Words apart: A Reading of Canadian Labor Conflict

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines the role that language plays in labor conflict. Nelson (2003: 449) argues that words are necessary for conflict: words initiate, maintain, elevate, defuse, and can resolve human conflict. My study follows Nelson in an exploration of how language was mobilized during the Alberta Teachers' strike (2001—2002). Both the Klein-led conservative government and the Booi-led Alberta Teachers' Association used language to present images, stories, and explanations that cast themselves and the conflict in very different ways. Speakers used language to create groups and engineer the conflict: they were "words" as well as "worlds" apart. To facilitate an examination of how speakers used language to construct and polarize these worlds a framework of four discursive strategies is applied.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Charles Keim. No part of this thesis has been previously published

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Chapter 1: A World of Words

Polonious: What do you read, my Lord?

Hamlet: Words, words, words

The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark. Shakespeare

As signalled by the title my study emphasizes language. It approaches labor conflict through the lens of critical discourse analysis rather than traditional quantitative analysis in order to explore how conflict was manifested and heightened through language. To the best of my knowledge no study has analyzed Canadian public sector labor conflict (hereafter referred to as labor conflict) through such a lens, even though such conflict is not possible without language. The abiding focus of Industrial Relations scholars on quantitative analysis tends to marginalize the fundamental truth that people use language—more than numbers—to create and define conflict, and to construct themselves and the "other." Strikes, negotiations, and legislation demand organization and the circulation of beliefs about one's group, the other group(s), and the actions being taken. This is accomplished through language. This chapter provides a general overview of discourse and the appropriateness of critical discourse analysis for the study of political discourse and labor conflict. Four discursive strategies are introduced and these strategies provide the framework for the body of this study.

The academic area of Industrial Relations began with conflict (Kaufman, 1993). In 1912, American President William Taft created a nine-person committee to explore the nature of conflict between employers and employees and share their findings with lawmakers. In particular, Taft and the American people were anxious to understand why two leaders of the Structural Ironworkers Union had deemed it necessary to dynamite the *L.A. Times* building in 1910. The committee's findings—contained in eleven volumes—were published in 1916. This

was not the first attempt to survey employment conflict. Earlier writers such as Marx, Lenin and the Webbs had explored the emerging theme of labor conflict and come to different conclusions. Since then, research has enlarged our knowledge of how labor conflict may be expressed, perpetuated, and resolved. But words have followed deeds with researchers using statistical research to explain how and why the action occurred. By contrast we know much less about how words precipitate deeds; how parties use language to define themselves and create an opponent; how language is used to construct conflict and convince us of its inevitability. There is a critical lack of awareness in labor studies concerning how language precedes and shapes deeds. This is not due to a lack of data, however.

In the case of the Alberta Teachers' strike, which is the focus of my analysis, both government and union speakers were quoted often and regularly by the press. It was primarily through the written media (newspapers) that speakers expressed their view of the conflict and offered their advice publicly. Newspapers play a formative role in public opinion and can be used to evoke public sympathy (Mosheer, 2009). Discourse scholars like Norman Fairclough have shown how media institutions are often far from neutral. Such a medium, nonetheless, enables speakers to convey their message to members of their party, the public, and those less sympathetic to their cause, including members of the other side. And yet the abundance of quoted material should not blind us to a curious question: why did speakers need to say so much?

In our published manuscript, Bad Time Stories: Government-Union Conflicts and the Rhetoric of Legitimation Strategies (2014), Yonatan Reshef and I found that speakers used language to tell us many things that would seem, at least at first glance, to have little to do with issues that gave rise to the conflict. For instance, government speakers were quoted as saying that they valued teachers, that education was a priority, that children were our future, that the

union was holding parents, children, and the government hostage, that nurses should be thankful for their employment, and that the union members were now jeopardizing the future of the province. Similarly, union speakers spoke of years of government neglect, deteriorating classroom conditions, dwindling resources, a stubborn government that refused to plan for the future and one that was all-too-willing to siphon money away from children and patients and into its own coffers. Both government and union speakers told us that their counterparts refused to negotiate. They also used language to say who they were: that they were concerned citizens, protectors of democracy, good stewards, advocates, parents, professionals, committed leaders and powerless victims.

This should not surprise us. In outlining the salient features of language use Gee (2011: 2) argues that language enables us to say things, do things, and be things. In saying things (informing), language enables us to give and receive information. In doing things (action), language allows us to make promises, have meetings and arguments, proclaim our love and declare war. In being things (identity), language lets us present ourselves as experts, concerned parents, sports aficionados, or even as a "common Joe." These three aspects are not mutually exclusive but intimately connected, so that how we are told something often says something about the identity of the person telling it to us and the action we are being asked to take.

Government and union speakers provided more than information: they not only said things but did and became things too. Gee (2011:7) argues that "in using language, social goods are always at stake." Social goods can be thought of in terms of money, status, power, acceptance, and legitimacy so that when language is used social goods and their distribution are at stake. Government and union speakers' use of language, then, represents a type of negotiation for social goods that was conducted in a public forum. Negotiations typically occur behind

closed doors, and yet before such private meetings occur, speakers begin negotiating via the written media. For Gee, language use is a type of "game" and as with any game there are certain rules which govern those who wish to participate and certain gains (social goods) accompanying a "win." As with any game, there are certain discursive strategies that are used to try to gain an advantage.

So what then were some of the strategies adopted by government and union speakers in this public "game" of negotiation? What were government and union speakers using language to say, do, and be? How did speakers use language to differentiate themselves from their "opponent" and how was language used to create this "opponent" in the first place? What were some of the themes that speakers evoked in their construction of the conflict and their place in it? As with any negotiation, speakers sought to gain the upper hand, but how did their counterparts respond to their discursive strategies? Were some strategies more successful than others? Did certain terms, laden with ideology, come to dominate the discursive landscape (like the "fiscal cliff" does ours)? How conscious were speakers of the language being used by their counterparts? Such questions cast a long shadow on our understanding of how labor conflict is initiated, constructed, and negotiated by government and union. My thesis seeks to illuminate the source of such shadows, so that we can understand how language makes labor conflict possible.

Discourse

Discourse derives from the Latin, "runs to and fro" (Claiborne, 1989: 137), and refers to how language "runs" back and forth between participants. While there are no shortages of definitions, discourse is generally seen to encompass "all forms of spoken interaction, formal and informal,

and written texts of all kinds. So when we talk of 'discourse analysis' we mean analysis of any of these forms of discourse" (Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 7). Watson (2003: 46) defines discourse more narrowly as "a set of concepts, statements, terms and expressions which constitute a way of talking or writing about a particular aspect of life, thus framing the way people understand and act with respect to that area of existence." Discourse can refer to the everyday use of language and also the language that certain concepts and ideologies provide us with. It is how we express an idea, concept, or ideology and the way in which it is expressed.

How we understand and discuss such things is referred to as "framing." When we talk about a "fiscal cliff," for instance, the term is accompanied by an ideologically driven discourse. The image of a nation hurtling towards such a "cliff" inherently argues that action must be taken to avert this epic crash and that someone or something must be responsible for bringing us to the brink. But do the expiring of the Bush-era tax cuts and the mandatory imposing of spending cuts really constitute a cliff? What would it mean to go over such a cliff? Responses to such questions often divide along the lines of Democrat and Republican. Or else the fiscal cliff is offered as proof that Congress is broken. Regardless, the image of a fiscal cliff looming before "us" charges the discussion with urgency: the nation is heading towards a cliff—something must be done. As such, though a speaker introduced this term (Ben Bernanke, Chair of the Federal Reserve) and is thus responsible for having constructing it, the term itself also constructs and simplifies our understanding of a complex financial issue.

Organizations, too, both construct and are constructed through the discourses developed by their members. Grant, Keenoy, and Oswick (1998: 1) define such discourse as "the languages and symbolic media we employ to describe, represent, interpret and theorize what we take to be the facticity of organizational life." For Mumby and Clair (1997: 181) discourse is "the principal

means by which organization members create a coherent social reality that frames their sense of who they are …" and "is both an expression and a creation of organizational structure." In this way, members construct an organizational reality through discourse but the organization also constructs the discourse of organizational members. Gee refers to such reciprocity as "reflexivity" (Gee, 2011).

Fairclough (1995:14) refers to a discourse as a way of signifying a particular domain of social practice from a particular perspective. As such, we can speak of the discourse of street gang members generally while observing how discourse differs between street gangs. Furthermore, language shapes gang members understanding of who they are, what kinds of things they do, and how they perceive and interact with their world. And yet we also know that gang members themselves shape and use language. Along the same lines as Gee (2011), Wodak (2003: 135) remarks how "situational, institutional and social settings shape and affect discourses, and … discourses influence discursive as well as non-discursive social and political processes and actions." At work, a department meeting, for instance, shapes and affects the language that is used but also the language used shapes and affects the department meeting.

Though aspects other than language can be used to communicate (gesture, dress, artifacts, symbols, etc.), talk and text play a vital role (see also Hardy, Palmer, and Phillips, 2000; Lessa, 2006). Discourse occupies a critical role in social reality by shaping relationships, power structures, and roles, though it also privileges some perspectives and marginalizes others, amplifies some voices and mutes others (Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford, 1986; Snow and Benford, 1988). Habermas (1977: 259) argues that language is in fact "a medium of domination and social force." Tracy and Mirivel (2009: 154) point out that discourse analysis is performed differently across academic fields. In linguistics the "intellectual divide is between

those who analyze discourse and those who focus on sentences." In psychology, sociology, and communication, researchers are interested in language phenomena generally and are less concerned with sentence-length or smaller units. Many of the handbooks on discourse analysis are multi-disciplinary, making it difficult to delimit its scope.

The popularity of discourse analysis has also contributed to its diffusion. Discourse analysis is an "increasingly popular method for examining the linguistic elements in the construction of social phenomena … [and] has been increasingly adopted by organization and management scholars" (Vaara, Kleyman, and Seristo, 2004: 3). In van Leeuwen's (2008: 5) analysis, texts are analyzed "for the way they draw on, and transform, social practices." Wodak and de Cillia (2006) distinguish between discourse and text and recommend the following distinction offered by Lemke (1995: 7): discourse refers to the "the social activity of making meanings with language and other symbolic systems in some particular kind of situation or setting … [when such meanings are made] a specific text is produced." When we focus specifically on an event or occasion, we should refer to it as a text. When we examine the patterns, commonalities, and relationships between texts, we should speak of discourse.

As Lemke's quote implies, "discourse" often refers to more than language ("other symbolic systems"). This is not surprising given the many ways that humans communicate. Gee (2011: 28) remarks how people build identities and activities not only through language "but by using language together with other 'stuff' that isn't language." As an example, Gee points out how street-gang members do not only use language to identify themselves. They also act and dress in a certain way. They also use various sorts of symbols (graffiti), tools (weapons) and objects (street corners) in the "right" places at the "right" time. Just because I can talk like a street-gang member does not mean that I can be accepted as one. As such, researchers have

explored the "discourse" of dress, symbols, tools and objects in order to shed light on how this other "stuff" is used by members.

The proliferation of studies all occurring under the umbrella of discourse led Widdowson (1995: 158) to complain that everyone was talking about discourse "without knowing with any certainty just what it is: in vogue and vague." Widdowson complained that discourse seemed to apply to just about everything. Recently, Alvesson and Karreman (2011: 1194) noted the "notorious vagueness, slipperiness and incoherence in the use of [the term] discourse." Discourse, ideology, and culture often seemed interchangeable. To help clear the air, Conley and O'Barr (1998) differentiated between "micro-discourse" and "macro-discourse," which Gee (1999) renamed "little d" and "big D" discourse.

For Gee (2011: 34), little "d" refers to "language-in-use or stretches of language (like conversations or stories)" while big "D" is "embedded in a medley of social institutions, and often involve various 'props'" (p.35). Little "d" refers to actual instances of talk or written texts; big "D" to long-standing systems of ideas: "what we think of as reigning ideologies, or complex social practices … [like] medicine or capitalism" (Tracy and Mirivel: 154); big "D" draws attention to the "powerful forces that reside beyond the text" (Fairhurst and Cooren, 2004: 132). Actual instances of language use, however, may blur such a tidy distinction. Alvesson and Karreman (2011) recommend that research focusing on words and text should be referred to as Text Focused Studies (TFS), while those concentrating on big "D" should be referred to as Paradigm-type Discourse Studies (PDS). My thesis, which examines the quoted material of government and union speakers, is on the one hand a text-focused study, and yet, like studying an iceberg, leads to a consideration of those large paradigms lying below the surface. Gee (2011: 37) cautions against such a bifurcated view of discourse because we "are always … creating new

Discourses, changing old ones, and contesting and pushing the boundaries of Discourses." Like icebergs, Discourses are most often in motion and they may occasionally turn over.

Critical Discourse Analysis

In considering the linkage between paradigms and talk and text, researchers seek to demonstrate how macro-concepts play out and are legitimated and even initiated at the micro-level. In Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), small "d" and big "D" discourses are often linked. Fairclough (2003) and Fairclough and Wodak (1997), for instance, examine the small "d" particulars of language use to show how it draws power from big "D" paradigms. Language expresses power, indexes power, is inextricably involved in challenges to power and may be used to subvert power. CDA is concerned with how power is used and enshrined within the political arena. It is an interdisciplinary approach that looks at the many ways in which social and political domination are reproduced in text and talk. CDA pays particular attention to the various ways that political leaders use language to inscribe their political agendas on the public consciousness and convince citizens to take action or to stand idly by. CDA examines language to reveal relationships of discrimination and dominance, power and control.

CDA grew out of European linguistic analyses of war rhetoric. It was developed by Norman Fairclough and his colleagues (Teun van Dijk, Gunther Kress, Theo van Leeuwen and Ruth Wodak) and formally entered the critical spotlight with the publication of Fairclough's Language and Power (1989) and the launch of van Dijk's journal *Discourse and Society* (1990). As Phillips, Sewell, and Jaynes (2004: 771) argue, these critics were responding to earlier approaches that they felt "either focused too narrowly on the micro-linguistic aspects of

discourse while neglecting its more macro social aspects or vice versa." CDA explores the link between the micro scale of language and the macro scale of social structure, examining language as a form of social practice so as to shed light on the way that text and talk reproduce and enforce social and political domination. In this way, CDA has been used to illuminate the discursive strategies used by government leaders to justify wars and policies (van Leeuwen, 2006).

In tracing the origin of CDA Chilton (2004: x) records how it brought together "socially and politically oriented linguists from a variety of backgrounds." Unlike other schools like The Frankfurt School and various proponents of critical theory (Benjamin, Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, Habermas, Bourdieu), who shed light on the linkages between language, politics, and culture, scholars within CDA (like Mey, Fairclough, van Dijk, Wodak, Reisigl and Wodak, Blommaert and Bulcaen) investigate language not in terms of a mental phenomenon (cognitive linguistics) but as a social phenomenon (generative linguistics). Scholars who approach language in this way explore how language makes society possible: how language generates and perpetuates, and is perpetuated by, such societal phenomenon as ideology, power, and conflict. For van Dijk (2001: 96) CDA is "discourse analysis 'with an attitude.'"

CDA is less a single theory or set of methods than it is an orientation to the study of language in use – that is, language embedded within its social context, or language "as a form of 'social practice'" (Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 258). How such language emerges from the sociocultural interaction of different groups struggling for discursive dominance remains an area of interest (cf. Maybin, 2001). CDA strives to expose the discursive strategies speakers use to legitimate their positions and convince their audience to adopt a course of action. In this way, CDA echoes the Bakhtinian (1981) idea that language is never neutral. Through language "political actors aim to maintain their hegemonic power" (Reyes 2011: 783). Words convey

more than information or opinion: they are, as Jean-Paul Sartre says, “loaded pistols” that aim to produce a certain outcome.

CDA examines not only the patterns, commonalities, and relationships between texts and occasions but also what speakers “aim” to achieve. Capone (2010: 2965) points out how intention “originally meant ‘aiming at’” and argues that the words used by political actors aim at gaining the audience’s trust. Similarly, Bourdieu (1991) has drawn attention to how politicians enact the symbolic power latent in their use of language, and Fairclough (2002) argues that such power “naturalizes” political goals, so that people internalize politician’s goals as their own. Though speakers commonly say that they speak for the people, Joseph (2006: 13) argues how “the inspiring orator can also lead a people, or rather mislead them, into believing that the narrow self-interests of the governing party are actually the interest of the people as a whole.” For Dedaic (2006: 700), political speeches are “primarily persuasion rather than information or entertainment.”

