

**VARYING EFFECTS**

# Time for year-end exams

Students throughout B.C. are facing government tests once more but although the government says results needn't have full effect on final marks, that old exam anguish has returned.

Alvin Myhre, Prince George School District superintendent, said the provincial government tests will count toward students' final marks to varying extents in each school.

Each school has been allowed to determine its own policy.

He said one school considers the government algebra exam to be excellent and will use it as the full 20 per cent of the year's achievement.

He said another school will use its English test as 10 per cent of the final marks, which themselves count as 20 per cent of the year's achievement. This means the government test, in this case, counts as only two per cent of the year's marks.

District schools have been given authority to hold exams according to their own schedules.

Students enrolled in English 12, algebra 12 and chemistry 12 and students enrolled in any Grade 10 math course must write exams.

Elementary exam results will be used doubly: marks at the school level will be used as a reference but all sheets will be sent to a technical agency to comply with education ministry requirements.

In the latter case reports will be submitted confidentially to the districts. The government will use results to monitor curriculum implementation.

Earlier, Education Minister Jack Heinrich was quoted, "It would be inherently unfair to have (the tests) used as part of the passing grade," because some school districts already knew the tests' contents.

For that reason the ministry withdrew requirements for test results to be used toward final results but left teachers the option of using them as, "a small percentage," of final results.

Jim Caldwell, retiring president of the Prince George District Teachers' Association, was non-committal about the concept.

"We aren't taking any

stand on this issue until after we've had time to evaluate it, when this year's tests have been completed," he said.

"We will be monitoring the tests and issuing a position on them, after we have seen the results."

He said if the tests are used to evaluate the programs, he and the association have no objections.

"Really the only thing a test does is show how well a person writes a test."

If students are assessed

by their teachers throughout the school year, the final assessment is more likely to be accurate than a test for which students cram, he said.

A recent poll concerning education indicated 62 per cent of the respondents subscribed to that idea, 48 per cent to the B.C.-wide tests and 30 per cent to nationwide tests.

The current educational system allows teaching to be within a specific framework, he said. The subject is taught within that framework but teachers are allowed to expand upon areas as students' interest dictate.

He said for that reason province-wide tests might not be truly indicative because one student might answer all the questions but another, in a different class, could miss some questions despite being equally proficient.

Another disadvantage of the exams is that they become the target of training, rather than the test. A game plan is developed in which the teacher covers the subject with the test in mind, rather than covering the course — the student anticipates the questions with his studies rather than trying to understand the subject.

## Forest service in war against flames

by Canadian Press  
VICTORIA — It's like an army, and the enemy is real — destructive and deadly.

There is the war room, bombers, spotter aircraft, helicopter attack teams, trained troops, heavy duty equipment that can be moved at a moment's notice, and a computerized early detection system.

The men and equipment work for the British Columbia Forest Service in the perpetual war against forest fires which each year destroy billions of dollars' worth of timber in the province.

"Although many of us don't like the analogy of the war room — we prefer the fire control centre, and war room is a little dramatic — it is that type of situation," said duty officer Ted England in an interview.

Throughout the summer, England and other officials will deploy the more than 37 helicopters, 30 water bombers and spotter planes, 1,500 men and equipment in the six forest regions to beat back the 2,200 fires anticipated.

It cost \$41 million to suppress fires in 1982, spotted over 332,000 hectares from the richly timbered mountain slopes to the sparser woodlands of the north. In the first six weeks of the current fire season, the cost already is \$4.5 million.

The attack is co-ordinated from a map-covered second-storey office near the Victoria waterfront where command teams, under the

supervision of Hank Doerksen, each day review the weather and wind forecasts and check the progress of each fire throughout the province before sending the men and equipment to where they will be most effective.

They also maintain liaison with their counterparts elsewhere in Canada and the United States to determine what equipment is available and from where, should it be needed.

And to stay ahead of the battle, they keep a sharp eye on lightning, which is detected and programmed in a computer within three seconds of striking.

The location then is printed on a map of the area, and forestry workers can guide spotter planes or ground crews into the location to check on possible fires.

The lightning monitor system, with 11 detectors currently in place and four more scheduled for installation, cost \$500,000 when installed in 1981, and the firefighters estimate it will save at least \$1.3 million a year in detection costs alone.

Dave Gilbert, the forester responsible for the system, said 43 per cent of all fires are sparked by lightning, but these blazes account for 55 per cent of all costs and damages.

Gilbert expects that within a year or two B.C. will be able to link up with the neighboring Alberta, Yukon, Washington and Montana systems to exchange data affecting each area.

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