

North Shore College vote key to entire B. C. plan

(Reprinted from Vancouver Sun Page 6, March 5, 1968)

Thursday's vote on a community college for the four Sechelt, Howe Sound, North and West Vancouver, won't be a simple expression of opinion: do you want to establish a community college?

It will be read as a cue vote that could influence the fate of similar plebiscites in the Lower Mainland expected to follow.

The North Shore voter might well ask how he got from his friendly community setting to this larger stage, pinned under a province-wide spotlight.

He got there because the proposal of the North Shore Community College Committee to use an existing school as the college campus broke the deadlock in Victoria. It will be the first vote in what is a new government approach to establishing a college. And every educator's eye will be on it.

School districts have been pounding on Victoria's door for three years asking permission to hold college plebiscites.

They had to. The new secondary school curriculum had been in force for three years. The broad vocational and technical streams led to community colleges, and had been so recommended in Dr. John B. Macdonald's report. Without it, courses could not be completed as certified career programs.

The pressure was on the Minister of Education, Leslie Peterson. He faced the clamor from school boards and he was in a tight money market. He could not move.

When the North Shore proposal came, Peterson grabbed it. He gave permission for a plebiscite, complimented West Vancouver school board for its generosity and opened the door to other applications on the same terms.

On his desk now is the recommendation of the Lower Mainland Co-ordinating Council that two colleges will be needed for the school districts north and south of the Fraser River. These include Burnaby, New Westminster, Coquitlam and Maple Ridge. These would form one district. Surrey, Richmond, Delta and Langley would make up the second.

The policy on community colleges is this: The province will make a contribution only where there is a demand demonstrated to support the college.

In this small print is the message. The provincial government is waiting for the peo-

ple to recognize the need for community colleges, then they must get a majority vote in their district.

After this the government will pay 50 percent of approved operating costs. When a campus is needed, a referendum must go to the voters for capi-

tal costs, and if this passes, contribute 50 percent of the building costs. The taxpayer with a \$25,000 home in North or West Vancouver would pay about \$7 per year for the college while the facilities of West Vancouver high school are used.

(See COLLEGE, Page 6)

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College vote

By 1973 if enrolment reaches 2,000 and a separate campus is required, the tax cost might reach \$25 per year.

Unlike the State of Washington which has 22 colleges, and California with 81, British Columbia, the dynamic province, has two.

Vancouver City College, bursting its walls in old King Edward High School, will soon have a new campus at Langara. From a few hundred students four years ago, the enrolment has reached 3,800 on a three-semester, 14-hour day program.

In the Kootenays, Selkirk opened as B.C.'s first regional college two years ago. Enrolment doubled the second year.

The Okanagan, after an internecine war between north and south which wrecked the college program, has come under a new order. The plan now is to start grade 13 college courses in three different schools in three different towns. In addition, technical courses will be set up in the government vocational school in Kelowna.

On Vancouver Island, six districts out of nine north of the Malahat voted to establish a community college. Six passed by majorities ranging up to 92 percent. ABERNI, Courtenay and North Vancouver Island opted out. The college will be set up in Nanaimo instead of building a campus.

Full machinery for policing plans for colleges has been set up. The Lower Mainland College Council is responsible for the orderly establishment of colleges. For instance, technical courses which require expensive installations would not be allowed in neighboring college districts. Rather, financial assistance would be given students to take their courses at one centre.

This is the picture in B.C. How does it match up with the rest of Canada?

Ontario reviewed its educational program four years ago. It found the need for colleges so urgent it could not wait for the people or a building program. It turned its trade schools and technical institutions into comprehensive regional colleges while the building program was being organized. There are 20 regions in the province, each with its own college.

Quebec has taken a great leap. It has literally lifted itself into the space age with a ladder system which funnels all secondary students through regional colleges on their way to university. This is an 8:3:2:3 pattern, eight years elementary, three secondary, two college and three university.

In B.C., the government is waiting for the people.

"This is not all bad," says Bert Wales, director of Vancouver City College. "It is good for the community to have some participation in its regional college. The curriculum is geared to community needs and there is a strong feeling of loyalty and identification in having some responsibility."

"If you don't agree on the formula for cost sharing—and most of us don't—the thing to do is get your college going, the fight for more equitable sharing. You are only hurting yourself if you vote it down because of government policies."

Spearheading this fight is

B.C. School Trustees' Association. It has completed a brief to the government recommending a 75:25 split instead of the present 50:50.

Now back to the North Shore. Is there a real need here for a college and are the residents ready to support it?

Some of these questions were answered at a college meeting last week when Dr. Ian McTaggart-Cowan, Dean of Graduate Studies was on the platform with Stewart McGill, regional director of Manpower, and Dr. Wales.

"More than 69 percent of parents in North and West Vancouver want their children to go to university," Dr. McTaggart-Cowan said.

"We won't be able to accommodate them. We anticipate 22,000 students next year. We don't know how to stop the growth."

There are 1,900 students in grade 12 in the four districts. Only a small number go on to university—between 30 and 35 percent. The rest try to get into the labor force, or put their names on the waiting list at the vocational school in Burnaby or B.C. Institute of Technology if they have entrance requirements.

McGill told the audience, "We are caught in a technological revolution and can't turn it off, even if we desired. The implications of this change are more people are working, and earning more money. Industry produces more. But somehow, in this affluent society more persons are being left behind. Jobs are harder to get and harder to keep."

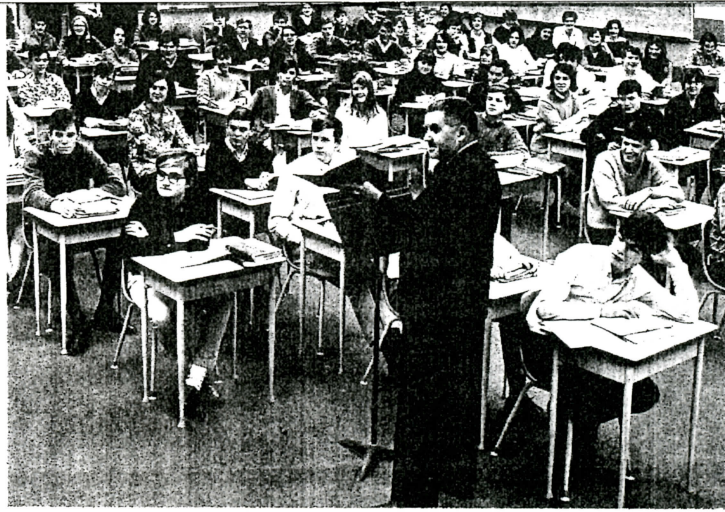
"There must be facilities, not only for initial learning, but for retraining," he said.

Dr. McTaggart-Cowan pledged close liaison between universities and community college. "We will lend a hand in staffing if it is needed," he said. "With the extended hours program, professors could easily teach their specialized subject in the college if they choose. We will help you get started the first year."

The communities on the north shore of the inlet have always been front runners in education. Innovations have started here. The committee realized when it set March 7 for the plebiscite day it was only giving itself five weeks to run a campaign and explain the complex personality of a community college.

But if it waited longer, it would not be possible to start classes in West Vancouver Secondary School this September.

It took the gamble. Now the voters take up the challenge. The spotlight will be on him Thursday.



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