CDA offers some advantages over more traditional treatments of language study like rhetorical analysis. Within European linguistics and discourse studies CDA has become the dominant framework for the study of media texts (Bell and Garret, 1998). Given the debt that my study owes to these studies of media texts, it would seem appropriate to follow the methodology used by these researchers, which is CDA. Rhetorical criticism shares a focus on and fascination with language and its particulars. However, it grew out of the humanistic tradition and looks to philosophy, political theory, and literary studies, not, as CDA does, to sociology, linguistics, anthropology and psychology. Rhetorical criticism typically focuses on culturally significant texts, like speeches by political figures, and not mundane or everyday talk and interviews. The study of rhetoric is fundamentally the study of persuasion, of the strategies speakers use to

achieve specific goals. Though CDA and rhetoric need not be seen as purely oppositional, both may study texts embedded in the contexts with which they occur (Tracy & Mirivel, 2009), CDA is especially concerned with uncovering hidden agendas and power relations.

Political Discourse

Political speeches draw their power in large part from the use of language. As Dediac (2003:1) argues, "Political power cannot be divorced from the power of words." CDA treats social practices not just in terms of social relationships, but "also, in terms of their implications for things like status, solidarity, the distribution of social goods, and power" (Gee, 2011: 68). For Gee (2011:10), "all language is political and all language is part of the way that we build and sustain our world, cultures, and institutions." I am particularly interested in the language used by government and union leaders, and here I follow those critics who trace how those with power seek to inscribe their views on the public. Reisigl (2008: 98) defines political discourse as "the practical science and art of effective or efficient speaking and writing in public. It is the science and art of persuasive language use." Political discourse is thus analyzed for how it enables speakers to "assert themselves against opponents, to gain followers, and to persuade addressees to adopt a promoted political opinion" (ibid: 98). For Reyes (2011: 783) political discourse is a specific genre in which political actors speak publically: "those speech events are commonly made in public forums in which politicians attempt to project their political agendas."

Political discourse occurs in a "field of political action." Such "fields" are "places of social forms of practice" (Bourdieu, 1991: 74), or "frameworks of social interaction" (Reisigl, 2008: 98). In some ways, we may consider a field as a genre in that it carries certain expectations

or possesses particular rules of engagement. Not only are political actors imbued with authority but they also actively create and perpetuate this authority (Mey, 2001: 219). Political concepts "do not have an agency or life apart from the political actors who use and change them" (Farr, 1989: 38). In using these concepts political actors seek to shape and articulate a nation's deepest convictions and persuade citizens to accept and fight for these concepts.

The field of political discourse requires attention to the political context generally and to specific contexts particularly. Election speeches, for instance, differ markedly from parliamentary debates, fireside chats, or declarations of war. And yet all these speech events are legitimized "by [their] authoritative source and formal context" and represent "official, institutional discourse, produced by a person who … is authorized" (Rojo, 1995: 530). During times of labor conflict politicians and union speakers use speech events to describe the conflict, themselves and their opponents in a particular way, to send a message to their members, their opponents and the general public. Both sides use language to construct a certain view of the conflict, to imply either its inevitability or avoid-ability.

Discursive strategies can be used for multiple purposes. The same strategy can be used to justify a decision to go to war as well as to pass back-to-work legislation. Additionally, union speakers may employ the same discursive strategy as government speakers when they explain their decision to take strike action. Both government and union, for instance, commonly say that the conflict is the logical outcome of their having the best interests of the public at heart, in striking contrast to their opponent who is pursuing their own agenda. Political discourse is sophisticated and subtle. Reisigl (2008: 100) counsels that every good analysis "is based on accurate interpretation and scientific creativity, and requires previous theoretical and practical knowledge." Analysis cannot be applied mechanically or automatically.

Industrial Relations

Analyzing political discourse is both an art and a science, requiring the researcher to pay close attention to not only the words but also their nuances and the images, metaphors, and stories that they evoke and build upon. Speakers may justify their actions by creating sides and implicitly or explicitly asking the audience to side with them. CDA has increased our awareness of how these sides are created through language and the way in which "various groups in the respective society compete for the one and only narrative" (Wodak and de Cillia, 2007: 338). In studying labor conflict, then, close attention must be paid to the ways in which speakers use language to construct sides, because such a construction implicitly argues for the superiority of one group over another.

Labor conflicts, especially strikes, have been well-studied and thoroughly researched. Researchers have sought to understand the determinants of strikes' duration, number, and volume (Rees, 1952; Kaufman, 1982; Stern, 1978). Using quantitative methods they have compared strike patterns between nations (Poole, 1984; Hibbs, 1976). Those interested in the relationship between a political party and the labor conflict have explored ties between labor conflict and a party's political platform (Shorter and Tilly, 1974; Korpi and Shalev, 1979; Reshef, 1986). More recently, Reshef and Rastin (2003) studied the different reactions of public sector unions to the challenges created by the Common Sense Revolution in Ontario and the Klein Revolution in Alberta.

These research efforts have enlarged our understanding of labor conflicts. Yet the focus has remained on the visible aspects of conflict, especially strikes. Strikes, however, are only one

expression of labor conflict, even though they visibly manifest discontent and provide a timeline. An exclusive focus on those dimensions of conflict most amenable to statistical analysis neglects the important role of discourse before, during, and after such conflicts. Through language the parties prepare their members, members of the opposition, and members of the public for the conflict; through language the conflict is expressed, justified, and legitimated; and through language the parties struggle for discursive dominance.

CDA provides sophisticated tools for investigating how political speakers use language. Traditionally, CDA has examined how one side constructs itself in relation to an "other," and/or the ways in which the "other" is constructed, but examinations of how the other side may contest or respond to such discursive efforts have been absent. It is common, for instance, to read how the Nazis used language to justify their treatment of the Jews and how they framed available definitions of Jewishness. By contrast, labor conflict presents a unique and exciting avenue of inquiry since it allows us to examine both sides of the conflict. Not only can we study how governments construct the conflict and the actors' positions within it, but we can also see how union speakers undertake similar efforts—how the conflict is constructed by the other side.

Unlike traditional treatments where speeches and/or texts are examined as freestanding documents, labor conflict allows us to see how other speakers responded to such discursive efforts. Besides enabling us to see how speakers engage each other, labor conflict provides an opportunity to see how language is used to construct groups, and how a group may be framed negatively even though it holds the position of teacher or elected official. Scholars have brought to light some of the ways that language is used to persuade citizens to pick up weapons and go to war. Yet we know far less about how lawmakers persuade us that they must pick up their pens

and pass legislation, or how union speakers use language to convince us that they must pick up their placards and strike.

To examine the role of language in labor conflict this study focuses on the conflict between the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) and the Alberta government. In some ways, this case can be regarded as a "media event." It produced a large number of government and union texts that are available for further analysis. This case is a discursive event that lends itself well to CDA. Given the seminal nature of my study it is appropriate to use this single case. The conflict between the ATA and the governing Alberta conservative party provides the opportunity to look carefully at how government and union speakers used language to construct the conflict and their role in it. Learning Minister, Lyle Oberg, and ATA president, Larry Booi, were frequently cited by the press during the conflict. Initial bargaining between the government and the ATA began in early 2001 and continued for about a year, which provides a clear time period from which to draw the data. Initially, the ATA had asked for no less than a 30.0 per cent pay raise over two years, but by the end of 2001 this was reduced to less than 20.0 per cent over two years. It also demanded improved classroom and teaching conditions and financial help to address issues of teacher attraction and retention.

Background

Please note that the following synopsis is heavily indebted to the earlier work of Reshef and Rastin (2003), Reshef (2007), and Reshef and Keim (2014). Although the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) strike began in February 2002, its roots reach to events nearly ten years earlier. Upon his election in 1993, Premier Ralph Klein put into motion a series of aggressive

socio-economic policies popularly known as the Klein Revolution. Klein's agenda was similar to the "Commonsense Revolution" that would be initiated in Ontario by Premier Mike Harris. Klein argued that Alberta had a spending problem, not a revenue problem: austerity—not stimulus—was needed. As part of Klein's belt-tightening, all public-sector employees were asked to accept a 5.0 percent pay cut followed by a two year wage freeze. The education budget was cut by 13.0 percent over three years, and Alberta teachers accepted the -5,0,0, wage scheme without an organized protest. The government also passed Bill 19, the School Amendment Act, which strengthened the role of the education minister by removing local school boards' taxation powers. Cabinet would now collect taxes and redistribute them among the school boards on a per-student basis, which would address discrepancies between school boards in more affluent urban centers and those in less wealthy, rural areas.

In 2001, the pain of these earlier sacrifices looked to have found its compensation. Money appeared to be as plenteous as Alberta's oil. In January, Alberta doctors accepted the province's offer of a 21.9% fee increase, which made them among the highest paid in Canada. In April, Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) received a salary increase of 3.3%. But this was short-lived. In August, they voted themselves another increase of 11.0% and launched a new transitional allowance. In December, they found their salaries still wanting and voted themselves a further 4.0% salary increase (effective April 1, 2002). Thus in the final nine months of 2001, MLAs received a salary increase of 18.3%.

A third group, the United Nurses of Alberta (UNA), representing approximately 18,000 nurses, reached an agreement that increased nurses' salaries by 17.0% over two years. They also saw increases to their overtime rates, vacation, and on-call premiums. ATA president Larry Booi surveyed the landscape and took it as "a sign that big numbers are not out of the question"

("Alberta teachers may be next in line seeking large raises from province." *The Edmonton Sun*. March 22, 2001). For Booi, the writing on the wall was clear: "If the government addressed the salary and working conditions of doctors and nurses because they value health care, I'm sure that they will value education, too" (Ibid.).

Booi may also have had "big numbers" in mind because of his government's desire to do whatever was necessary to bring more teachers to Alberta classrooms. In February, Learning Minister Lyle Oberg publicly stated his government's intention to attract teachers to Alberta from across Canada: "In essence what we did was declare war on the other provinces" ("Alberta poised to steal teachers." *Alberni Valley Times*. February 9, 2001). Oberg said that he had "no qualms" about hiring teachers away from other provinces. As he saw it, his government's responsibility was "to get more teachers into here" (Ibid.). It may have seemed to Booi that the stars were aligning for the ATA. Doctors, nurses, and MLA's had received significant salary increases and surely government's desire to attract more teachers to Alberta signaled a willingness to invest in public education generally and teachers specifically.

Furthermore, in April, at his annual Edmonton premier's dinner, an ebullient Klein announced that it was time teachers be recognized for their hard work and earlier sacrifices. Austerity then was prosperity now. The time had come to share in the spoils. According to Klein, "teachers were part of the solution a few years ago [and now his government would] make sure that our teachers and instructors and professors are fairly compensated and given as good a work environment as they can have so that they know how much they are appreciated" (Olsen, Tom. "Klein hints at teacher pay raise." *The Calgary Herald*. April 6, 2001). Large salary increases for doctors, nurses, and MLAs; a Learning Minister waging war to increase the ranks of teachers; an appreciative premier who wished to reward earlier sacrifices; a $6.4 billion surplus for the

previous fiscal year and a budgeted surplus of $817 million; these were all signs that the ATA could expect good things from its government.

Less than a week later, however, the government put in writing its appreciation of teachers. As part of its new budget, it created Teacher Salary Enhancement Funding through which it set aside money for school boards to give teachers a 4.0 per cent raise in September 2001 and an additional 2.0 per cent increase in the following year. Needless to say, this was far less than what teachers had expected. In 2003, an arbitration tribunal referred to the above events as "factors which increased the teachers' expectations for higher increases" (*Edmonton Public School Board No. 7 and the Alberta Teachers' Association*, 2002: 38). The tribunal emphasized that, "The introduction of the Teacher Salary Enhancement Funding clearly set a *floor* of 4% for increase in teachers' salaries for 2001-02 and 2% for 2002-03" (ibid: 39, emphasis in the original).

During the initial bargaining stages, the ATA believed government's appreciation of teachers should result in 30.0 per cent pay raise over two years. By the end of 2001, the ATA had reduced its demand to a less than 20.0 per cent increase over two years. It also demanded improved classroom and teaching conditions and financial help to address the issues of teacher attraction and retention which Oberg had highlighted earlier. In Alberta, collective bargaining in education was conducted between a local union and a school board. Upon learning of the government's 2&4 scheme, the ATA appointed bargaining agents to work with each bargaining unit, thereby laying the basis for coordinated bargaining. This would enable the ATA to coordinate its actions and flex its collective muscle.

By the end of January of 2002, 14 bargaining units had held strike votes resulting in overwhelming support for job actions; nine had applied to the Alberta Labor Relations Board for

supervised strike votes; another 28 were in mediation; and nine bargaining units had settled. From the ATA's perspective, the only way to avoid job action was to squeeze a better offer from the government, but the government would not budge. On February 4, after a failed mediation process, the ATA managed an unprecedented feat. For the first time in its history, the union coordinated a series of strikes across 19 of Alberta's 62 school districts: 14,538 teachers walked out, sending 250,196 students home. Two weeks later, the number of striking teachers rose to 20,976, affecting 356,845 students. The strikes, which lasted 13 working days for most participating locals, ended on February 21, when the government declared a public emergency and ordered the striking teachers back to work. Order in Council 77/2002 declared "that on and after February 21, 2002 all further action and procedures in the dispute are hereby replaced by the procedures under section 112 [Emergencies] of the Labour Relations Code."

The teachers complied and returned to the classroom. Oberg gave the 22 affected school boards and local unions until March 15 to reach a contract settlement, either on their own or with the help of a government-appointed mediator. In the absence of a settlement, arbitration would ensue. The ATA did not agree that its 13-day (in three cases only 3-day) action had created an emergency and appealed the decision. It advised its members that, "Until further notice ... members who have agreed to participate in or conduct extracurricular activities [should] continue with those arrangements. However, where no commitments have been made, teachers should not now be volunteering to take on new tasks" (*Alberta Teachers' Association*, 2002b).

On March 1, Court of Queen's Bench Chief Justice Allan Wachowich struck down government order 77/2002, ruling that the government had failed to consider each of the 22 disputes. Therefore it had engaged "in the fallacious logic of either regarding hardship generally across Alberta as proof of specific hardship caused by each bargaining unit, or by attributing

hardship caused by one bargaining unit as proof of hardship caused by another or all …" (Alberta Teachers' Assn. v. Alberta, 2002). Hence the government had failed to prove that there was an emergency causing an unreasonable hardship to a third party (i.e., students, families, and laid-off support staff) across the province. He added that, "it must be borne in mind that the very purpose of a strike is to cause some hardship in order to raise the profile of the issues being contested, and to pressure the other side into making concessions. If a strike did not cause some degree of hardship, it would be pointless" (ibid). Despite the ruling, the ATA chose not to resume the strike, and teachers returned to work on Monday, March 4.

In response to this show of good will, Klein agreed to meet with Booi and discuss options to end the conflict. On March 5, they met for 30 min. Booi asked for a fair arbitration process—embedded in legislation—to resolve the disagreement on salary increases, class size, and teaching conditions. Both leaders appeared optimistic that a solution was within sight. Two days later, however, the caucus rejected the options Klein had presented. Instead, it opted for an arbitration panel that would only consider salaries, and would do so under strict government-set guidelines: notably that salary increases would be limited to what school boards could afford to pay. Klein insisted that Booi had agreed that the arbitrator would deal exclusively with salaries whereas working conditions were to be discussed by a still-undefined review commission. An exasperated Booi fumed: "every negative thing that happens, every problem that emerges from this point on, is the direct result of the school boards' and government's betrayal of teachers' good will" (Rusnell, Charles and Graham Thomson. "Teachers' Stabbed in the Back." *Edmonton Journal*. March 12, 2002).

On March 11, 2002, the Alberta government passed Bill 12, the Education Services Settlement Act (ESSA), which outlined a process to enable the parties to reach settlements

through arbitration. Any school district that had not reached a negotiated settlement would be referred to a three-member panel for binding arbitration. The ATA was outraged by what it saw as a "tainted arbitration process." For Booi, it was "a black day for public education and for democracy in Alberta. This government has made a terrible decision, and we shall have to live with the consequences" (Alberta Teachers' Association 2002c; ATA News 2002b).

