Al and his wife Anne were in Europe in 1967-1968 and went back again in late 1976 remaining there until Al's illness brought them home a few months ago.

The journal he kept is rich in penetrating observations, descriptive passages, all of them revealing a deep sense of history. One of them I believe Harry will quote. Al writes in his journal of the "racial tolerance of Paris, a city that gave birth to the French Revolution and pushed all of Europe, except Spain forward toward human freedom. A city," in Al's words, "whose citizens above all others in the world will take to the streets to support a fight for some great social benefit or issue. The city that does not practise tolerance among its citizens but is simply tolerant. Indeed, one gets the impression that most Parisians don't even think of being tolerant."

And he sees not the historical drama in the ruins of Castle Conway in Wales. "I see," Al wrote, "only the mindless brutality, the inhuman ignorance of the savage barons who built and peopled them and who prevented Britain from realizing her own renaissance much earlier than it did eventuate. Monuments like Conway Castle should be maintained but the orientation should be to remind us of the meanness of the human spirit if allowed to express itself in individualist, antisocial ways, not on the so-called glories of the past."

Al started his second career just over 25 years ago, returning to school to get his degree, compressing into two years what many fail to accomplish in many more. He became an elementary school teacher in Vancouver and swiftly played a significant part in the Vancouver Elementary Teachers' Association and through it, in the B.C. Teachers' Federation. He held rather strongly the view that teachers are workers and the federation is their union. Although it has not come to pass, Al was always convinced that teachers belonged in the labor movement. He became editor of the *VESTA News* establishing it as a highly respected journal, outstanding in both form and content. It couldn't be otherwise with Al as editor. Al served variously as vice-president, as geographical representative and on his school staff committee. He did all those things in spite of a body weakened by tuberculosis and the consequent loss of a lung.

His fellow teachers at Kingford Smith Elementary and latterly at Hastings Elementary remember him fondly as a friend and an outstanding teacher. The current president of the B.C. Teachers' Federation, Al Blakey, recalls Al Parkin as a person of principled integrity, always holding an honest, forthright position respected by others as he respected their views. And what of his students; how do they see Al Parkin? A letter arrived in my office yesterday addressed to Anne Parkin. It came from one of Al's Grade 7 students who is now in her first year of teaching at Port Hardy. I would like to read a few excerpts from that letter:

"Your husband," she writes to Anne, "rarely raised his voice at any child. He had an uplifting way of treating each youngster with the respect and maturity that one gives to an adult. One never got the feeling that punishment was being given. Mr. Parkin had a subtle way of appealing to every child's common sense and sense of responsibility. Although he had a large oral vocabulary, all of us had no trouble in understanding him. The maturity of the words seemed to make us feel older. Thus he prompted us to behave more responsibly. He have us every opportunity to practise decision making. I have never experienced a more democratic classroom."

And in specific terms on her own life, she writes that "Mr. Parkin inspired me to have three goals. The first was to be a writer, a dream that has never left me. The second was to be as good a teacher as Mr. Parkin, one who truly listened to children and respected them as sensible people. I began my first term of teaching this year and I still hope to become as effective in that profession as Mr. Parkin was. The third goal that Mr. Parkin inspired was to keep talking, writing, communicating—somehow to point out problems and work toward improving people's lives. Mr. Parkin was never aggressive in encouraging this. He simply gave his calm assurance that this was a good thing for everyone to do. Most teachers have at least one minor little enemy amongst their students but everyone in my class of 7th graders liked Mr. Parkin very much. Whenever we happen to reunite, we still talk about him. Mrs. Parkin, your husband was a good man. If he had such an effect on me, imagine how good a teacher and friend he was to hundreds of other children he taught. I know I will always remember him."

And so will we all.

Statistics on Unions

Tom Morton with thanks to Jim MacFarlan for sources and ideas.

