

More from the Mad Trustee

# Government's not interested in providing quality education

By Eden Haythornthwaite

At the board meeting on July 8 we had a little chat about our request—made at the bitter end of the budget process this year—that we seek an audience with the minister to discuss our Student Success Budget. We have yet to be summoned to head off and see the wizard but when we do, we expect to be prepared. I imagine that our district is on the same desirability list for a meeting with the ministry right up there with Carrot Top and Kim Jong-il but you never know – they may allow it if we promise to keep schtum and listen to the looped message/mantra – **you are getting more than you have ever had, ignore the evidence of your eyes, you are well funded stop whining, you have plenty of money you just don't know how to allocate, you should stop spending your vast wealth on highballs and tapas.**

We are evidently destined to meet as a board at the end of August to design a careful script so we can regale the ministry with the right message. We do not wish to be a bother and we would prefer not to be parboiled or bricked into a heritage closet while we are there – we will be well behaved and positive—yes positive—so as not to offend or cause any discomfort that might echo the discomfort our staff and students endure.

Discomfort evidently is for those who have not risen to a higher station in life – the rest of us must arrange our dismay in terms which sound as if we are really quite happy about destroying public education in our copious free time on their behalf and are not going to grumble about it.

Finally I think I understand what this is all about.

It is about sustaining the morale of senior staff and our sainted provincial overseers by never uttering a discouraging word for fear they will collapse with the tulip time vapours—discouraging word being identified as anything that has the merest whiff of critique or dissent. And evidently no one else would have noticed the

me this; the impact of our budget deliberations had—among other things—created the imperative to cut the position of reception and processing in the district resource centre from seven hours a day to four hours a day.

What does this mean? It means the person responsible for processing books and visual resources for the 21 schools in our district will be hard pressed to perform their duties with the effectiveness required, so print and other aids to learning will arrive in a timely way in our classrooms. It is worth noting that due to the relentless cuts to teacher/librarian time in our schools this particular service is crucial and in much demand. Obviously the math tells us with the cut to the hours of this position, the time it takes to handle the work will almost double.

Now as any good trustee will tell you, this is a single, though fairly dramatic illustration of cuts which have been visited on our schools and the staff and kids in those schools. However it is important as trustees we do not excuse ourselves from our responsibility for all this mayhem simply because we have now accepted the current budget and funding arrangements. The impact is clear – and this is only one example.

It may be time to review...exactly how are we going to return to our classes this fall under the present regime in Victoria which seems hell bent on extracting heroic measures from employees and families rather than funding our classrooms? We do not have the resources to run our schools properly, to provide quality learning opportunities and suitable working conditions.

The budget has passed but who is to say when we should stop exploring the end result and fight with resolve for our kids' needs.

We know that the budget season starts in February in order to run through the cycle by the mandated June 30 deadline. But who says we have to wait? In fact it is

# Man, was that Fest fun!!



Federal NDP Leader Jack Layton leads the NDP contingent in the Vancouver Gay Pride Parade, held August 2 at English Bay. Diane Walsh photo



Thousands came to English Bay to browse the multitudes of goods and foods available to those taking part in the Vancouver Gay Pride Parade. Diane Walsh photo.