One legal option left for the teachers was "work to rule." One day after Bill 12 came into effect the ATA sent the following message to its members: "The ATA president is asking all teachers to comply with the requirements of the law. However, he advised the media that teachers will be making individual decisions about voluntary services in schools across the province.... In addition, voluntary services will be withdrawn from the Department of Learning" (Alberta Teachers' Association 2002d). On March 18, in a speech at the Legislature, Booi announced that the ATA would legally challenge Bill 12, and he distributed a list of voluntary school-based services to the Minister of Learning that teachers could stop providing. These services included marking achievement tests and diploma exams, preparing items for diploma examinations, and piloting new curricula, as well as supervising sporting, social, or other events outside the normal school day, taking inventory, ordering textbooks or supplies, and collecting money from students.

On April 17, 2002, the government, the ATA, and the Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) reached an agreement on key issues. According to the ATA, the agreement went a long way toward restoring teachers' confidence in the potential for the arbitration process to result in fair collective agreements. The ATA recommended teachers end their withdrawal of voluntary services to school boards and they invited qualified teachers to consider marking diploma examinations once again. The ATA also agreed not to pursue a legal challenge of Bill 12. Yet the

ATA waffled on its position concerning the withdrawal of voluntary services. While it recommended that teachers end their withdrawal of voluntary services to school boards, it maintained that these services were voluntary and that teachers should make their own decisions about their reinstatement.

On July 27, 2002, the arbitration tribunal submitted its awards in six test cases, which became the standard for the remaining cases. The awards gave teachers a raise of 6.25% retroactive to September 1, 2001, and an additional 3.75% (compounded) increase effective August 31, 2002, for an end-rate for 2001–2002 of 10.23%. For 2002–2003, teachers would receive an additional 3.5% effective March 1, 2003, for an overall end-rate of 14.09% over 2 years. The total cost of the arbitrated salary settlements was pegged at $142 million.

The teachers were delighted since this more than doubled the government's original offer. Their joy was short-lived, however. The government informed the school boards that there would be no increase in grants to cover the difference between the arbitrated settlements and the original teacher salary enhancement grant, which provided teachers with a 6.0% wage increase over 2 years. At the same time, on October 17, 2002, Oberg reiterated that his government was not planning for any school board to have an accumulated operating deficit. Some school boards, especially the larger urban ones, were squeezed between what they could pay and what they had to pay. Solutions to this dilemma put a strain on labor-management relations. For instance, before the beginning of the 2003 school year, Edmonton Public School Board (EPSB) eliminated 430 teaching positions. Booi emphasized that to protect public education teachers must continue to pressure the government to increase its financial support. However, no concerted political action ensued.

Data

Over the course of the conflict, a significant body of text was generated. Both government and union speakers told their audiences why there was a conflict, how they were on "our" side, and how they were "taking the high road." The data that I draw upon are collected from February 12, 2001 to May 26, 2002. The data are quoted material collected primarily from newspapers, since speakers used this mode of communication to converse with the other party, their own members, and the public. In particular, the data are drawn primarily from Alberta's most well-known newspapers, *The Edmonton Journal* and *The Calgary Herald*. Bell and Garret (1998:6) point out that CDA "has arguably become the standard framework for studying media texts within European linguistics and discourse studies." Newspapers, however, are not the only source of information, and my study may also draw upon the union newsletters, Hansard, budget addresses, and legal awards to further identify the parties' discursive efforts. In this study, the unit of analysis is language, specifically, an utterance. An utterance comprised all the information provided by a specific speaker (e.g., union President or a Minister) in a given article.

Newspapers were chosen as the data source because it is through them that most people would have been made aware of and followed the conflict. Newspapers are read not only by the "average" person, but also by those directly involved in the conflict. Hence it is a medium through which speakers could reach members of their own party, members and leaders of the other party and people generally interested in the conflict. Newspapers thus allow a more generalized and populist window on the language used by speakers. Unlike other media

newspapers lend themselves more readily to a study of the manifest phenomenon, in this case words, used by the speakers.

To aid in sifting through the data I use NVivo, which is a qualitative data analysis computer software package designed for researchers working with rich text-based information. NVivo is commonly used by researchers in the health and social sciences. NVivo is built upon and has subsumed the program NUD*IST (1981-1997). Wodak (2003: 134) advises that the context of each utterance should "be taken into account when analyzing its exclusionary force." Taking into account the context will allow us to see how Wodak's (2003) observation—that more official settings embed prejudice and stereotypes in positive self-presentation—is manifested in labor conflict. Similarly, Wodak (2003: 134) notes how the more anonymous and general the genre "the more explicit exclusionary discourses and discourses of difference tend to be." Comparing, for instance, an anonymous union bulletin with an official union press conference may enable a clearer understanding of how polarization is constructed within different contexts.

A tool such as NVivo is only as good as the person using it. As with any program, like content analysis, for instance, it may illuminate what is discussed and what is being said, but not how those topics are being discussed. A further shortcoming of any computer-aided program is that it cannot identify what is not being talked about. In analyzing the discourse following the World Trade Center attack, for instance, Billig (2003: xiv) observes how speakers rarely (if ever) described what happened as a criminal act "which called for the mobilization of criminal justice systems nationally and internationally." Instead, speakers used the language of war. Rudd (2003: 31) notes how quantitative analysis of language cannot tell the whole story, "since it is used only

to compare amounts or percentages of time spent discussing particular topics and to determine topical priorities in a particular text."

Polarization

Speakers used language to create boundaries between various groups. To analyze how these boundaries were formed requires sensitivity to language. Features like sarcasm, ridicule, and irony demand a careful attention to the way language is used. And similar attention is needed for understanding how disputes are created. "Every dispute," Dedaic (2003: 1) argues, "starts with 'othering,'" and "othering" requires a distinction between "us" and "them." Difference fulfills the basic human need to feel that one belongs to a certain group and groups are often defined in opposition to other groups. Perhaps we believe we belong to a group because we do not belong to another group. What distinguishes a group is its perceived difference. Conflict begins when groups "fail to negotiate interests, norms or identities" (ibid: 1). To construct conflict requires that competing views or interests be demarcated. Polarization is how groups are created. It refers to speakers' discursive efforts to construct their group as distinct and superior to another group(s). It emphasizes differences between groups, drawing boundaries between "us" and "them." In this project, I examine how language is used to create and enforce these boundaries. To better grasp how this occurs, I propose four discursive strategies by which polarization is enacted.

Speakers present themselves positively and may depict their group as incarnating society's best interests and deepest values, while portraying the other group negatively. As Reyes (2011: 785) notes, such a binary construction allows "speakers to create two sides of a given

story/event," establishing a context "in which speaker and audience are in the 'us-group' and the social actors depicted negatively constitute the 'them-group.'" Polarization is not neutral—it establishes an inclusive "us" and an exclusive "them." Only after sides are constructed is it possible to reject "them" and to dismiss what "they" are saying. Chilton (2004) defines this process as "binary conceptualization," while Lazar and Lazar (2004) refer to it as "discursive bipolarity." In both instances, the nature of who "we" are is constructed in terms opposite to who "they" are. If "they" are not like "us," then action is implicitly urged. Dediac (2003: 1) argues that the language of polarization asks us to "direct the spear towards 'the other.'"

For Wodak (2003: 133) "political discourse and communication are fundamentally based on distinguishing between 'Us" and 'Them.'" There are consequences for separation, however, since it makes it possible for groups to be "systematically marked and set aside as outcasts" (Lazar and Lazar, 2004: 227). Building on the work of Foucault (1967), Dediac (2003) notes how the public moral order is constructed normatively via the articulation and definition of an aberrant "other" which is simultaneously identified as a "threat." Language enables the identification, division, and excision of that threat. Polarization creates groups and puts them on a collision course. It provides the rationale for the in-group to take up arms, while giving them a target to "aim" at.

Wodak (2003:133) argues that the construction of an inclusive "us" and an exclusive "them" is "one of the most important functions to allow, on the one hand, positive self-presentation of the speakers/writers and, on the other hand, negative other presentation of opponents." The creation of "us" and "them" enables the speaker to begin adding positive characteristics to "us." However, this is most often undertaken not only by attributing positive attributes to "us" but also by debasing the "other." Negative characterization of the out-group

enables “us” to blame “them’ for certain social phenomenon while implicitly characterizing “us” positively. For instance, “they” are irrational which has necessitated that “we” take action and it implicitly attributes rational behavior to “us” (Van Dijk, 1984).

Such polarization is often enmeshed with calls for action, indicating the human tendency to mobilize against discursively constructed “others.” If they are irrational, then action must be taken to ensure that their irrationality and associated danger do not spread. Lazar and Lazar (2004: 227) point out how, as a macro-strategy, polarization refers to the “dichotomization and mutual antagonism of out-groups (‘them’) and in-groups (‘us’),” a point reiterated throughout the literature (Bauman, 1990; van Dijk, 1992, 1995). If someone is not in the group, then they must be outside it. To enter the group requires that a boundary be crossed. Language creates and patrols such boundaries, which not only mark the borders of identity but also the borders of power (Hannan, 1996). This notion of boundaries, Chilton (1996) argues, is fundamental to our notions of security, community, and country.

The construction of categories is essential for human conflict yet it is also fundamental to the acquisition of knowledge. Tajfel (1981), for instance, argues that human knowledge depends on categorization since categories provide meaning. Humans are driven to understand their world, and categories allow us to compare and contrast, to understand one thing in terms of another. Rojo (1995: 51) says that the process of categorization “generates knowledge about ourselves, and about the events we are living.” But this process also implies distinction and exaggeration (Billig, 2003:5). Social categories provide us with a sense of social identity and “our” categories of identity make sense only insofar as there are categories that denote “others”: as the categories of “in-groups and out-groups become salient and meaningful, so the distinctiveness between ‘us’ and ‘them’ is psychologically exaggerated.”

A Framework

Reyes (2012: 788) explains that these distinctions can be exaggerated by constructing "what they are"; "what they do"; "what they have done"; and "what they could do." Such discursive strategies are "utterances which constitute a 'we' group and a 'they' group through particular acts of reference" (van Leeuwen and Wodak, 1999: 92). When George W. Bush and the majority of the American people advocated the bombing of Afghanistan after September 11, 2001, their response depended upon a heightened sense of "us" and "them" (Billig, 2003: xi-xii). Bush's introduction of the term "War on Terror" and his warning that "they" would deploy "Weapons of Mass Destruction" without conscience raised the distinction to a fever pitch. The portrayal of "them" as a "great Satan" led Chomsky (2004: 349) to argue that superpowers need to construct such a foe in order to unify their citizenry and mobilize it for war.

Exaggerating the differences between "us" and "them" also enables speakers to construct a positive identity of who "we" are. Distinctions are rarely value-free. Implicitly they cast judgment and ask us to take action. But before doing so an antagonist must be identified. CDA is concerned with such uses of language, and language as an instrument of control and symbolic power. Meyer (2001: 15) notes that CDA "endeavors to make explicit power relationships which are frequently hidden." In exposing how a speaker uses language to identify an inferior, scholars have adopted a range of methods and frameworks. Heterogeneity is encouraged, since the

complex and multifaceted relationships between language and society are seen to require such a dynamic and multi-disciplinary approach (Wodak, 2000: 8).

How language is wielded to construct an opponent is particularly visible in times of conflict. And nowhere is discourse more explicitly hortatorical, relationships of power more clearly defined, than in those so-called "Call to Arms" speeches where speakers draw on the "power dynamics of their social contexts to exhort 'the masses' to kill and to die" (Graham, Keenan, and Dowd, 2004: 201). In these instances language is used to convince an audience to follow the speaker's will, to leave their families and risk their lives to kill "them." In Harold Lasswell's (1927) classic study, Propaganda Techniques in the World War, he identified four key discursive strategies found in propaganda: demonization of the enemy leader, couching war in terms of defense, exaggeration of atrocities, and devising different justifications for different groups in society based on their different interests. We may recall Sartre's (1960) keen aphorism that "when the rich wage war it's the poor who die." But in waging war, leaders must convince the poor as well as the rich that war is necessary, that "we" must stop "them."

Following a similar vein, Graham, Keenan, and Dowd (2004) collected a corpus of 120 Call to Arms texts from the past millennium, beginning with the speech at Clermont by Pope Urban II (1095) launching the first crusade and concluding with Bush's (2001) "War on Terror" address. In tracing how language was used to justify war, Graham, Keenan, and Dowd (2004: 204) find four generic features: 1) an appeal to an external power source presented as inherently good; 2) an appeal to the nation's historical importance; 3) the construction of a thoroughly evil Other; 4) an appeal for unification to meet that threat.

In his study of how George W. Bush and Barack Obama employed similar linguistic strategies of legitimation to justify two different armed conflicts, Iraq (2007) and Afghanistan

(2009), Reyes (2011) finds five key discursive strategies: 1) emotions, particularly fear; 2) a hypothetical future; 3) rationality; 4) voices of expertise; and 5) altruism. Though Bush and Obama represented different sides of the political spectrum (Republican / Democrat), their discursive approaches were virtually identical.

CDA is often used to examine how Nazi Germany achieved its goal of Jewish out-casting. Rudd (2003: 28), for instance, notes that "tactics of polarization used in the construction of group identity have long been an object of research in post-war Europe, particularly by German-speaking linguists." Researchers have sought to understand how Auschwitz was made possible through language and how language is being used to address (or avoid) the memory of this atrocity. Polarization was fundamental to Jewish "outcasting," yet there is no canon or ascendant framework that outlines the semantic moves associated with it.

Given this absence I could not simply reach for a single framework to apply to labor conflict. That is not due to a poverty of frameworks, however. A survey of CDA reveals a seeming "obsession" with categories and frameworks, but often they are used to point out features particular to the study. The framework I use is not intended to exhaust or consolidate all of the taxonomic structures found in CDA, but simply to draw upon those strategies that deal most explicitly and generally with polarization and then apply them to labor conflict. Doubtless, future research will update and modify this framework, and so it should. These discursive strategies are a starting point, a first attempt. It represents a map for helping me to navigate the uncharted territory of labor conflict discourse. Like Ariadne's skein of thread, I am using this framework to find my way in the labyrinth of language.

It should be noted, however, that though I use these discursive strategies to navigate the field of language generated by the speakers, the study uses inductive not deductive reasoning.

While deductive reasoning moves from the general to the more specific, inductive begins with specific observations to broader generalizations and theories. This bottom up approach is suited for beginning with specific utterances and observing the patterns that they constitute. Inductive reasoning is more open-ended and exploratory, which is well-suited for the present study. The study is not purely inductive since it does begin with the imposing of four discursive strategies, but my research is largely exploratory in nature which is appropriate for inductive reasoning. There is an absence of specific rules for pointing my study in a specific direction of how language is used by the parties to manifest conflict.

My study builds not only on the work of scholars in CDA, but also on my own previous work. In Bad Time Stories: Government-Union Conflicts and the Rhetoric of Legitimation Strategies (2014), Yonatan Reshef and I examined how language legitimated union-government conflicts, especially how public-sector unions and provincial governments mobilized language to legitimate their behavior. In our study, we used the framework suggested by Theo van Leeuwen (2008) for examining the discursive construction of legitimation. This framework, however, is based on uncovering the four main strategies that groups use to legitimate their positions rather than on how the group is constructed in the first place. We did not examine how speakers used language to polarize the actors into separate groups and structure the conflict.

To the best of my knowledge Industrial Relations scholars have not used CDA to examine labor conflict. Yet before conflict manifests itself as strike action and before back-to-work legislation is passed, language is mobilized to construct the conflict and impart its *gravitas*. Speakers used language to provide their audiences with stories, images, anecdotes, and popular myths. These were summoned not only to say that an offer was "reasonable" but also to construct the other group as "unreasonable." But what is reasonable? Here, too, speakers

mobilized language to construct the categories of (un)reasonable. The framework or "discursive strategies" that I introduce shortly represent my attempt to identify some of the key ways that speakers polarized the actors into separate groups.

Gee (2011) argues that discursive strategies adhere to certain "rules" regarding how language is used. In implementing their strategies, the Nazis' use of language followed certain rules; there were certain things that even this regime could not or would not say. Execution, for instance, was referred to as *sonderbehandlung* ("special treatment"). The rules of engagement between union and government speakers may be different than those of the Nazis and yet many of the same discursive strategies appear in both settings. There are also striking similarities between the discursive strategies found in the Third Reich, the Call to Arms speeches, and labor conflict. The framework that I use borrows heavily from scholars of CDA and is designed to shed the greatest light on the discursive strategies deployed by government and union speakers to create conflict. Though CDA is primarily concerned with government discourse, my study dilates the focus to include union efforts as well.