PRE-TEST—POST-TEST
TRADE UNIONS OF CANADA

1. What percentage of paid workers in British Columbia belong to a union?
a. 23% b. 45% c. 65% d. 79% e. 89%

2. Which of the following areas has the highest percentage of workers belong to a trade union?
a. British Columbia
b. Ontario
c. Quebec
d. the Prairies
e. Maritimes
f. United States

3. The majority of Canadian unions are members of what national organization?
a. Confederation of Nation Trade Unions. (CNTU)
b. Confederation of Canadian Unions (CCU)
c. Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)

4. What percentage of Canadian union members belong to international unions, unions with members in both Canada and the United States (as separate from strictly Canadian unions)?
a. 13% b. 29% c. 40% d. 47% e. 72%

5. Which of the following countries has the highest percentage of workers belonging to a trade union?
a. Australia
b. Canada
c. Sweden
d. United Kingdom
e. West Germany

6. Which of these countries has the lowest percentage of union workers.
a. Australia
b. Canada
c. Sweden
d. United Kingdom
e. West Germany

7. Which of the following industries has the highest percentage of workers belonging to a trade union in Canada?
a. forestry
b. mining
c. public administration (government)
d. finance (banking)

8. Which has the lowest percentage?
a. forestry
b. mining
c. public administration (government)
d. finance (banking)

9. What percentage of British Columbia male workers are union members?
a. 31% b. 51% c. 64% d. 78% e. 92%

10. What percentage of B.C. female workers are union members?
a. 31% b. 51% c. 64% d. 78% e. 92%

ANSWERS

1. b
2. a
3. c
4. d
5. c
6. b
7. c
8. d
9. b
10. a

STATISTICS TABLES

Tables 1 to 4 come from the *B.C. Labour Directory*, 1978. Tables 5 to 8 are from *The Current Industrial Relations Scene in Canada, 1978*, Industrial Relations Centre, Queen's University.

TABLE 1 UNION MEMBERSHIP IN BRITISH COLUMBIA, 1940-1978

Year	B.C. Union Membership	Percentage Change from Previous Year	Total Paid Workers[1]	Organized as a Percentage of Total Paid Workers
1940	44,867			
1941	50,360	12.2		
1942	61,292	21.7	213,000	28.8
1943	91,618	49.5	231,000	39.7
1944	107,402	17.2	266,000	40.4
1945	110,045	2.5	283,000	38.9
1946	108,125	-1.8	322,000	33.6
1947	119,258	10.3	334,000	35.7
1948	135,326	13.5	338,000	40.0
1949	142,989	5.7	340,000	42.0
1950	146,259	2.3	335,000	43.6
1951	157,287	7.5	342,000	46.0
1952	170,036	8.1	362,000	47.0
1953	174,894	2.9	360,000	48.6
1954	178,533	2.1	363,000	49.2
1955	186,951	4.7	381,000	49.1
1956	191,952	2.7	414,000	46.4
1957	216,070	12.6	430,000	50.2
1958	233,972	8.3	422,000	55.4
1959	219,279	-6.3	438,000	50.1
1960	215,437	-1.8	430,000	50.1
1961	221,946	3.0	438,000	50.7
1962	216,685	-2.4	461,000	47.0
1963	222,138	2.5	488,000	45.5
1964	226,690	2.1	519,000	43.7
1965	237,864	4.9	550,000	43.2
1966	256,241	7.7	588,000	43.6
1967	273,946	6.9	626,000	43.8
1968	287,502	5.0	654,000	44.0
1969	292,842	1.9	706,000	41.5
1970	310,222	5.9	713,000	43.5
1971	316,587	2.1	743,000	42.6
1972	332,091	4.9	784,000	42.4
1973	350,175	5.5	850,000	41.2
1974	395,846	13.0	895,000	44.2
1975	401,608	1.5	919,000	43.7
1976	426,723	6.3	950,000	44.9
1977	439,730	3.0	974,000	45.1
1978	450,802	2.5	1,003,000[2]	44.9

1. Source: "The Labour Force," Statistics Canada, Ottawa, Cat. 71-001 (monthly). Includes Agricultural Workers in 1976, 1977 and 1978.
2. Estimated because the figures for August through December were not available at time of publication.

Questions

1. In what year did union membership show its largest growth rate (as a percent) from the previous year?
2. How do you account for the high rate of increase at that time?

Notes:

During the second world war union membership grew rapidly. This was because of a government policy which gave workers the right to organize trade unions. During war time labor was in short supply and the government feared any disruption of military production.

Union membership reached a peak in 1958 after a decade of economic expansion. It subsequently declined during the recession years up until 1964. Recent increases have been largely due to rapid organization of unions among government employees.

