

The New World Order...by Rob Harding

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Monday, October 17, 2005

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The B.C. teachers' dispute, like all such events, is best understood when placed in a larger context. In this case, the context is truly immense, and despite the assiduous efforts of Campbell and his yes boys in the corporate media to dismiss the dispute as a cash grab by a spoiled and greedy "lawbreakers," the true context is all too clear.

When George Bush senior declared the beginning of a "New World Order" at the beginning of the 1990's, he wasn't joking. A world wide system is being put in place. Let's call it Globalization Inc. Headquartered in Washington, D.C., Globalization Inc. is the offspring of the World Trade Organization or W.T.O., an organization of the wealthiest and most powerful men in the world that meets behind closed doors and is accountable to no one except top executives and shareholders in huge multinational corporations. It operates wholly and partially owned subsidiaries all over the world. Right now, British Columbia is only partially owned.

Although they have and use dictatorial powers over citizens in their own jurisdictions, little politicians such as Campbell, Ralph Klein, and Mike Harris (remember Mike Harris of Walkerton fame?) are in reality only messenger boys given their marching orders by Globalization Inc. The marching orders are quite simple and straightforward: privatize everything. In a world view where everything is for profit, there is no room for public ownership. The goal of privatization is to transfer public assets-the assets that citizens own and rely on-to private hands, specifically the hands of multinational corporations.

Canadians in general, and British Columbians in particular, have seen this strategy unfolding during the past generation. We have seen an unrelenting attack on the public institutions that set our society apart from the dog-eat-dog mess to our south. Our health care system and our public school system, two of the crowning achievements of Canadian society, are viewed as the last frontiers of privatization. Turning them in to cash cows, though, will be tricky, mainly because unions keep getting in the way. The B.C.T.F. is just the latest example.

The tactics used by Campbell and the like are quite simple and crude: attack and undermine the school system, the health care system and the people who work in them. Create chaos. Make work that was previously only difficult virtually impossible. In one of the world's richest societies, use excuses such as the lack of money. Continue the attack for years until the system is near collapse, and then point to it, say it's not working, and suggest that "the private sector" has a role in solving a problem that has been deliberately created in the first place.

Of course, precisely because of our school system, Canadians are educated enough to see through the privatization agenda when given a fair chance. Here is where language becomes important in the advancement of the privatization agenda, and where the effort is made to take that fair chance away. Politicians and business leaders tell citizens that privatization is good for them, that it will mean tax cuts and less "red rape." Rather than tell citizens the unvarnished truth, politicians and their media boys use

phrasing such as "market forces are at work"-a platitude evoking images of consumers happily spending Saturday morning buying produce and fresh bread. "The entrepreneurial spirit" is another lofty-sounding phrase familiar to us all. When hearing it, we might visualize bright-eyed children at their lemonade stand. But of course we're not talking about lemonade stands; we're talking about an agenda designed to reverse a century of social advancements and to make that reversal permanent.

As a branch manager of Globalization Inc., Gordon Campbell has privatized B.C. Rail, although he explicitly promised in the last election not to do so. Gordon Campbell tried to sell the Coquihalla Highway but realized he would have to set that project aside for the time being when British Columbians reminded him that it was not his to sell. Gordon Campbell has privatized the operations of the Medical Services Plan which are now run by a U.S. based multinational. Gordon Campbell has privatized support services in hospitals. They are now run for profit by a French multinational.

Under Gordon Campbell's regime, a long-term goal, the handing over of British Columbia's natural gas to a U.S. based multi-national energy giant, has been achieved. Terasen was a mere middleman in this latest swindle. At one time, B.C. Gas was a publicly-owned company, an arrangement designed to ensure that British Columbians would have control over our own energy and would pay a reasonable price for it. For the U.S. champions of "free enterprise," grabbing control of Canada's abundant energy has been a cherished objective for decades. By signing so-called "free trade" agreements, Canadian politicians have handed that energy over. Now, British Columbians will be paying a giant, foreign corporation "market price" for our own natural gas. "Market price" means of course whatever they want to charge us. Nobody asked us, and there's nothing we can do about it.

The real meaning of globalization is evident in the behaviour of Telus which locked out its employees and simply shipped their jobs to India, and in Alberta at Lakeside Packers, a company owned by a U.S. based multinational, where picketers are assaulted and jailed, and where Premier Ralph Klein, a man capable of drunkenly bullying homeless people claims he has no power to appoint an arbitrator. Canadian politicians have been very co-operative functionaries for Globalization Inc. We could argue that Brian Mulroney, who fancies himself Canada's greatest prime minister and who now resides in the U.S. where he is reaping the rewards for his loyal service to the corporation, opened the door and set the stage for the likes of Gordon Campbell by complying with the New World Order. We could also argue that from a certain perspective, compliance may be a more reasonable course than resistance. Globalization Inc. is not above using violence to deal with functionaries unwilling to comply. Saddam Hussein comes to mind. So does the second-largest pool of oil in the world.

So we can see the B.C.T.F.'s struggle with the Campbell government is a part of something much bigger. The stakes are huge. In order to advance his privatization agenda, Campbell feels he must silence teachers by destroying the B.C.T.F. But the B.C.T.F. is not going away, and teachers will not be bullied into compliance. Teachers are industrious and talented people with imaginations capable of embracing a world view with aspirations beyond the mere accumulation of private, material wealth. That world views different from the ideology of the bottom line are discussed with students is intolerable to Campbell and his puppet masters. The fact that teachers know history and have the means and the courage to teach it is yet another reason why Campbell finds us intolerable. Although our energy has now been delivered as ordered, our school system has not. And by the way, we should keep our eyes on our water. The U.S. is becoming very thirsty.