Employing such a framework promises to shed light on several questions that have yet to be addressed in the CDA literature. For instance, are certain discursive strategies held in common or might one side rely more heavily on a single strategy? Would it seem like there are many or few strategies? Is a discursive strategy countered with another strategy or do speakers simply speak past the efforts of their opponents? Speakers may use language to construct an opponent and implicitly identify them as a threat, but do their counterparts respond with a similar or dissimilar strategy? If both sides use the same strategy, what distinguishes its usage and how is it wielded by the different speakers to try and gain the upper hand? Given that government

represents the interests of the public, how might constructions of party interests differ between their uses and those of union?

Unlike the discourse used in times of armed conflict in which the "other" is frequently constructed as "evil" or as a "Great Satan," in my experience the discourse of labor conflict is more subtle and marked by a greater degree of decorum. Teachers, for instance, are recognized by government speakers as performing a vital service and are spoken of in laudatory terms. Nonetheless, government speakers may frame the teachers' union as holding different, potentially disastrous values than the government. For their part, the union would often seem to construct the government as pursuing an agenda at odds with their own (and society's). In either case, speakers construct a clear division between "us" and "them," with positive associations linked to "us" and negative ones to "them."

The Discursive Strategies

Speakers use language to construct the categories of "us" and "them" and to polarize these groups. The following framework is forwarded with the hope of teasing apart the various strands that constitute polarization. It is not intended to consolidate all of the strategies that are found in CDA (a project in itself); rather it presents those strategies that will hopefully shed the greatest light on how speakers set about creating categories and enacting polarization. So far as I know no other student of Industrial Relations has attempted to identify these strategies or explore the foundational role they play in constructing labor conflict. The framework I present is exploratory, not confirmatory: other perhaps more comprehensive strategies will emerge as the analysis proceeds.

As with any study that wishes to chart new territory, one must start somewhere and this framework provides me with a way to begin the journey and a sense of direction. To facilitate an easier reading and help the reader understand the course on which I am embarking, I outline four discursive strategies (Table 1) and then briefly discuss them. The reader is reminded that discourse is rarely this tidy, and it would seem that a single example rarely embodies a single strategy. More often a discursive instance reveals a subtle blending of multiple strategies, which like a garment, provides it with greater strength and subtlety. The framework that I provide imposes artificial and arbitrary boundaries, but it does so to render the invisible visible, to bring to the surface that which has been taken for granted and overlooked.

Table 1

Four Discursive Strategies of Polarization

1. Altruism: refer to an ultimate moral force that binds "us" together.
2. Manipulation of emotions: (concretization) including (e)vilification of "them."
3. Ridicule of the other side: "they" are ridiculous and completely unlike us.
4. Time: Past, future, present

1. Altruism

"Our" actions are often presented as beneficial to others: "we" rarely act out of self-interest; "we" are not driven by greed but "they" are. Reyes (2011: 801) argues how doing things for the poor, innocent, and vulnerable "presents the action as beneficial for a community and circumvents judgment about the selfishness of the speaker." In the context of war, speakers argue that action must be taken on behalf of those who lack democracy, freedom, or equality. Nations

rarely “attack”; instead, speakers tell us that action is required to “protect” a nation’s citizens, or to “safeguard” human rights. For Joseph (2006: 13), speakers invoke a discourse in which their interests represent “the interest[s] of the people as a whole.” As such, speakers forward their own political agenda under the guise of serving the larger interests of their citizens. This is partly what Lakoff (1991) meant when he coined the phrase, “the Fairy Tale of the Just War.”

2. Manipulation of emotions

Emotions are often manipulated by those with political power to achieve their goals (Reyes, 2010). Though emotion is common to all of the strategies, studying it by itself enables us to pay closer attention to the way in which examples, images, stories, experiences, etc., are used to elicit an emotional response. Tusting, Crawshaw, and Callen (2002) note the role of personal experience and emotion in perpetuating stereotypes. Government may be described as callously indifferent or as a faceless bureaucracy, and union may be depicted as greedy and outdated. Such depictions draw upon popular stereotypes and are aimed at the audience’s heart.

Emotion can express sincerity. A hallmark of this strategy is the absence of such modal words as “might,” “may,” “possibly,” “probably.” Instead speakers tell us how an action *will* bankrupt the nation, how failure to address union concerns *will* impoverish the souls of our students. The absence of modals increases perceptions of the speaker’s commitment and the assurance or certainty of their speech acts. Van Dijk (1995) uses the term “concretization” to refer to the way in which the enemy’s negative acts are described in specific, graphic and visual terms, to elicit a strong affective response.

Chilton (2004) draws attention to the close relation of political discourse to emotive effect and argues that framing is never solely rational but rather intimately linked to emotion. The discursive framing of an outsider, for instance, implicitly taps into a community's insecurity about those who are not like them, those who are "strangers." Emotions, as Elster (1994: 24) notes, "have the capacity to alter and distort the cognitive appraisal that triggered them in the first place." Anker (2005: 25) has shown how American national identity established its own "moral virtue through victimization and heroic restitution." It created a cultural mode of melodrama with one of its main qualities residing in "a cyclical interaction of emotion and action meant to create suspense and resolve conflict" (ibid: 24). Emotionally charged speeches rarely present new information, rather they trigger "an emotional mode (fear, sadness, insecurity, revenge) in the audience, ideal for legitimating political actions based on the effects of those emotions" (Reyes, 2011: 789).

3. Ridicule

Ridicule exaggerates the differences between social groups, presenting the other side as holding beliefs and/or values so at odds with commonsense that they appear laughable and irreconcilable. In her study of American conservative talk-show radio, Rudd (2003) draws attention to the way in which Limbaugh and Hamblin ridicule those who hold opposing views. Limbaugh, for instance, "has mocked intellectuals as 'fuzzy-headed academicians,' 'sandal-clad theoreticians' and 'near-sighted pointy heads'" (ibid: 44). Such a portrayal of those who challenge his views (and facts!) renders "them" cartoonish, making it impossible to take seriously what they say.

Such simplistic and generalist labels lump together a vast and varied group of people, enabling Limbaugh and Hamblin to define and utterly dismiss the "liberal" outgroup. In this instance all intellectuals are out of touch and comical. As well, Rudd (2003: 47) notes how such characterizations send a powerful message: "I am a mature person with legitimate concerns, but my opponent has an infantile, hapless and irritating personality and is limited to issuing complaints that have no merit." Ridicule constructs the other as undeserving of our consideration and worthy only of being discarded. In addition, it frames opposing views as annoyances, something that hinders the speaker from their grand pursuit of truth. It was in this way that Hilter portrayed the German parliament as a "babbler's club" (Bork, 1970: 92), a place where mindless politicians spoke only to hear themselves speak and not further the good of the people.

Ridicule obliterates any middle ground or compromise. By ridiculing one's opponents and presenting their views as ridiculous, speakers imply that this group should not and must not be listened to at all; their points cannot be considered. Ridicule paints with a broad brush, implicitly arguing that the out-group is monolithic and deserves our laughter, not attention. The element of humor encourages the audience to adopt the speaker's perspective, to share a laugh together as the out-group's concerns and objections are discarded.

4. Time

To explore how speakers used time to justify their actions speakers' utterances are divided into the categories of past, future and present. I save my discussion of the present time for last since speakers used the past and the future to argue the inevitability of present action. Thus the past and future culminate in speakers' use of the present time.

The Past

Andreas Huyssen (2003: 18) notes how memory and musealization together are increasingly called upon to provide a bulwark against obsolescence and the shrinking horizons of time and space. The turn toward memory is "subliminally energized by the desire to anchor ourselves in a world characterized by an increasing instability of time and the fracturing of lived space." But the past is not neutral and modern uses of the past are increasingly subject to politicization as various groups seek to ascribe a certain view to the past that inscribes their own political agenda. The past presents a powerful linguistic opportunity for creating a starker and more pronounced difference between an "us" and "them." Graham, Keenan, and Dowd (2004: 209) observe how war rhetoric commonly draws a connection between the "exhortations being voiced and the popular historical consciousness of the audience."

Any presentation of the past, however, is by necessity a re-presentation, with speakers emphasizing some features and muting others. Hobsbawm (1983) notes that traditions can be "invented" to either show how current practices extend a laudable tradition or signal a break with a troubled tradition. Hart, Jarvis, Jennings, and Smith-Howell (2005: 170) find that whether American presidents preached change or continuity "all became disciplined by the past once they arrived [in office]." Wodak and de Cillia (2007: 339) describe the vital roles that founding myths and the (re)constructing of collective experiences play in the forming of a nation-state's official past. Recollection and retelling can transform an audience's perception of the past and persuade them to accept the speaker's claims.

Appeals to the past enable speakers to anchor their exhortations within a shared historical consciousness, even as it creates that consciousness. In this way, the past can sanction current

action even as the current action is depicted as honoring the past. But the past may also be characterized as having foisted a great many problems on its unsuspecting heirs, so that predecessors can be depicted as having behaved irresponsibly forcing "us" to now take corrective action. Speakers may also link their group—historically—with the foundational values of their nation. In this way, speakers seek to weave the identity of their group within the larger fabric of the nation: they are standing up for and expressing the core values of the nation. Such an alignment is made possible through the liminal potential of the past. But while it gives us something to think about it also gives us something to not think about. Public memory can be exploited as a political tool.

The Future

Leaders may justify their decision to send their nation into war by constructing a hypothetical future (Reyes, 2011). Discursive constructions of the future warn of the consequences of inaction or promise the fruits of action. Political discourse often extrapolates opponent's views onto the canvas of the future where they become ominous and threatening (Dunmire, 2007). Such depictions are imbued with emotion, and the consequences are made more terrible by the suffering that will be experienced by our children. Reyes (2011: 790) notes that "fear is perhaps the most effective emotion to trigger a response." Fear in political discourse is often developed through a process of "demonization" in which atrocities attributed to the enemy require our immediate intervention, or else the depravity will spread (often likened to cancer).

Dunmire (2007: 19) argues that the future constitutes "an ideologically significant site in which dominant political actors ... can exert power and control." As Fairclough (2003) notes,

"would" and "could" become important markers for speculating about a disastrous future and for imagining scenarios instead of mentioning actual facts. But though the future is hypothetical, the meaning it infuses into the collective memory helps to form a "shared belief" (Beasley, 2004) that is reinforced through repetition. For Fairclough (2002) such a repetitive structure embeds discursive goals so that the audience understands the situation as truthful. A pertinent example would be the popular belief that today's spending is tomorrow's tax (rather than an investment). A focus on the future enables speakers to "deviate the attention from the present itself and to avoid pertinent questions about the decision making" (Reyes 2011: 794).

The Present

Beyond every other consideration the discourse of polarization leads inescapably to one conclusion: something must be done and now. Wittgenstein (1980: 46) remarked that, "words are deeds" which is to say that words are not just words, but rather part of our reality. As such, language lays the rails on which human action may run, predetermining certain outcomes and restricting other avenues of possibility. Language is essential to polarization, but it does not stop there—speakers use language to engender action. In war discourse the enemy is commonly likened to a kind of cancer that will spread if left untreated, or else the enemy seeks to destroy values we hold dear and so intervention is necessary. In such instances, action is implicitly urged: something must be done.

The image of an impending "Fiscal Cliff," for instance, implicitly argues that action must be taken. While speakers on both sides of the conflict make use of the discursive strategies deployed in Call to Arms speeches to tell us that something must be done, it is worth

remembering that labor conflict is not war. Within the context of labor conflict, certain groups are expected to take action. First, workers can be expected to participate in strike action and any other collective action and support the union leadership. Or else they may be expected to embrace government's depiction of reality and so accept the government's offer. Government may be expected to agree with the union's portrayal of events and offer a better deal, or else other government members may be expected to support the speaker and, if needed, vote in favor of legislation. Society at large may be expected to support the speaker's side in a variety of ways. In the end, however, the employee-employer relationship is expected to persist.

Conclusion

For Nelson (2003: 449) "conflict begins and ends via talk and text … It is discourse that prepares for sacrifice, justifies inhumanity, absolves from guilt, and demonizes the enemy." If conflict begins and ends with language, then a study of labor conflict should include a study of how language is used to make such conflict possible. As such, my thesis examines labor conflict through the lens of CDA, and it does so by presenting a framework that illuminates the discursive strategies used to construct groups, polarize them into opponents, and enable conflict. Reading labor conflict through the lens of CDA will enable an understanding of how government and union speakers construct their sides as worlds apart through the resources of language.

It should be pointed out that while calls for armed conflict, or a summons to war, share features with calls for labor conflict, there are fundamental differences. In general, during labor conflict both sides know that the conflict will be over and they will have to return to work together, which may condition their behavior. In labor conflict the "others" are citizens of the

same realm; "they" are our flesh and blood and hold a privileged social standing. Teachers and government members are people with important and visible roles. Second, these are groups who may be seen sympathetically by virtue of their professions. Teachers, for instance, have the province's children under their care. And while politicians may sometimes be the target of public scorn, they are nonetheless public officers tasked with making the province a better place. A further difference is that some of the union members would have supported, and perhaps continued to support the provincial government. Conversely, government speakers would presumably want union members to support them in the next election. Hence the worlds created through words were more intermingled than one would find within the context of a traditional call to arms.

Nonetheless, language is fundamental to the manifestation of conflict in labor and armed conflict. Wodak (2003:133) argues that political discourse and communication are "fundamentally based on distinguishing between 'Us" and 'Them.'" This division is the basis for constructing positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation and for ultimately laying the blame with the out-group. Polarization enables and sharpens such a contrast, and constructing "them" may often enable us to identify who "we" are and what "we" stand for. The "other's" irrationality (to name but one example) may be used to identify "us" as rational, civilized human beings. My study explores how government and union speakers go about constructing such an "us" and a "them" in the first place by examining the discursive strategies that make such polarization possible. Though it is customary to hear that "actions speak louder than words," my thesis argues that actions might be inspired, animated, intensified, moderated, initiated and explained by words. Without language, such actions can only go through the motions.

Chapter 2: Altruism

"That's the most important thing I can say to the teachers out there: Think of your kids. Think of your students."

--Alberta Learning Minister, Lyle Oberg

Introduction

Conflict requires at least two groups. Opposing groups, however, are not necessarily naturally occurring. Sometimes they should be constructed, a task for which language is well-suited. Through language speakers define and mark the boundaries of their group: they tell us who belongs to their group and who does not. They also tell us about their members; what they believe and their core values. Speakers may define their group by contrasting it with a different group or by contrasting the values of their members with those of others. Altruism is a semantic strategy by which such differences can be constructed, explained, and exaggerated. It enables speakers to simplify the conflict by constructing a morally superior in-group and a morally inferior out-group.

While the in-group is presented as selfless, the out-group is characterized as driven solely by self-interest. Within the context of a call to arms, speakers depict themselves as taking action to protect an innocent and vulnerable victim group. As such, speakers using this strategy construct a group that must be protected, is worth saving, and cannot defend itself. In the current study this group was the students, who were portrayed as innocent victims bearing the brunt of the out-group's actions. Students were vulnerable and required the protective action of the in-

group. In protecting this helpless group the in-group was depicted as answering to a higher calling. Their motives were pure; their actions altruistic.

The Oxford English Reference Dictionary defines altruism as "regard for others as a principle of action." In this way, it contains a strong moral component, drawing as it does upon a system of embedded social values which regards selfless action as laudable. Victimizing a vulnerable and innocent group is perceived negatively. Such a group should be protected, not exploited. This requires the group be portrayed as utterly defenseless. There is nothing that they can do to protect themselves. They are victims. This chapter does not intend to explore the philosophic basis of altruism or to weigh in on whether or not pure altruism is possible. Rather, I wish to survey the ways that government and union speakers presented their actions as selfless, as motivated by a concern for the helpless student group.

Students were portrayed as being victimized by the out-group. Government speakers told us that the union was using "our kids" as leverage to negotiate higher salaries. On the other hand, union speakers described government as siphoning money out of the education system, imperiling the quality of public education and impoverishing the learning of "our children." Both government and union speakers explained and justified their actions through altruism: their group had the students' best interests at heart. In so portraying themselves, speakers depicted the out-group as their perverse mirror-image: "they" were guided solely by self-interest. Through altruism speakers radically simplified the conflict and made it seem inevitable. They crafted a context in which innocent students were being held hostage by a powerful out-group. By creating victims and villains, speakers created an avenue for introducing their group as noble heroes who would save the victims and vanquish the villains.