TABLE 2 BRITISH COLUMBIA UNION MEMBERSHIP BY SEX, 1978

	Union Membership	Relative Distribution	Paid Workers[1]	Membership as a Percentage of Paid Workers
Total	450,802	100.0	1,003,000	44.9
Men	318,696	70.7	631,000	50.5
Women	132,106	29.3	372,000	35.5

[1] Source: estimated from "The Labour Force," Statistics Canada, Ottawa, Cat. 71-001 (monthly). Estimated because figures for August through December were not available at time of publication.

Question:

1. Why are male workers more likely to be organized into unions than female workers?

Notes:

Crafts such as printing and carpentry and then later producing industries such as forestry and mining were the first industries organized. They also mainly employed men. Women, more likely to be in service industries or office work, used to feel apart from male-oriented unions.

In the last 20 years, however, the number of women belonging to unions has increased at a growth rate two and a half times that of men. In Canada as a whole, one fourth of union members are women, up from 15 per cent in 1962.

TABLE 3 CONGRESS AFFILIATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA UNION MEMBERSHIP 1978

CONGRESSES	Membership	Percentage Distribution
American Federation of Labor–Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)	2,986	0.6
Canadian Labour Congress		
AFL-CIO/CLC	190,143	42.2
CLC only	129,530	28.7
Confederation of Canadian Unions (CCU)	15,131	3.4
TOTAL	337,790	74.9
UNAFFILIATED	113,012	25.1
GRAND TOTAL	450,802	100.0

Notes:
The AFL-CIO is the American trade union congress. The CLC is the largest Canadian union federation and is composed of both national and international unions. Its provincial association is the B.C. Federation of Labour. The CCU is an all-Canadian congress of trade unions.

TABLE 4 THE FIFTEEN LARGEST UNIONS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Relative Position 1978	Union	Membership January 1978
1	International Woodworkers of America	47,536
2	B.C. Government Employees' Union	38,323
*3	B.C. Teachers' Federation	29,339
4	Canadian Union of Public Employees	24,850
*5	Hospital Employees' Union	21,060
*6	Teamsters	21,016
7	Carpenters	14,973
8	Public Service Alliance of Canada	13,788
*9	Registered Nurses Association of B.C.	13,516
10	Operating Engineers	12,449
11	Hotel and Restaurant Employees	11,255
12	United Steelworkers of America	10,796
13	IBEW (Electrical Workers)	10,398
14	Telecommunications Workers Union	10,347
15	Labourers' International Union	9,373

Question:
1. How many of the top 15 unions are government employee unions? How many are from productive industries?

Notes:
The large number of public sector unions reflects the importance of that sector in B.C. and the weakness of our industrial base as opposed to Ontario where the autoworkers' and steelworkers' unions are powerful.

The unions with asterisks are not members of the B.C. Federation of Labour.

TABLE 5 UNION MEMBERSHIP BY REGION AS A PER CENT OF ALL PAID WORKERS Canada, 1961-1976

Region	1961	1971	1976
Canada	27.3	31.7	35.2
Atlantic provinces	25.5	28.4	37.3
Quebec	25.9	33.8	37.0
Ontario	28.4	31.8	33.0
Prairie provinces	18.3	25.2	30.3
British Columbia	42.9	37.2	43.9

Source: The figures for union membership were derived from Labour Canada, *Industrial and Geographic Distribution of Union Membership in Canada*.

Notes:
The recent upsurge in trade union membership has been greater in the Prairies, Atlantic provinces, and Quebec than in Ontario and B.C. Our province still remains the most highly unionized area on the continent.

TABLE 6 **UNION MEMBERSHIP IN SELECTED COUNTRIES**
(as a per cent of wage and salary earners)
1961-1975

Countries	1961	1964	1967	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975
Australia	59.0	56.0	54.0	50.0	53.0	54.0	55.0	56.0	58.0
Canada	29.5	27.3	30.5	31.8	31.7	32.7	33.4	33.7	35.4
Japan	34.3	34.9	34.1	34.7	34.2	34.0	33.1	33.9	34.2
Sweden	n.a.	68.3	68.9	74.5	75.6	77.3	79.5	80.3	81.7
United Kingdom	43.4	44.8	44.7	49.7	50.3	51.3	50.5	51.6	52.6
United States	30.2	28.3	27.8	30.1	30.0	29.4	29.2	29.4	n.a.
West Germany	30.9	30.2	37.3	36.6	37.0	37.6	38.1	40.0	41.2

