

# **Defeat Bill 12! Support BC teachers!**

The BC Liberal Government is again treating teachers in this province as second class citizens without the same rights as most other workers. For the second time, they have tabled legislation (Bill 12) removing the democratic rights of teachers to free collective bargaining, unilaterally extending their present contract to June 30, 2006.

While the contract imposed in January 2002 provided a wage increase, teachers' incomes have lost ground to inflation, and pay rates in B.C. are lower than in other major provinces. The 2002 increase was not fully funded by the province, forcing school boards across B.C. to close schools, lay off hundreds of teachers, increase class sizes, and cut important services for students.

The Campbell Liberals talk about the importance of education, but their actions go in the opposite direction. By once again placing their narrow, anti-union political agenda ahead of the needs of students, the government has given another slap in the face to the women and men entrusted with the future of our children. In 2002 the government claimed lack of funding as its flimsy pretence to impose a settlement. This time, there are funds available to provide a decent wage increase and better classroom conditions, since the government has been loudly trumpeting the growing surplus in provincial coffers, due mainly to the wind-fall profit grab by the energy sector.

Even more damning was the "fact-finding" report presented last week by Deputy Minister of Education Emery Dossall, who stated that he felt there was no way that the negotiations between the BC Public School Employers Association and the BCTF could succeed. By imposing the "zero compensation" formula and preventing the BCPSEA from bargaining over working conditions with financial implications, the Campbell Liberals clearly never had any intention of allowing a negotiated collective agreement.

The teachers of British Columbia have been demonized by this government for far too long. Former Education Minister Christy Clark tried to deprive teachers of any democratic control over their professional organization, the BC Teachers' College. Just a few months ago, Premier Campbell attacked the teachers in a sleazy tactic to scare voters in a close election campaign. His government has given increased support to private schools, while undermining the public education system which is a cornerstone of our society.



BCTF members are highly trained, hard-working professionals who do excellent work while facing the challenges of larger class sizes and growing numbers of special needs and ESL students. Parents, students and school trustees are demanding better wages and working conditions for teachers as essential to improving the education system. There is increasing recognition that the Campbell government is playing games with the education of our students, by leaving the teachers no option other than strike action.

The Communist Party of Canada (BC Provincial Committee) agrees with this view, and declares our full support for teachers in this labour dispute. We call on all workers to mobilize in support of our sisters and brothers in the BCTF, who are not only fighting to save their union, but are also on the front lines of the struggle for a decent learning environment for our children.

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**Communist Party of Canada (BC Office)**  
706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3J1  
(604) 254-9836  
<http://www.communist-party.ca>

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