Such a distinction demonstrated that the in-group recognized and adhered to society's system of values. In this way, speakers portrayed their group as incarnating society's highest values and their actions expressed those values. The in-group was selfless; their actions exemplary. They knew the difference between right and wrong and were making tough but admirable choices to do the right thing. Reyes (2011: 802) argues that altruism is a recurrent feature of all political discourse, since it enables speakers to claim that "their actions will benefit others, where 'others' normally is used to refer to the poor, or people without democracy, equality, freedom of expression, etc." In the present study, it was students whose education was being threatened by a powerful and self-interested group.

Through their appeals to altruism speakers constructed three groups: victims, villains, and their own noble hero group. Within the victim group speakers constructed another sub-group. Government speakers told us that parents, too, were being held hostage by the union. They had been pushed to the breaking point by teachers who cared only for themselves. For union speakers, it was public education that was also being victimized. Government had all the power and chose to care more about their budgets than our children. Money was being drained from education and students were suffering. While government speakers complained about a spoiled union with unrealistic demands, union speakers described a government that more closely resembled the schoolyard bullies that plagued their school playgrounds. Woven throughout these portrayals was the depiction of an in-group that was taking the moral highroad; it was guided by an unselfish concern for the suffering of others.

In order to better situate my analysis of altruism I first discuss how altruism can be, and has been, used by political speakers to justify American military action. It is within the context of military action that scholars of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) have drawn attention to

speakers' use of altruism. Following this discussion, the chapter then examines the ways in which altruism was marshaled by union and government speakers to simplify the conflict, while creating an in-group and out-group and setting them on a collision course. The construction of a victim group enabled speakers to define the boundaries of their group and justify their actions. In standing up to protect the victim group, speakers portrayed their group as altruistic.

Altruism to justify American military force

CDA scholars have explored the various ways that America has justified its military presence in the world. For Lazar and Lazar (2004: 60), a central tenet of this justification has been "the benevolent rescue of the oppressed and the restoration of human rights." They argue that Bush and Obama have presented America's military action as necessary for the "liberation" and "improvement" of the victims of an oppressive regime. America was neither angry nor vengeful, but rather it was a great liberator seeking the best interests of the country to which its troops had been deployed. America was answering a higher-calling. Reyes (2011) analyzes the ways American political speakers constructed American action as in the best interests of the countries they were invading: America had come to set the captives free. Self-interest was not a motive; rather its actions were "a sign of pure altruism" (Reyes, 2011: 802).

For Rojo (1995: 50) the Gulf War was an example of the "appropriation of discourse." Though the war began with a search for Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), the focus soon turned to Saddam Hussein, who was described as a depraved enemy that deserved the attacks being made upon him. He was contextualized as deserving these attacks by describing the ranks of oppressed citizens who could not defend themselves against his regime. He was an evil tyrant

who tortured innocent citizens. These were not "average" citizens, but ones that were particularly vulnerable, like women, children, and those belonging to minority groups. Rojo (1995:51) notes how Hussein became a concrete rival embodying "all the anti-values, all the crimes," by which it could be inferred that American action was necessary and "right." American intervention would "protect" those who could not protect themselves.

Speakers encouraged their audience to regard the out-group as personifying all of those values which "we" regard as negative. Hussein was portrayed as uncaring, crazy, decadent, inhuman and evil. For Rojo (1995: 56) altruism allows for "a simplification [that] makes it possible to leave the 'real' causes for the conflict unmentioned." Altruism becomes the reason as well as the justification for the action taken and is seldom explained. Explanation is often rendered unnecessary. In this way, American military action was presented simply as necessary for liberating an oppressed people. Such a simplification, however, brushed aside questions regarding the meaning of oppression, liberation, and American action, and ignored entirely other oppressed groups (i.e., factory workers in Bangladesh, Tibetans, North Koreans, etc.).

Bush and Obama used altruism to "circumvent judgment about the selfishness of [America's action]" (Reyes, 2011: 801). In their speeches they appealed to a higher moral order and argued that it was "wrong" to stand by and watch as an innocent group suffered: these wrongs must be righted. In his address to congress (September 20, 2001), for instance, Bush argued that war was necessary to stop murderers who were targeting women and children. American action was thus presented as not the launching of a military offensive but rather the fulfillment of America's moral obligation to defend those who could not defend themselves. For van Leeuween (2007), altruism relies upon a system of values and contains a strong moral

component. Perhaps this is one of the reasons that the official name of the war in Afghanistan is "Operation Enduring Freedom."

These examples of how altruism was used in the context of American military action shed critical light on the current study. First, it provides examples of how CDA scholars have approached altruism and the conclusions they have drawn. Second, it reveals several recurrent features that I will be exploring: the way that conflict is simplified into selfish villains, suffering victims, and noble actors. Third, it demonstrates the pervasiveness and persistence of altruism as a discursive strategy. Speakers, it would seem, are eager and careful to present their group in the best possible light. One way they do this is by constructing an out-group that embodies all the negative attributes, which creates a contrast and provides a clear target. Understanding how American presidents used altruism to justify military action should help prepare us to understand how the Alberta government and the ATA used altruism to justify their own actions.

Using altruism to simplify the conflict

Reyes (2011:787) argues that "[p]ublic speakers, in particular, and social actors, in general, make sure their proposals do not appear driven only by personal interests." While the out-group is portrayed as selfishly pursuing their own agenda, the actions and policies embraced by the in-group "are typically described as beneficial for the group or society as a whole" (Rojo and Van Dijk, 1997: 528). A recurrent theme in the data is that while the labor conflict was complicated speakers were motivated by a simple truth: they wanted what was best for the kids. As such, the complex issues associated with labor action (negotiating process, contract length, pension, previous concessions, contracts awarded to other groups, professional development, etc.) were

largely ignored. Instead, speakers told us about a group that did not care about students and was simply looking out for number one. The in-group was presented as taking action because of its selflessness, because of its concern for these victims. Within such a context the complexities of labor conflict were simplified into a singular theme: one group was standing up for what was right against another group that was bent on pursuing its own selfish agenda.

For both government and union speakers, students were constructed as the reason and recipient of their action: students were being exploited by the out-group. For Learning Minister, Lyle Oberg, students were being sacrificed by teachers in their attempt to pressure the government for more money. On the other hand, for ATA President, Larry Booi, students were bearing the brunt of government's unwillingness to spend money on education. In both cases, speakers constructed their group as having the students' best interests at heart. They alone were willing to take the difficult but necessary action to stand up on behalf of students who were vulnerable and powerless.

To personalize and concretize the message, speakers used the words "students" and "kids." In the data set, government speakers used "students" 17 times and "kids" 7 times, while union speakers used "students" 4 times and "kids" 7 times. These were the human faces behind the abstract term "public education." Speakers used this group to portray their actions as altruistic. Space prevents an examination of how and when students were referred to as "students" or "kids" and the effect such usage may have generated. Possibly the term "kids" was intended to elicit a greater degree of sympathy. Regardless of this distinction, "students" and "kids" were constructed as a vulnerable group that was helpless and needed to be rescued by a powerful group.

By focusing attention on this vulnerable group speakers ignored or slighted other issues like budgets, salaries, pensions, education, and labor laws. Perhaps this is because "students" and "kids" are less abstract and invite our sympathy and protection. Nonetheless, throughout the discursive battle students were described as being put "at risk" by the other group's actions. Union speakers attempted to portray themselves less as professionals seeking better compensation than as guardians of "our" children's education. By contrast, government speakers presented themselves as reaching for legislation to protect the future of "our" children's education. For both government and union speakers, altruism allowed them to simplify the conflict: their immediate action was needed because a vulnerable student group was being taken advantage of by a powerful and unscrupulous out-group.

Union

For union speakers the reason for the conflict was simplified.

1.1 While they did get somewhere on salaries we've said from the beginning ... we're not going to see teacher salary increases on the backs of kids in classrooms. (Booi. "Alberta Teachers' Association nixes contract reached by Medicine Hat local." *Medicine Hat News*. Nov 23, 2001).

1.2 Teachers are the only ones who are standing up for proper funding for education (Booi. Holubitsky, Jeff. "Huge Gap Between Teacher Demands, Board Budgets." *Edmonton Journal*. January 3, 2002).

1.3 We've never said every class was too big. We said there's far too many that are too large … In an average class, four kids have a defined special need. If the average is four in a class of 23, how many are there in a class of 30? The real world of those numbers is that teachers go home at the end of the day feeling guilty because they know with all those kids with high needs, they didn't get to a lot of the kids who need their help the most (Booi. Koziey, Lynne. "Alberta Releases Class Size Figures." *Calgary Herald*. January 20, 2002).

1.4 If they order us back, the fight isn't over. If you think you can wave a legislative wand and make all the problems go away, it's not going to be that way and we will find other ways to fight it. Look at B.C. [British Columbia] right now, you take away their [teachers'] right to strike and they start with withdrawing voluntary services and extra-curricular activities … What I can tell you is we are not going away until the problems are addressed. I tell teachers to go with their eyes wide open. No children's crusades. No starry-eyed illusions you are going to have three days and they will order you back. The only guarantee is if we don't take strong action, nothing is going to change (Booi. Holubitsky, Jeff. "Alberta Teachers Ready to Work to Rule." *Edmonton Journal*. January 22, 2002).

1.5 But the strike is not about higher wages. It is about three things: classroom conditions, wages, and recruitment and retention of teachers. Teachers are prepared to get a little beaten up because nobody likes a strike. People may get angry, we may get beaten up, but if we don't do this nothing is going to get better (Booi responding to a poll which asked Albertans whether they supported or opposed teachers going out on strike to seek higher wages. Forty-seven per cent of respondents supported the teachers, while 48 per cent opposed a strike). (Derworiz, Colette. "Teachers Strikes Divide Albertans." *Calgary Herald*. January 23, 2002).

1.6 If Dr. Oberg spent one-quarter of his energy into solving the problem, we might not be at this point. Since last April, he's decided to pick a fight with the teachers with a string of press releases, and now these ads suggesting that Alberta teachers are the highest paid on average in the country, that the classroom sizes are small, and that the government is investing heavily in special-needs children. It's a pugnacious attitude that is really angering teachers because they know he's wrong. Dr. Oberg likes to use averages when he tries to make his point. But what do averages mean? If you average temperatures, you can get rid of winter (Booi. Thomson, Graham and Ed Struzik. "ATA Calls Oberg's Ad Blitz 'Misleading.'" *Edmonton Journal*. February 2, 2002).

1.7 These people [teachers] are passionately committed to kids, but the reason they had this strike in the first place is that they were not going to see another 10 years of deterioration of public education and decline of the profession (Booi. Derworiz, Colette. "ATA Boss Vows to Fight Back." *Calgary Herald*. February 16, 2002).

1.8 One of my class sizes is 38 kids for Grade 6 science. The working conditions are the worst they've been and I've been teaching 22 years (Wendy Porteous [teacher]. "First picket line goes up in 18-day-old Alberta teachers strike." *Edmonton Journal*. February 20, 2002).

1.9 We've always said that the capacity to pay is there—It's the willingness that's the problem. To me, the real problem has been priorities and values. I don't think they see public education as a big enough priority. I think they value small government and the lowest possible taxes (Booi. Thompson, Wendy-Anne. "Liberal Pushes Using Surplus to Meet Demands." *Calgary Herald*. February 17, 2002).

> 1.10 This action will inflame teachers, destroy co-operation, and undermine our classrooms right across this province. This is a form of bullying. What they have now is a completely poison atmosphere in schools across the province. … We had the audacity to point out that Alberta has the highest class size in the country. We got messages at the time that was a serious mistake and that there was going to be pay back (Booi. Rusnell, Charles and Graham Thomson. "Teachers' Stabbed in the Back." *Edmonton Journal*. March 12, 2002).

According to Booi (1.7), teachers cared deeply about their students; in fact the conflict was a result of their passionate commitment to their students. Elementary school teacher, Wendy Porteous (1.8), offered a similar explanation. Class sizes were intolerable; they were the worst they had been in 22 years. In both instances, the speakers made it appear as though their actions were guided out of concern for the kids. The government, apparently, did not care about the kids. They did not care if classrooms were overcrowded. It was the teachers who were standing up on behalf of the students. Booi further argued that teachers were also defending public education. While teachers, like Porteous, addressed the more immediate concerns of classrooms and students, Booi addressed the large scale concern of public education in general. He presented himself as holding a larger perspective and launching a fight on behalf of an important public institution.

No longer were teachers willing to simply stand by and watch the continued deterioration of public education and their profession. In this way, Booi provided a simple motive for the teachers' actions. They were "passionately committed to kids" and were standing up for public education. They expressed their motives in a way that most people would presumably approve. This illustrates Rojo and van Dijk's (1997: 528) point that actions and policies embraced by the in-group "are typically described as beneficial for the group or society as a whole." In this case, public education was presented as an important value for society, but it was apparently not a priority for the government. For Booi (1.9), government had plenty of money to address the

union's concerns, but public education was not a "big enough priority" for the government. Instead the government wanted only smaller government and lower taxes. They did not care if 38 kids were crammed into a Grade 6 science class (1.8).

In 1.7 and 1.9 Booi simplified the problem and presented a clear solution. First, he asserted that the quality of public education had been steadily deteriorating over the past ten years, though no proof was offered. Second, no mention was made of what he meant when he decried the decline in the profession. It is not clear whether such a decline referred to the teacher-student ration, the number of teachers in the profession, a decline in teachers' professional prestige, or to the marks received by students on provincial achievement tests. Nonetheless, a clear solution was provided. Government simply needed to make public education a priority and everyone would be happy.

Using altruism to construct victims

Reyes (2011:803) argues that "when our actions benefit other groups, especially the innocent, unprotected and the poor, etc., they are more likely to be accepted and approved by our interlocutors." In simplifying the conflict, union speakers presented their actions as benefiting an innocent and vulnerable student group. In this context, students were children who were vulnerable and needed protection. Such a depiction draws heavily upon certain preconceived notions like innocence, vulnerability, youth, childishness, and even horse-play ("are you kidding me?"). The term student, which was also used by government and union speakers, is less personal and denotes a more autonomous entity. The word "kids" implicitly draws upon such referents as parents, home, young, and dependent; whereas the word "student" draws upon other,

less personal referents, like teachers, school, education, and learning. As such, part of the assumption of "kids" is that they require parents or guardians who will guide and protect them. Students, presumably, need teachers, schools, and education and while students can be kids, we understand that "student" itself represents a passage from childhood (when people are kids) to adulthood (when people are adults).

Children, students, and public education itself were constructed by speakers as victims that needed their protection. In this way union speakers framed themselves as looking out for the students. They were described as not acting out of self-interest but rather acting on behalf of another vulnerable group. Teachers did not want money for themselves but for their students. Unfortunately, students did not have a voice in the level of funding that government had marked for their education. They were crammed in overcrowded classrooms and had no other options. Perhaps they did not even know that their conditions were "intolerable." Teachers were thus presented as acting on their behalf. Teachers knew what levels of funding were "proper." They knew that conditions were intolerable and they had the wherewithal to stand up to government and fight for proper funding.

For union speakers students were being victimized by a government that did not care about the quality of their education. But teachers knew better. Booi presented the union as possessing knowledge that the government had chosen to ignore. The government's use of averages to describe Alberta classrooms was akin to using averages to argue the mildness of winter. In 1.6, Booi asserted that teachers knew that Oberg was wrong. Oberg was using averages to mislead people into thinking that government was investing in education. According to Booi, it was the kids who most needed help that were falling through the cracks, which left teachers in a predicament. It was not because teachers did not care, but rather teachers cared too

much. At the end of the day teachers were left "feeling guilty" because they could not "get to" the kids who needed them.

Government's refusal to admit the "real world of those numbers" had created another group of victims. In 1.3 and 1.6, Booi constructed students as being victims of large class sizes; they were not getting the help they needed. But teachers too were suffering; they, too, were victims. Large class sizes prevented them from doing their job. They left work feeling "guilty." Interestingly, the sub-theme of parents-as-victims was never mentioned by the union: were parents also being victimized because their children's needs were not being met? Instead, we were told that the union was standing up for "proper funding for education" (1.4). Even though teachers (1.6) knew the truth about class sizes and the government's lack of investment in special needs students, their cries had fallen on deaf ears.