Sources: Labour Canada, *Union Growth in Canada in the Sixties*, by J.K. Eaton.
Union Membership: Australia, Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, *Official Yearbook of the Commonwealth of Australia*; Canada, Labour Canada, *Labour Organizations in Canada*; Japan, Statistics and Information Department, *Yearbook of Labour Statistics*; Sweden, National Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract of Sweden*; United Kingdom, *Department of Employment Gazette*; United States, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Director of National Unions and Employee Associations*; West Germany, Federal Republic of Germany, *Statistiches Jahrbuch*
Wage and Salary Earners: O.E.C.D., Labour Force Statistics.
Note: International comparisons should be approached with caution in view of the different methods in each country for defining their categories

Questions:
1. In which countries has trade union membership increased from 1961 to 1975? In which countries has it stayed more or less the same (within a percentage point)?

Notes:
Trade union membership in Canada has increased at an annual rate of 5.2% since 1961 while the U.S. rate of growth has been 1.2%.
Compared to European countries (including both prosperous economies such as West Germany and Sweden and weaker economies such as the U.K.), Canada is much less unionized.

TABLE 7- COLLECTIVE BARGAINING COVERAGE BY MAJOR INDUSTRY GROUP
Percentage of Employees Covered
Canada, 1963-1976

Industry	Non-Office Employees		Office Employees	
	1968	1976	1968	1976
Logging	78	84	22	16
Mining	77	83	5	11
Manufacturing	72	76	9	10
Transportation, Communication & Other Utilities	88	89	46	45
Trade	21	28	2	4
Finance	9	11	1	2
Service	34	47	12	25
Public Administration	46	98	24	92

Source: Labour Canada, *Working Conditions in Canadian Industry.*

Questions:

1. In which industries has there been a large increase in unionization since 1968?
2. Why is there such a difference in union membership between non-office and office employees?
3. Which industries have a low rate of union membership? Why do you think this is?

Notes:

The figures refer to collective bargaining coverage, a broader measure of union representation.

The recent and rapid increase in union membership in the public sector is clearly shown.

The low rate of union representation among office workers and in both categories of the finance industry reflects: different attitudes of white-collar employees, their traditional reluctance to see themselves as "workers," the difficulty of organizing widely scattered and small bank branches or offices, the attitude of banks toward unions, and the large number of women in such jobs who, in the past, have felt apart from what used to be male-dominated trade unions.

TABLE 8 TYPE OF UNION MEMBERSHIP

TYPE	MEMBERSHIP (PER CENT)			
	1961	1971	1977	1978
International Unions	71.9	62.0	49.0	47.4
National Unions	22.4	34.9	47.4	50.0
Independent Locals	3.6	2.5	2.6	2.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Absolute Total	1,446,942	2,210,554	3,149,213	

Source: Labour Canada, *Labour Organizations in Canada.*

Notes:

Of the 47.4% membership in 1977 in national trade unions, only 22.3% are in the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC). 46% of the international union membership are in the CLC, giving the internationals about two-thirds of CLC membership.

Included in the 47.4% membership are 5.5% in the CNTU (Confederation of National Trade Unions) in Quebec, 0.7% in the CCU (Confederation of Canadian Unions) and 18.1% not attached to any larger body.

Quebec Teachers Negotiate in Common Front

Sylvain Masse,
translated and adapted by Tom Morton

Like their B.C. counterparts, Quebec teachers have been recently negotiating a collective agreement. Unlike B.C. teachers, Quebec teachers are allied with other public service workers and do not have our system of binding arbitration. This year's negotiations went through a planned massive strike, a televised intervention by Premier Levesque and a settlement approved not by workers but by the National Assembly.

The 190,00 members of the public service belong to three large trade union federations: the CSN, FTQ, and CEQ (Centrale de l'Enseignment du Quebec). The latter is composed of the majority of teachers in the province. The CSN and FTQ are only partly made up of public service workers. In 1972 and 1976 the three had also formed a common front and in 1976 were influential in the fall of the Bourassa government.