More egregiously, the union had discovered that government would shoot those messengers with the courage to tell the bad news. In 1.10, Booi remarked how his union "had the audacity to point out that Alberta has the highest class size in the country." Here, the union was described as having done what any responsible group should do: it had warned its employer of a developing crisis. They had informed their government and the public that Alberta had the largest class sizes in Canada. In these large classes, students were being left behind. Apparently, government had responded not with concern but by warning the union that there would be "pay back." Instead of being thanked the union was being punished for disclosing the dangerous learning conditions in Alberta classrooms.

Using altruism to ennoble action

In their analysis of how news agencies construct and exploit social values, Galtung and Ruge (1973:62-72) argue the importance of putting a face on the conflict in order to connect with an audience. Putting a face on the out-group similarly enables speakers to mark "them" more clearly, while setting them aside as outcasts or threats. Conversely, it also enables speakers to present the in-group positively. As Fowler (1991: 15) notes, putting a face on the conflict enables speakers to "promote straightforward feelings of identification, empathy or disapproval and to effect a metonymic simplification of complex historical and institutional processes." In seeking to portray themselves as "good" people speakers sought to portray their actions as "the right thing." In so doing, union speakers sought to draw attention to why they were pursuing certain actions rather than discussing the nature of those actions themselves. They were good people conducting themselves in an exemplary fashion.

These were good people who not only knew what was right, but also they were willing to take action. If teachers had to take strike action to improve the learning conditions of the students, they would do so. If they must stand up to an unjust and uncaring government, they would do so. Throughout the conflict the ATA presented itself as selfless. In explaining why the ATA had nixed the agreement reached between the teachers and the school board in Medicine Hat, Booi stated that his union was not willing to accept a proposed 11% wage because of moral reasons: "We're not going to see teacher salary increases on the backs of kids in classrooms" (1.1). Here, Booi explained his union's decision <u>to not</u> approve the salary increase because the money would have been taken from the school's budget; therefore, it was going to come "on the backs of kids in classrooms," which was not acceptable. The statement painted a flattering

portrait of teachers: they would not accept money that had come from such channels. This was "dirty" money. It can be noted that "kids" in this instance likely provided a more powerful and evocative image than the less personal "students."

Presumably most people would agree that financial gains should not come on the backs of kids. This may be why Booi presented his union's decision in such terms, so that teachers would be viewed favorably and their decision supported. But it also cast the ATA as noble: they had high standards and would not accept "dirty" money. Their altruism stood in stark contrast to those who had proposed this solution in the first place. Apparently, the government out-group was willing to plunder the school's budget to offer money to the teachers, even though it would negatively affect students. While "we" would not accept such gains, "they" had no qualms offering them. Booi constructed the union's refusal as noble by framing it as altruistic. Implicitly, he also characterized the out-group's offering of such a deal as ignoble. "They" were not above taking money away from kids in the classrooms.

Perhaps a further reflection of societal values was Booi's claim that the strike was not only about money. Booi claimed that it was "about three things: classroom conditions, wages, and recruitment and retention of teachers" (1.5). Teachers' wages were apparently one small part of the problem. By downplaying the role of wages Booi may have been trying to avoid the perception of his union as simply striking for more money. Presumably, teachers were motivated by other and more noble values than money, like molding young minds and instilling a love for learning. As well, Booi characterized teachers' actions as necessary for improving public education: "if we don't do this nothing is going to get better" (1.5). In this way, the teachers were described as motivated by a desire to improve education rather than their own bottom line.

Union action was further ennobled by describing the teachers' persistence. In 1.4, Booi declared that "we are not going away until the problems are addressed … if we don't take strong action, nothing is going to change." Here, he explained his union's refusal to go quietly as signaling their dedication to public education. There were some significant and vexing problems that had to be addressed. It is important to note that Booi was suggesting Alberta teachers might follow their counterparts in B.C. and withdraw voluntary services and extra-curricular activities. These would be unpopular. Obviously. And yet Booi painted these controversial and even inflammatory actions with a noble brush. Teachers would take these extreme measures so that the problems would be addressed. In 1.5, Booi argued that teachers were following a higher calling. They were willing to endure the slings and arrows of an enraged public so that the problems could be fixed: "Teachers are prepared to get a little beaten up because nobody likes a strike. People may get angry, we may get beaten up, but if we don't do this nothing is going to get better."

Government

Government speakers, too, described themselves as motivated by a concern for the students. They were the ones looking out for the "kids." Similar to the union, they used altruism to simplify the reasons for the conflict and their role in it.

1.11 When it comes to work to rule and a strike, what we're talking about here is kids that are suffering, and in all fairness I don't think that's what teachers want (Oberg. "Alberta teachers say government must bump up pay offer or they will strike." *Edmonton Journal*. April 27, 2001).

1.12 I think that teachers belong in the classroom. I think that students belong in the classroom … I have to ensure that students get their education and where I draw the line in the sand is where students won't be able to complete their year. That is not

acceptable. There is absolutely no way the public, the government or anybody else would tolerate kids missing six months of the year, half a year of schooling, because someone is on strike (Oberg. Williamson, Kerry. "Oberg Fears Strike Can't Be Averted." *Calgary Herald*. January 12, 2002).

1.13 This [pension deal] is as far as we can go. It's a huge thing. It is not something we do lightly, but we want our kids back in the classroom. I am the Minister of Learning and I am there for the kids. If it goes to a strike position I am not sure that this (offer) will be there (Oberg. Pederson, Rick. "Oberg's Proposal Not Enough, Teachers' Union Says." *Edmonton Journal*. January 12, 2002).

1.14 I have heard from more than 1,000 parents who are at their wits' end … We have had a lot of phone calls, a lot of hardship stories that have come into us over the past two days. We feel it's absolutely hideous students are in the middle of this. What we have done today is take students out of the equation [by legislating an end to the strike] (Oberg. "Manipulation 101." *Calgary Herald*. February 22, 2002).

1.15 This is about students, and I think that's the most important thing I can say to the teachers out there: think of your kids. Think of your students when you are doing this … If we lose the case [i.e., the ATA court appeal of the Order in Council] then I am prepared to bring in legislation to put them back to work, because students have had enough (Oberg. Thomson, Graham and Jeff Holubitsky. "Oberg Won't Tolerate 2nd Walkout." *Edmonton Journal*. February 23, 2002).

1.16 I have a huge problem when teachers take out their frustrations on the students (Oberg. "Alberta teachers dispute." *Daily News* [Prince Rupert, B.C]. March 13, 2002).

The government data support Rojo's (1995: 56) notice of how simplification "makes it possible to leave the 'real' causes for the conflict unmentioned." In 1.11, for instance, Oberg characterized such features of union action as "work to rule" and "strike action" as about "kids that are suffering." He did not explain what these measures meant nor why the union felt it necessary to adopt them, rather he interpreted them as causing "kids" to suffer. Implicitly, such a comment casts aspersions on the moral fiber of those who would embrace any action causing "kids" to suffer. In so contextualizing the conflict Oberg circumvented judgment about his government's role in the conflict. The union alone was responsible for causing kids to suffer. As

well, his interpretation avoided having to explain how such legal actions by the ATA could be construed as causing kids to suffer.

In his description of the conflict, Oberg outlined how things were supposed to work: teachers and students belonged in the classroom (1.12). Since they belonged there, his government's duty was to ensure that they were in the classroom and not somewhere else. In 1.15, Oberg implied that the teachers had neglected to "think of" their "kids." If teachers were to simply think of their students, as we can assume the government had, then the ATA would realize the error of its ways and the teachers would return to their classrooms. In this instance, the reason for the conflict was presented very simply: the teachers were not thinking of their students.

In its response to the strike action taken by the ATA, the government introduced Order in Council 77/2002, which stated "that on and after February 21, 2002 all further action and procedures in the dispute are hereby replaced by the procedures under section 112 [Emergencies] of the Labour Relations Code." Essentially, the government declared a state of emergency so that it could legislate the teachers back to work. However, Court of Queen's Bench Chief Justice Allan Wachowich struck down the government order (March 1, 2002), thereby allowing the ATA to resume its strike. This complex situation was radically simplified by Oberg. For Oberg (1.14), strike action was tantamount to teachers taking out their frustrations on students. Hence the union was venting its frustrations on an innocent party. What it means when teachers take out their frustrations on students was never explained. Neither was it made clear how the Chief Justice's decision to allow the ATA to resume its strike could be equated with teachers taking out their frustrations on students. Oberg made it clear that he had a "huge problem" with teachers taking out their frustrations on students.

Presumably Oberg's audience would agree with this sentiment. Kids should not be so used. It is worth noting how Oberg's statement constructed the teachers as a monolithic out-group. It is safe to assume that many (if not all) teachers would have agreed with Oberg's statement: teachers should not take out their frustrations on students. Presumably, teachers would take very seriously any such action by their colleagues. And yet Oberg's statement lumped all the teachers into this group. Strike action represented teachers taking out their frustrations on their students. Since it involved all of the teachers, they were all behaving in this way. Such a construction enabled Oberg to galvanize the distinction between government and union and to outcast the union. "They" were taking out their frustrations on our "kids," which is something that "we" would never do.

For government it was the "kids" being left to bear the brunt of the union's actions, not the government. The teachers' actions were hurting the wrong people. Students were described as helpless casualties in a conflict for which they were not responsible. From the government's perspective, students were having their education taken away from them by the very people who had been entrusted with providing it. Students were powerless pawns at the mercy of a self-interested union seeking more money. They were a helpless group in need of a powerful defender.

In Oberg's view (1.14), legislation was a tool government could use to fix an "absolutely hideous" situation. For Oberg, the only thing students should be in the middle of was their school year. By saying that students were "in the middle of" the conflict Oberg characterized them as victims caught in the crossfire between a sympathetic government and a striking union. Oberg simplified why his government had declared a public emergency and ordered teachers to end their strikes: it was about the kids. In 1.15, Oberg presented his government as knowing that

"students have had enough." He never explained how he had gained such information, but neither was he asked to produce evidence. He did, however, explain that legislation was being implemented on behalf of the students. His government was acting out of selfless concern for the kids. By taking "the students out of the equation" Oberg implied that negotiations could now be conducted directly between the parties involved without harming the students.

A fundamental aspect of altruism is knowing which values and/or groups are held in high regard by a community. For instance, in declaring the following (1.13), "I am the Minister of Learning and I am there for the kids," Oberg identified and aligned himself with a key societal group—kids. As the Minister of Learning, he could have just as easily remarked that he was "there for the students"; "there for the teachers"; "there for the parents"; "there for the province"; or even "there for the government." And yet most readers would presumably recognize that these other groups do not carry the same gravitas as "kids." As a group, children evoke a strong emotional response. Why? It is difficult to explain why we place some categories of people above others, but we do. And knowing which categories register what level of importance distinguishes someone as knowledgeable of such a hierarchy, as a member of the in-group.

If speakers understand the values of their community, they can then present their motives as expressing those values. By describing his government as using legislation on behalf of kids, Oberg marginalized other reasons why his government would reach for legislation. Also, he may have gained public approval by framing legislation as proof of his government's decision to protect a highly valued group (how can you not stand up for kids?). It also made it seem as though his government was acting purely in the interests of students. They would negotiate with the union and give audience to their demands, but like everyone else in the community (1.12):

"There is absolutely no way the public, the government or anybody else would tolerate kids missing six months of the year, half a year of schooling, because someone is on strike."

The secondary victim group that Oberg mentioned was parents. In 1.14, Oberg told his audience that he "heard from more than 1,000 parents who are at their wits' end … We have had a lot of phone calls, a lot of hardship stories that have come into us over the past two days." Apparently, parents had "had enough," but like their children they were powerless. Interestingly, Oberg did not provide evidence of how he had "heard" from so many parents in such a short period of time, nor did he tell us how the loss of a few days of school constituted "hardship stories." As well, he did not say how many parents had called him in support of the teachers. Yet he made it clear that his government was using its legislative power to stand up on behalf of those parents "at their wits' end." Legislation would protect the vulnerable; it was not just an easy way out.

Depicting a victim group implies that a group is being victimized by a more powerful group. Throughout the conflict, government speakers presented themselves as standing up for the students. Even though the action they were taking might be regarded as unpopular by the teachers, it was nonetheless necessary, like medicine, for bringing about the cure. Teachers might not like legislation, but it was preferable to allowing them to take out their frustrations on the kids. Government would have liked to give everyone what they wanted, but it did not have unlimited resources. The actions taken by the out-group were forcing it to reach for an imperfect instrument. Government could not make everyone happy, but they were doing what was best for our kids.

Taking the moral high road was credited as the reason government was embracing action it would normally shun. In 1.13, Oberg described his government's offer to take over the

unfunded liability portion of the teachers' pension plan (this would have amounted to about a three per cent wage increase). The offer was presented as an ultimatum. If a single local union walked off the job, the deal was off. And yet Oberg framed his government's proposal of the pension deal as "a huge thing," something that they would do only because they wanted their "kids back in the classroom." Also, by referring to the students as "our kids," Oberg may have strengthened parents' perception of a bond between themselves and government, since these were "our kids." Such identification dilated the boundaries of the in-group to include parents and kids along with the government; but not the teachers!

Oberg invited his audience to interpret the government's offer in terms of their commitment to kids rather than in terms of their bargaining with the ATA. Government was guided by altruism not opportunism. In this moral order, kids commanded the utmost concern, and Oberg was "there for the kids." Because it was critical to have kids in the classroom government would do something, like the pension deal, that it preferred not to do. Oberg portrayed legislation and the pension deal as exemplifying his government's concern for the students. Government was not simply trying to find an easy way out of a difficult situation, but rather it was doing everything in its power to protect a vulnerable group. Legislation was not an easy answer to a difficult labor problem, rather it answered the need to end students' hardship. Presumably, if government has the power to end hardship, it should do so. According to Oberg, it was "hideous" that students were caught in the middle. Government recognized the situation as requiring their immediate action.

Conclusions

Altruism allowed speakers to simplify the conflict and valorize their role in it. Conflict requires an in-group and an out-group. It also requires that these groups be characterized as opposed in some fundamental manner. An analysis of the data reveals that speakers constructed this dichotomy by constructing a third group, victims. These victims were "kids" whose education was being jeopardized by the selfish actions of the out-group. By contrast, the in-group was motivated by altruism. They knew what was best for the kids and would do everything within their power for them. For Oberg (1.13), he was "there for the kids" and his government's use of legislation would ensure that they were not caught in the middle. Booi (1.1) argued that teachers were "passionately committed to kids." His union's decision to take action was animated by their concern that students receive a quality education.

Through altruism speakers simplified the conflict and presented the in-group positively and the out-group negatively. The distance and difference between these groups were exaggerated by projecting the conflict through the lens of altruism. The in-group was populated by "good" people who were doing the "right" thing by standing up for powerless students, who had been left to suffer by the selfish actions of the out-group. "They" belonged to a different moral order and should not be supported. The in-group was acting nobly and deserved admiration and support. Within this moralized landscape inaction became unacceptable. If a vulnerable group is being exploited, action must be taken. To identify the wrong without taking action was presumed wrong. Altruism thus creates a context in which the in-group must take action. It must do something to stop the out-group from continuing to exploit this vulnerable group.

This chapter has explored how speakers used altruism to construct the conflict and their place in it. By portraying themselves as taking action on behalf of a vulnerable but valuable group, speakers identified themselves and their parties as noble people with the courage to do the "right" thing. And they told their audience what the right thing was. Through altruism, speakers constructed a reality in which they could not only locate themselves as defenders of "our kids," but also identify a selfish out-group operating outside the pale of societal norms. In so doing, the in-group was simultaneously separated and distanced from the out-group: "they" belong to a different moral order. It was their regard for children that inspired the in-group. In this way, speakers aligned themselves with a key societal value while seeking to strengthen their position at the bargaining table.

Chapter 3: Manipulating emotion

"Teachers are frustrated and they are angry."

--ATA President Larry Booi

Introduction

The current chapter explores how speakers sought to manipulate the emotions of their audience. In particular, it examines how and why speakers may have chosen to declare their members' feelings. Who was their audience and what emotions did speakers described? What was the purpose of such declarations? Why should the audience care if members were hopeful, disappointed, frustrated or angry? These are questions that this chapter sets out to explore. Recall that I am a student of Industrial Relations, not psychology or sociology, and so my interest lies in how speakers used their utterances to create sides, generate conflict, and elicit support within the context of labor conflict.

Who was the audience? The press allowed speakers to address multiple interested audiences, including members of their own group, members of the other group, and those with a general interest. In this way, speakers could use the press to tell their members, who may hold a variety of views, how they should be feeling or how they should be reacting to the latest developments. By characterizing their members as experiencing a particular emotion speakers could present their group as united and homogenous, down-playing differences of opinion while encouraging conformity and confidence. Addressing members of the out-group enabled speakers to let them know how the in-group regarded their proposals or actions. Perhaps expressing the group's collective emotion constituted a warning. If members are angry, then strong action may

follow. In addressing interested members of the public, speakers could tell them how to interpret the situation, that they should be disappointed with the latest government offer or that they should be outraged by the union's excessive demands. Speakers advised them how "to read" the situation. These are some of the ways that speakers used emotion.

To facilitate an easier reading, three questions will serve to guide our exploration: whose emotions were targeted; how did speakers attempt this; and to what end were these emotions being manipulated? First, it is critical to consider whose emotions may have been targeted. While we can never be sure who the speakers meant to address, perhaps multiple audiences, the utterances hold a special significance depending on the audience. Second, how were these emotions targeted by speakers? What were some of the ways that speakers aimed for the emotions of their audience? Third, why might speakers have been seeking to manipulate emotions? What was the purpose? Did speakers want to tell others what their group was feeling, or did they want to intimidate certain actors or make some people resentful of other people?

These questions provide the focus for this chapter so that we can explore how speakers spoke to different groups and to what end. With these questions in mind, the remainder of this chapter is organized as follows. First, I open with prefatory remarks shedding light on the study of emotions generally. Second, I explore the three questions outlined above within the context of union utterances. Third, these questions then guide an examination of government utterances. Fourth and finally, I conclude with a discussion of the marked differences between these two groups.

Prefatory remarks

How speakers characterize their group's emotions and the effect they hope to create confronts a basic problem. As Stenvall (2007: 205) points out, "emotions are, basically, subjective experiences, something that is hidden in people's mind." Emotion should thus be understood as a uniquely individual experience, which problematizes an outsider's ability to understand and articulate that emotion. There is also lack of agreement concerning what an emotion is and how it is produced (Berezin, 2002: 37). And yet most of us have experienced events where we felt that we shared an emotion with a larger group: celebrating a win for the home team, grieving the loss of a loved one at a funeral, and feelings of civic pride at a public event. To speak of collective emotions requires that "some aggregate of individuals is feeling something that is sufficiently alike to be identified as the common emotion of that aggregate" (Kemper, 2002: 62). The tears of those in attendance at Princess Diana's funeral, for instance, allowed commentators to mark the solemnity of the occasion and comment on the nation's sadness. Along these lines Berezin (2002: 44-45) discusses the critical role played by commemorations in the generation of collective emotions or what sociologists call "communities of feeling."

Such feelings that "we were all there together" can be exploited by political leaders. In his examination of how Bush and Obama legitimized two different armed conflicts (Iraq, 2007; Afghanistan, 2009), Antonio Reyes (2011) points to how the American people were constructed as united in their emotions. Both presidents used the events of 9/11 to appeal to their audiences' emotions while sanctioning their party's military response. In justifying American military action both speakers repeatedly told their audiences how "Americans" were feeling. For Reyes (2011: 790), emotions are key "because they condition and prepare the audience to receive proposals

and courses of actions." For example, in his address to a joint session of Congress, Bush (September 20, 2001), remarked how "Our grief has turned to anger, and anger to resolution." In this instance, Bush identified feelings of grief, anger, and resolution purportedly shared by all Americans that were now reaching their ultimate expression in his announcement of American military action.

The study of emotion is relatively new. Prior to the 1970s, it was primarily the domain of psychology and philosophy, but currently it attracts researchers from a wide range of academic disciplines, "linguistics, sociology, anthropology, political science and neuroscience" (Stenvall, 2007: 206). To the best of my knowledge, it has not attracted much, if any, attention from researchers within Industrial Relations. Researchers concerned with the role of language in society have looked at how collective emotions are constructed by speakers and the press. Speakers may characterize the emotions of a group to tell their audience how these members are feeling and also to signal that an event is causing outrage or approval. A speaker may also articulate the emotions of a group in order to construct the solidarity of a group, that "we were all there together" (cf. Berezin, 2002: 45; Stenvall, 2007: 213).

Union

Union speakers wasted few words telling us how their members were feeling. As indicated by the following instances, Booi left little doubt that his members were unhappy.

2.1 General anxiety in the classroom has turned into general anger …I have never seen anything like it. (Booi. "Alberta teachers angry over salary increase; plan strike in the fall." *Edmonton Journal*. May 20, 2001).

2.2 Not only have we not abused the strike weapon, we haven't used it for 10 years. That's how reluctant we are. There's a lot of regret, but it's regret combined with

determination. (Booi. Braid, Don. "ATA Boss Carries a Big Stick." *Calgary Herald*. January 15, 2002).

2.3 Our frustration in Alberta is that we're headed for an unprecedented strike largely because the government has made no serious attempt to deal with our concerns. When we get denial from the minister and open threats from the Premier of our province, it makes me think, 'I guess, we're in for a fight'" (Booi. Thomas, Don. "Don't Try It, Teachers Warn." *Edmonton Journal*. January 27, 2002).

2.4 Teachers are so angry with Dr. Oberg. Dr. Oberg has wanted punitive legislation and union busting since the beginning. (Booi. Thomson, Graham and Jeff Holubitsky. "Oberg Won't Tolerate 2nd Walk." *Edmonton Journal*. February 23, 2002).

2.5 This is an arrogant abuse of power. It's also a black day for public education and democracy in Alberta. What was tabled is not arbitration. It is legislative smashing of fair collective bargaining and teachers' rights … For the Premier to suggest that I and teachers asked for this travesty, is simply incredible and ludicrous (Booi. Olsen,Tom. "Teachers Urged to Pull Voluntary Services." *Calgary Herald*. March 12, 2002).

2.6 Wildcat strikes (are) the big fear right now … There was a lot of talk of mass resignations … some of our people are so enraged that we have real fears that they may do things that will backfire. (Booi. "Alberta teachers' union urges members to refrain from wildcat strikes." *Edmonton Sun*. March 17, 2002).

The union utterances spanned a range of emotions, from anxiety and anger (2.1), to regret (2.2), to rage and fear (2.6). In these instances, Booi made it clear that his members were emotionally invested in the conflict. For the union, this was an emotional event. His members were not simply calculating numbers or engaging in various negotiation strategies. Union members were taking the conflict personally. Booi also clarified which emotions his members were experiencing. As noted earlier, to enable a more clearly focused exploration of the emotional import of these utterances I interrogate them within three different though related aspects. I begin by considering the three main audiences to which these utterances may have been directed.

Who were speakers addressing?

The press provided a medium for union speakers to address multiple audiences. Of course, not everyone who picks up a paper or turns on their television would necessarily be interested in hearing about the conflict. As well, those who were interested may have had any number of reasons for following the conflict. In outlining the main audiences, I am not attempting to be exhaustive nor am I trying to list all of the reasons why these groups constituted an audience. Instead, I am simply painting with broad strokes the landscape of the conflict so that we may discern its general features.

The first audience that union speakers may have wished to address was the teachers themselves. First, Booi could have assumed that teachers would pay attention to what their president was saying. Of course, he would have communicated through other channels and yet the press provided him a further opportunity to offer his members a window onto his view of the events. Perhaps Booi believed that offering such a view would persuade members how they should interpret the latest government offer or the most recent event. As well, if strike action was in the cards, union leaders would have to convince teachers to join the picket line, not cross it. As well, union speakers may have sought to maintain members' confidence in their ability to lead the union through this tempestuous event.

A second audience that union speakers may have addressed was members of the ruling government. By addressing these members, especially their leaders, Klein and Oberg, speakers may have hoped to send a clear message about the union's solidarity and resolve. Through the press, union speakers could tell the government that its members were angry and ready to take strong action should their concerns not be addressed. Similarly, union leaders could intimate the

course of its future actions, reminding government of the steps that they could take. Speakers may also have hoped that addressing government members would allow them to convey the mood of their members, to let government know how receptive members were to the offer on the table.

Union speakers could also address interested members of the public. On the face of it, this would seem to apply most directly to the concerned parents of children, but not all concerned parents would necessarily follow the conflict. And some parents may have been concerned only insofar as wondering when their kids would be out of their hair. Speakers may have looked to the press to provide the opportunity to convince the public of the legitimacy of their cause, to let them know what course of action they were taking and why. As well, they could prepare parents and others for the disruptions that would occur if strike action was taken. Perhaps, too, speakers hoped to gain traction in the public mind in order to increase pressure on their government counterparts, thereby improving their position at the bargaining table.

How did speakers address their audience(s)

In addressing his audience, Booi chose to let them know how union members were feeling. First and foremost, Booi was very clear about these emotions; he did not let his audience guess how members were feeling. Members were not simply unhappy, but rather their anger had reached a fever pitch: Booi claimed that he had "never seen anything like it" (2.1); teachers were "so angry" (2.4); the Premier's suggestion was "simply incredible and ludicrous" (2.5); and the membership was threatening to break into factions, with "wildcat strikes," "mass resignations," and "things that will backfire." Booi used strong language to convey the teachers' emotions. In

2.1, for instance, Booi noted that anxiety had turned to anger and that he had "never seen anything like it." In this way, the scope and level of teacher anger was unprecedented. This intense emotion is seen again in 2.6: "Wildcat strikes (are) the **big** fear **right** now … There was **a lot** of talk of **mass** resignations … some of our people are **so** enraged that we have **real** fears that they may do things that will backfire" (emphasis added). In this instance, absolute terms were themselves heightened; rather than just fear we heard of a fear that was "big" and "real." Similarly, now was emphasized as "right now" and talks with "a lot of talk."

The Roman rhetorician, Quintilian referred to such exaggerations as hyperbole, which he defined as "an elegant straining of the truth" (1891, 8.6.87). Hyperbole (from the Greek for "overshooting") is bold overstatement that can be used for dramatic or comic effect. Here, it was used by Booi for serious effect to exaggerate the government's behavior and the union's emotional response. As a figure of speech, it is well-suited to memorable utterances. Like any figure of speech, we may pause to consider why such a device is being used. While we can never be certain, a few explanations are possible. First, and importantly, these are the words that made it into the press. The language is colorful and gripping, well-suited to headlines and emboldened captions. These are words designed to capture attention while powerfully expressing the teachers' emotions.

Second, by relating the teachers' emotions in strong terms, Booi could hope to avoid questions concerning the validity of his assertions. Booi remarked that teachers were "so angry" which implied that their anger was obvious. Not only did Booi heighten the pitch of teachers' emotion, but also he made it appear that all of the teachers were angry. In this way, he depicted the teachers as united in their reaction and speaking with a single voice, which glossed over any divisions between the teachers and minimized their potential objections. Presumably, not all of

the teachers were "so angry" and yet that is how Booi characterized them, which presented them as monolithic. As well, since all of the teachers were "frustrated and angry," it is safe to assume that such feelings were themselves validated because of their scope. If everyone is angry, then there must clearly be something responsible for their anger.

Such unanimity is further illustrated in 2.3. Booi remarked that denial from Oberg and threats from Klein had left teachers frustrated, leading him to believe that "we're in for a fight." This "we" was enforced throughout the utterance by the use of pronouns: "our frustration"; "our concerns"; "our province"; "we're headed"; "we get denial"; "we're in for a fight." The repetition enforced the proposition that this was a strongly unified group, united in its emotions and its resolve. The "we" included leaders and members, which let audiences know that members and leaders were in agreement. In this instance, the "we" was taken for granted and the conflict was expressed in combative terms—it was a "fight." At this point, Booi broke with the plural pronoun to signal the independence of his cognitive appraisal and perhaps to assert his authority: "I guess we're in for a fight."

Audiences

Speaking to union members

A common theme expressed by the data is union's insistence that the conflict originated with the government. According to Booi, this was not a conflict that the teachers had initiated or union brass invited, but rather the government was out to get them. In 2.3, blame was placed on Klein and Oberg, and in 2.4 Booi asserted that Oberg had wanted to "bust" the union from the outset.

In this way, the teachers were given a clear target and were informed that the stakes were high. If Oberg was out to "bust" the union, then teachers should take the conflict seriously. There was no room for apathy.

In 2.5, Booi declared that "what was tabled is not arbitration. It is legislative smashing of fair collective bargaining and teachers' rights." Booi portrayed the government as willfully "smashing" teachers' rights with legislation. The violence of the government's action was juxtaposed with the basic values to which the teachers subscribed. In this way, Booi exaggerated the difference and distance between government and the teachers, exemplifying the discursive strategy of out-casting. Vilifying the government's actions implicitly sanctified those of the teachers, perhaps dismissing any sympathy teachers might have had for their government or misgivings toward their own actions. Teachers were instructed to place their allegiance squarely with the union.

By describing the teachers' frustration and anger with the government, Booi could also manage teachers' expectations. In this way, Booi could explain to members why they were not getting the results they had hoped. The lack of results was not due to a lack of effort by the union leadership. On the contrary, union leaders were doing everything in their power to bring the conflict to a successful close, but government was unwilling to budge. "They" were the problem.

As their leader, Booi was likely well-aware of members' emotions and by articulating these emotions he demonstrated that he was empathizing with his members; he understood how they were feeling. He had his finger on the pulse of the membership. He was not a distant and uninformed leader. In fact, he too was frustrated and angry. He was also telling them that they were not the only ones feeling this way. Their leader and fellow teachers shared the same emotions and so members should recognize that they were part of a "community of feeling." In

their emotions, they were not alone. Perhaps, too, Booi was telling members how they ought to feel.

Speaking to government members

By informing government of how members were feeling Booi may have hoped to signal the level of their discontent. In so doing, he could let government know that teachers would not back down. If, for instance, government heard that teachers were "so angry," then they should expect angry actions to follow. Perhaps such anger was a warning that government had better tread softly. They were not dealing with a docile or apathetic group. Booi conveyed to the government how emotionally invested the teachers were in the conflict. As teachers, they cared deeply for their students and were thinking with their hearts as well as their heads.

In 2.6, Booi remarked that he, too, had fears: "Wildcat strikes (are) the big fear right now … There was a lot of talk of mass resignations … some of our people are so enraged that we have real fears that they may do things that will backfire." Here, Booi warned the government that some members were "so enraged" they might not be restrained. Apparently, there were limits to his power. Booi claimed that that he had "real fears" that members might "do things that will backfire." So enraged were members that even their leader did not know what they might do. He was apparently doing his best to reign them in, but he did not know how much longer this could last.

This was one of the very few instances where a hierarchy within the union was signaled. Booi remarked that "some of our people are so enraged that we have real fears that they may do things that will backfire." The use of pronouns is telling ("our"; "we"; "they"). Importantly, the

pronoun “we” signals a different group, since “we” fear what “they” may do, even though both pronouns refer to union members. In this way, a division or degree of separation was created between the enraged members and the leaders who feared what “they” might do. This may have allowed Booi to absolve himself of member’s actions, so that the government would understand that union leadership had not sanctioned these actions. As well, Booi may have hoped to let the government know that they were triggering irrational behavior—members were no longer thinking rationally and they could not be restrained. In this way, Booi may have been engaging in Gundersonian “sabre rattling” by scaring or intimidating the government into bettering their current offer.

Speaking to the public

In addressing interested members of the public Booi may have targeted students’ parents, since this group would be directly affected by the teachers’ action. With their children in the classroom parents would presumably be more invested and interested in the conflict than other members of the public. Nonetheless, Booi made it clear to all members of the public that teachers cared deeply about students. In fact, Booi claimed that this is where the conflict had originated: teachers were standing up for their students. Government would not take the teachers’ concerns seriously (2.3), and they were abusing their power to punish teachers who simply wanted better conditions for their students (2.5).

Teachers were willing to take extraordinary measures for their students. In 2.2, Booi told his audience that the union might be forced to take strike action, but they were “reluctant” to do so. In fact, the decision was made with “a lot of regret.” In preparing the public for a strike Booi

clarified that this action was not taken lightly, but it was the only "weapon" they had. Government was unreasonable; they would not talk with the union or listen to their concerns. In this way, the public was told that the teachers deeply regretted having to take such action.

The public was asked to empathize and even feel sorry for the teachers and be mad with the government. The teachers did not want to go on strike. They did not want to withdraw voluntary services from their students. But government had pushed them into a corner. Government was being unreasonable and had left the union with no other options. It is worth noting the considerable regret that Booi equated with the union's decision to reach for the "strike weapon." Apparently, they understood full well how their actions would affect the students. They cared deeply for them which was why their decision was so difficult. Their angst was contrasted directly with the government's "arrogant abuse of power." While union had "not abused the strike weapon," the government was arrogant in their abuse of legislative power.