Early negotiations did not go smoothly. Montreal teachers rejected the government's first offer by a vote of 98%!

The main issue was a raise in the minimum wage, job security, and maternity leave. Class size was also an issue for teachers. The unions rejected an offer of $218 a week by the government and insisted instead on $265.

The most militant union, the "fer de lance," was the hospital employees union, a member of the CSN.

A "general strike" of all public service employees was called for November 13, two days before the important provincial by-elections.

The Parti Quebecois government reacted: the National Assembly unanimously passed Law 62 making all work stoppages illegal.

There was a strong movement among the teachers and public employees to strike against the law. The teachers did not have sufficient agreement among themselves to defy the law, though they threatened to do so after Christmas. The hospital employees' union did have that defiance. Institutes were closed and only essential services were operating.

In the midst of the disruptions, Rene Levesque addressed the Quebec people on television. It was in a style reminiscent of his starring role years earlier when he moderated a weekly news show. *Le Devoir* compared him with a professor with black board and chalk as he instructed his audience:

- on economics: there is only so much money
- on law: defiance of Law 62 would be prosecuted
- on morals: he was very disappointed in the irresponsibility shown by the unions and said that the time had come to question the system of negotiations in the public sector and the right to strike after a test of 15 years had shown it to be a failure.

Following the speech, Finance Minister Parizeau made a new offer of the same amount of money ($690 million) but redistributed. The redistribution favored the lower salaries which would now be a minimum of $265 a week. It worked against those union members with higher salaries, notably the teachers. Several members of the CEQ publicly admitted this but the other unions were more content. There was, in any case, little alternative to the legislated settlement.

Book Review

"In the 23 richest countries in the world, 4 out of 10 unemployed persons are under 25."

Gary Onstad

Poor Kids, a report by the National Council of Welfare on Children in Poverty in Canada. Ottawa. March 1975.

For all the horn blowing, flashy symbols, good intentions, and good works generated by the International Year of the Child in 1979, this four-year-old report on the state of poor kids in Canadian society stands as a stark, shocking reminder that until governments start to seriously redistribute income, the problems of one out of four Canadian children will still be with us when we celebrate the International Year of the Pet in 1989.

What *Poor Kids* does (in just 44 pages) is to destroy once and for all the Canadian myth that all children are born with an equal chance to rise as far as their abilities will carry them: "To be born poor in Canada does not make it a certainty that you will live poor and die poor—but it makes it very likely."

Through the cool logic of government statistics and the clear language of the text, this report makes an irrefutable case that Canadians must examine their community values and find out whether they really care to do anything about the state of poor kids.

What is poverty? The National Council on Welfare used the Statistics Canada definition for its study of poor children—that is, when more than 62% of family income is required to provide the minimum necessities of food, shelter and clothing, the family is living in poverty. Applying this to the last census, the council identified an astounding 1,657,017 children under the age of 16 who were living in poverty. This represents one out of every four Canadian children and one out of every six children in affluent British Columbia.

When family characteristics are analyzed, there are some interesting insights into the types of families in which poor kids live. For example, the fact that eight out of 10 poor children come from families where both parents are present could lead one to conclude that children from single-parent families are doing all right. But a closer examination reveals that for children in female-headed single-parent families, an appalling 69.1% are poor. The rapid increase during the 70s in separations and divorces indicates that the 1981 census will reveal not only larger numbers of poor children from female-headed single-parent families but also an increase in the percentage of those children who live in poverty.

What does poverty do to children? The report identifies a number of crucial results. For example, the state of health of poor kids is dramatically portrayed by a study done in Montreal during the construction boom that accompanied the building of the billion-dollar Olympic facilities. Low income neighborhoods in Montreal's east end were scrutinized and kids from poor families were found to be indequately nourished, retarded in height and weight development and in physical-mental co-ordination, and were far more prone to diabetes and tuberculosis than their more affluent peers. The report concludes that even the Canadian medical community appears to be unconcerned that poor kids are disproportionately-sick kids.

The education system also comes in for some brutual examination. Thinking teachers should not be surprised at the plethora of studies which show that poor children are more likely to come to school underfed, are more likely to be sick, to be absent, to be restless, and unable to meet the "standards" of the schools, more likely to be in the low streams that lead to dead-end jobs. While some teachers blame the parents of poor kids for the poor performance of their children, others find it interesting that studies show that poor parents place a high value on education. Perhaps it is time that teachers stopped blaming the parents of poor children and started exploiting the

high value that those parents place on teachers. This can only be done when teachers stop being elitist and start to seriously communicate with those parents in order to help the children to develop to their full potential.

If schools help to perpetuate the problems of poor kids, the home situation is often seen as another pressure for the kids. In Canada, home for hundreds of thousands of poor kids ranges "from an unheated shack without running water to an apartment unit in a giant housing project." When such homes fail to provide the minimal needs of the child, some 50,000 children are placed in foster homes and, overwhelmingly, they are children of poverty. The placement of these children in foster homes is hardly surprising when it is realized that government policy provides foster parents with two or more times the welfare allowance to care for the child than it does for the natural parents.

In a chapter entitled "Are Poor Kids Bad Kids?" The report presents a convincing case that dispels the prevailing myth that poor children are more criminal than the non-poor. The studies show that there is considerable class bias in the disposition of cases of juvenile offenders. The report concludes: "There seems little evidence that poor kids are in fact disproportionately bad kids, but it may be that they are disproportionately treated that way." Teachers in secondary schools should ask their students—both rich and poor—which group gets the most hassles from their local constabulary.

The report suggests that government inaction in the past could be replaced by government action—a guaranteed basic income, for example—that could alleviate, if not solve, the problems of the poor. As Bernard Shaw once said, "What is the matter with the poor is Poverty."

Since the factual evidence of the unequal distribution of wealth in Canada is so obvious, the *Poor Kids* report concludes that Canadians have a clear-cut value decision to make—either we can do something about it or we can stand firmly behind the myth that equal opportunity exists. It is a question, says the Council on Welfare, of values: "That choice, which we, the Canadian community, will make will tell us a great deal about ourselves."

Where are the political leaders and where is the political movement that will help us to find out about ourselves?

Odds and Ends

For Twenty Cents a Day is finally available! See the back page of the newsletter for information. It received enthusiastic applause when screened at the convention of the B.C. Federation of Labour. Sitting beside me during the film, older trade unionists were telling me stories of their own work and wages in the thirties. One was singing along to "Hold the Fort."

Also at the Fed convention was a resolution calling for a labor history course in the school system.

Playing at the Janus Theatre in Vancouver through November and December has been *Highball* written by Barry Hall and performed by Touchstone Theatre. It is an excellent and bawdy account of early days in logging leading up to the founding of the IWA.

Three records have been passed on to us from the Centrale de l'Enseignment du Quebec (CEQ), teachers' union. They are recorded at different shows in support of International Women's Day and the strike in 1974 against United Aircraft. They're certainly useful to French teachers. I've used in a socials class one song, sung mainly in English, called "Mummy" which is about the sadness of an assimilated rootless French Canadian child.

A card I received for my birthday:
"'Don't you wish birthdays were like labor unions? . . . then we could negotiate the raise in our age!"

Coming up: "Teaching Canada for the 1980s, The New B.C. Social Studies," February 22-23, 1980, Langley Secondary School. Possible participation by Labour History.

"Ten Days for World Development," February 1-11. This is a national church program of development education. This year's theme is "making a living." I don't know enough of the program to comment on its value. However, I've seen their study/action guide and it has good stuff in it. Especially good is an article by an old friend, Mike Ryan: "The Labour Movement: A Christian Perspective." Ten Days has contacts around the province. The central contact is Mary Baxter, 150 Robson Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 2A7. Telephone (604) 688-5321.

Still coming up: another issue of our journal (yes it's true), long delayed because of all the work involved with the film. The theme will be logging.

NOW AVAILABLE

FOR TWENTY CENTS A DAY

a twenty-minute documentary on the depression in British Columbia, produced by the Labour History PSA, and available from

Canadian Filmaker Distribution Centre
2265 Fir Street
Vancouver, BC V6V 3B6
(604) 732-9396

The film was made with the financial support of the following: Canadian Labour Congress, Boag Foundation, Florence Bowes estate, Vancouver Foundation, National Film Board (Vancouver Production Office), B.C. Teachers' Federation PSA Council and private donors.