Government

Coming from the emotionally charged world of union discourse to government reveals a stark difference. First, government speakers rarely mentioned any specific emotion. Rather than telling their audiences that they or their government was angry, frustrated, or disappointed, speakers seemed more likely to tell their audience how members of the audience were feeling. As well, speakers presented situations in such a way that the emotions of their audience would likely be manipulated. Like their union counterparts, government speakers appeared to address multiple audiences through their utterances.

2.7 Where I draw the line in the sand is where students won't be able to complete their year. That is not acceptable … There is absolutely no way the public, the government or anybody else would tolerate kids missing six months of the year, half a year of schooling, because someone is on strike … My message to teachers is basically take a look [at] what is on the table, take a look at the offers, take a look what is happening elsewhere in the country. We just heard today about the unemployment rate hitting eight per cent, we heard about Ford closing five of its plants in North America, those are people losing their jobs (Oberg. Williamson, Kerry. "Oberg Fears Strike Can't Be Averted." *Calgary Herald*. January 12, 2002).

2.8 There is enough money to make Alberta teachers the best-paid on average in the country. With the six per cent increase, Alberta teachers' salary ranges will be the highest in the country. That is a fact. This [pension deal] effectively would result in a nine per cent increase for teachers outside their negotiations with school boards. (Oberg. Derworiz, Colette. "Teachers Among Best-Paid." *Edmonton Journal*. February 2, 2002).

2.9 Speaking at a Tokyo luncheon, Premier Klein told an audience he had spoken to the husband of a Japanese teacher who said that his wife 'makes about the same' as a Canadian teacher. The difference being, instead of working four or five hours a day, she works eight hours a day. And she only gets one-month holiday instead of two. And only one week at Christmas and one week in the spring instead of two weeks. And she has to work two Saturdays a month … and she doesn't go on strike (Klein on CBC radio. Holubitsky, Jeff and Allyson Jeffs. "Teachers Outraged by Klein Criticism." *Edmonton Journal*. February 9, 2002).

2.10 Over the coming days our priorities will be to examine whether this action is causing unreasonable hardship to students, families and other third parties. One of the key criteria to me as Minister of Learning is ensuring that students do not lose their school year. That would be completely, absolutely 100 per cent unacceptable (Oberg. "No End in Sight for Strike." *Edmonton Journal*. February 20, 2002).

2.11 I have heard from more than 1,000 parents who are at their wits' end … We have had a lot of phone calls, a lot of hardship stories that have come into us over the past two days. We feel it's absolutely hideous students are in the middle of this … What we have done today is take students out of the equation. (Oberg. "Manipulation 101." *Calgary Herald*. February 22, 2002).

2.12 If we lose the case, then I'm prepared to bring in legislation to put (teachers) back to work, because students have had enough. (Oberg. Thomson, Graham and Jeff Holubitsky. "Oberg Won't Tolerate 2nd Walkout." *Edmonton Journal*. February 23, 2002).

Who were speakers addressing?

Government speakers may have wished to address members of their own government and opposition members. As such, they may have hoped to demonstrate their own competency as well as that of their government. They were not flustered by the conflict nor rattled by the union's rhetoric, but rather they were taking it all in stride and conducting themselves in a politically appropriate manner. Teachers, too, may have been another group they expected to address. In this way, speakers may have anticipated bypassing the union leaders to communicate directly with the union membership and provide them with a competing narrative. Perhaps they wished to inspire feelings of fear or guilt within the teachers. Government speakers may have also been speaking to the ATA leader. Parents, as well as the general public, represented a third group. To this group, government speakers could communicate their empathy for those affected while justifying the actions that they were taking. Additionally, speakers may have tried to manipulate the public's emotions so that they would resent or even despise the union's actions.

How did speakers address their audience(s)

As with union speakers, government speakers often reached for the figure of hyperbole. In 2.7, Oberg stated that neither the public, nor the government, nor anybody else would tolerate a teacher strike, which of course neglected the fact that the teachers were part of the public and likely enjoyed support from all of these groups. Second, Oberg stated that his government would do "anything" to keep students in the classroom, which contradicted his government's unwillingness to simply grant the teachers the wage increase and other requests they sought and

have them return to work. Third, Oberg used "six months of the year" to demonstrate the potential effects of the union's action. In Alberta, strikes in education do not last six months, the vast majority being settled within days. Excluding weekends and vacations, the longest teachers' strike occurred in 1983 and lasted 43 days (Reshef, 2007). Taken together, these three exaggerations highlighted the government's commitment to the students, and the enormity of the union's planned misconduct. Implicitly, it followed that the government cared deeply about this conflict and would do whatever they could to resolve it.

Unlike their union counterparts, government did not explicitly say how they were feeling. Direct expressions of government emotion were rare. Nonetheless, in 2.11 Oberg announced that his government felt that "it's absolutely hideous students are in the middle of this." However, this assessment was offered only after hearing from "more than 1,000 parents" and after receiving "a lot of phone calls, a lot of hardship stories." In this way, Oberg was essentially communicating an emotion that he had received from the public and was grounded. As such, his government was portrayed as a conduit or spokesperson for public discontent. Hideousness was more government's assessment of the situation than an articulation of how it felt.

Another theme of government address was the relating of evidence designed to elicit certain emotions. For instance, in 2.9 Klein told the story of a hard-working Japanese schoolteacher who worked twice as hard as teachers in Alberta, "makes about the same," and yet she "doesn't go on strike." Similarly, Oberg (2.7) told his audience about rising unemployment, layoffs in the auto industry, and uncertainty looming on the horizon. Apparently, the lesson was that teachers should just be thankful that they still had jobs, but this was a lesson that was implied. Unlike their union counterparts, Klein and Oberg did not tell us how they felt but rather they presented a scenario apparently designed to elicit certain emotions from their audiences.

Audiences

Speaking to the government and opposition members

Several themes are noticeable in examining what speakers may have hoped to communicate to their fellow elected officials. First, speakers made it clear that they were not pursuing their own narrow agenda but were guided by the wider concerns of their citizens. In 2.7, 2.10, and 2.11, for instance, Oberg signaled that his government had taken its cues from the public. By reaching for legislation (2.11, 2.12) it was putting into action the public will. As such, Oberg made it appear that public sentiment had sanctioned his government's actions. It was the public, after all, that had told the government of their "hardship stories." In mentioning that "I have heard from more than 1,000 parents" and that "a lot of phone calls, a lot of hardship stories … have come into us over the past two days" (2.11), Oberg implied that not just himself ("I") but other members of his government ("us") had heard from the public. In this way, there were multiple points of contact between his government and the public, and, like the union, his government was responding as a single, unified entity.

Oberg told his audience that the public was upset, especially parents (2.11). He also said that students had "had enough" (2.12). In this way, he could hope to let his peers know that the situation was volatile and they had best not interfere. Should the opposition use the conflict as an opportunity to side with the teachers in hopes of gaining ground in the public's affections they would be sorely disappointed. The government was expressing the will of the public and it was standing up for parents and children, who had let government know how they were feeling. Additionally, Oberg made it clear that no one, not "the public, the government or anybody else

would tolerate kids missing six months of the year, half a year of schooling, because someone is on strike" (2.7). All government members were made aware that strike action would not be tolerated by anyone; therefore, any objections that they might have had should be kept to themselves.

Finally, both Oberg and Klein made it clear that they were in fact being quite generous with the teachers (2.8, 2.9). The government offer was spelled out and situated within provincial, national and international contexts. Enlarging the context made it seem that the government was knowledgeable about the current economic environment, both at home and abroad. Perhaps, too, Klein and Oberg hoped that providing such a context and making the government offer seem generous would discourage other from arguing differently. In these ways, speakers may have sought to achieve support for their actions from their members and members of the opposition

Speaking to the teachers

In addressing the teachers directly government speakers may have sought to achieve several things. First, the aforementioned generosity of their offer may have let teachers know they were being given a fair shake. Oberg in particular made it clear that this was a very generous offer. Despite what they might have been told by their leaders, teachers were told that this was a generous offer. It was also the government's final offer. There was no more money for teachers' salaries. Teachers were told that government was doing all it could to make them the highest paid in the country at a time when many workers were losing their jobs. Presumably, such assertions were intended to make teachers feel grateful, and perhaps shake their confidence in Booi's message.

Another emotion that speakers may have elicited was guilt. In describing the "hardship stories" of distraught parents and the plight of students "losing a year" Oberg provided a fresh perspective on the teachers' actions. According to Oberg, "students have had enough" (2.12) and they "are in the middle of this" (2.11). The actions which teacher claimed were being taken to benefit students were in fact harming them. Teachers were making their students' lives miserable, and students had had enough. They were punishing children and their parents. In this way, Oberg may have made teachers feel ashamed for the consequences of their actions. The teachers were the authors of these "hardship stories." Klein's story, too, should have elicited shame and/or guilt from the teachers, since their Japanese counterparts were gladly doing more with less.

Given the emotional stories that his government had received Oberg clarified that his government would not stand idly by while the strike dragged on. For Oberg, a strike represented "a line in the sand," crossing it would be "completely, absolutely 100 per cent unacceptable" (2.10). His government felt it was "absolutely hideous" that student were "in the middle of this"; passing legislation was what they would do to "take students out of the equation" (2.11). Here, Oberg explained that his government would not agonize over its response. Emotion was largely absent from these pronouncements. Government will act not because of how it feels but because a line has been crossed. If one door is closed (2.12), then government will use legislation to open another. As such, Oberg may have sought to intimidate the teachers, to have them fear the force and alacrity of his government's response.

Speaking to the public

Government speakers, in addressing the public, may have elicited several emotions. First, Klein and Oberg made the generosity of the government's offer clear. In 2.9, Klein noted how, unlike their Japanese counterparts, Alberta teachers had it easy: they worked half a day, had two months of holidays, and had weekends and four additional weeks off (Christmas and spring break). Yet even with all these perks they were going on strike! Klein did not say that this was ludicrous. He did not say he was frustrated with their ingratitude or upset that they made more than their hardworking Japanese counterparts. Instead, Klein left it to his audience to make up its mind.

Similarly, Oberg (2.7) offered the plight of factory workers at Ford Canada as evidence that Alberta teachers should be grateful they even had jobs, let alone such good paying ones. But the ATA had been selective in its vision. It refused to look at the big picture and simply thought of how big a raise it could negotiate. Oberg argued that if the teachers "would simply look [at] what is on the table, take a look at the offers, take a look what is happening elsewhere in the country," they would appreciate his government's generosity. Like Klein, Oberg did not say that he was frustrated with the union, but he presented a scenario that was frustrating. If the union would "simply look," the conflict would be over and everyone would be happy. Both Klein and Oberg presented a situation presumably designed to incite resentment among the public towards the teachers and a greater understanding for the government's actions. Though the speakers did not say how they were feeling their presentation of the "facts" called out for such a response.

A final aspect that deserves mention is the claim that the public, especially parents, had been heard. In 2.10 Oberg announced that his government would examine whether the union's actions were "causing unreasonable hardship to students, families and other third parties." Two

days later (2.11) he announced that he had "heard from more than 1,000 parents" and his government had received "a lot of phone calls, a lot of hardship stories." The following day (2.12), he concluded that "students have had enough." Taken together, these utterances told parents and members of the public that they had been heard. Government was feeling their pain: they too felt it was "hideous." Apparently, this was a government in tune with the emotions of its people.

Conclusions

Both directly and indirectly union and government speakers asserted the importance of emotions. Emotions were presented as a barometer of how people and members were feeling and they sanctioned a certain course of action. Hyperbole was frequent throughout the utterances but speakers used it differently. For union speakers, hyperbole underscored how heavily teachers were invested in the education of their students and the magnitude of government misconduct. But also it portrayed the teachers as unified in their response: it was one unhappy group of people that the leader represented. Government speakers used hyperbole to underscore public sentiment and the hardship of students, and also to lend credibility to their actions.

The distinction between government and union brings to light an important difference. While union speakers told us how frustrated they were with the government over its lack of concern for public education, they did not tell us about the frustrations or concerns that "the public" may have had. As such, union speakers primarily told their audiences how angry and frustrated the teachers were, not the public. In this way, they overwhelmingly described how union members were feeling. By contrast, government speakers rarely, if ever, mentioned how

they were feeling. Instead, they said how the union's actions were making the public feel. Apparently, both union and government speakers had their finger on the emotional pulse of the groups for which they spoke and the group that would decide the political future of the speakers.

Generally, union speakers stated openly how they were feeling, while government speakers did not. If the situations that Klein and Oberg presented left them frustrated and upset with the union, it was not mentioned. They were more reserved and politic in their utterances. Often, Oberg simply presented his government's action as a matter of fact: union had crossed a line and so action was being taken. Perhaps the lack of emotion signaled the presence of power as much as decorum. Unlike their union counterparts, government speakers rarely, if ever, portrayed the government as a victim or as at the mercy of another powerful group. Rather, their response may be likened to that of a police officer, who simply listens to the pleas of the speeding motorist while stoically writing the ticket.

In characterizing the emotions of their group or another group, speakers presented these emotions as appropriate. Their group was reacting properly to the situation, while the out-group was reacting inappropriately; "they" were out of touch. At no point did Booi tell his audiences that teachers were perhaps overreacting or reacting inappropriately. Similarly, Oberg did not tell us that the "hardship" experienced by students and parents was an overblown response to a temporary interruption. Instead, teachers, parents, and students were presented as experiencing the correct emotions. Theirs was a community of feeling that was reacting appropriately and in concert.

An important aspect of emotion is that it signals to the audience what the correct response should be. If teachers are inflamed with the government's actions, then perhaps the wider public should also be angry with the government and throw their support behind the union. Similarly, if

students and parents are disgusted with the actions of the union, then perhaps the actions of the union are disgusting, which means that the public, and even the teachers themselves, should applaud the government's decision to intervene. For both union and government speakers, emotion enabled them to claim intimate knowledge of the group for which they spoke. It was this group that was responding correctly to the situation. Their emotions provided the appropriate response, a response that audiences would do well to heed.

Chapter 4: Ridicule

"Not by wrath does one kill, but by laughter."

--Nietzsche

Introduction

Ridicule, whether manifested as mockery, satire, raillery, invective, or irony, has enjoyed a long and distinguished history, appearing "in the literature or folklore of all peoples, early and late, preliterate and civilized" (Preminger, Warnke, and Hardison, 1974: 738). Though words and their definition often change over the course of time, ridicule has remained close to its origins, which Onions (1966: 767) cites as "to make fun of ... to laugh." Unlike humor, however, ridicule has an edge to it. In Gulliver's Travels, for instance, Jonathan Swift not only elicits our laughter by describing the acrimony between those who choose to open their eggs on the big end and those preferring to open the small end, but he also draws unsettling parallels between such trivial disagreements and the religious conflicts ravaging eighteenth century Europe.

The popularity of Gulliver's Travels continues to this day, and if the ratings of such current political commentaries as *The Colbert Report* and *The Daily Show* are any indication, then ridicule remains a popular tool for making fun of public figures. Unlike the other semantic moves that this dissertation explores, ridicule is well-suited for the popular appetite. It provides memorable quotes and amusing anecdotes. It allows audiences to share a laugh while poking fun at popular figures and beliefs. Like Swift, Colbert and Stewart have shown themselves to be masters of this genre. As with other semantic moves, some speakers are more capable than others, and such people cast a long shadow in the popular imagination while enjoying high ratings.

Ridicule can be used for more than laughs. Behind the laughter there may be serious business. As Abrams (1988: 166) points out, ridicule may also evoke "contempt, scorn, or indignation." It may be used, as in caricature, to exaggerate or oversimplify an opponent's views and opinions. In his study of ridicule, Obadare (2009: 243) summarizes some of the many functions that it may serve: "'vengeance', 'coping mechanism', a 'means of escape', 'subversion' … [and] resistance." He then examines ridicule within Nigerian society and concludes that it is most often used to "not only critique the state, but also to cope with the rigours of everyday life" (Ibid.: 246). Within the context of Obadare's study, he found that speakers used ridicule to exaggerate the differences between the state and the people. The ruling government lacked common sense. They were incompetent and unable to perform basic cognitive tasks, which was evidenced by their administrative bungling.

In this way, figures of state were distanced from the common sense community to which the common person belonged. On the one hand, this allowed these members to share in a good laugh at their leaders' expense. But as Obadare argues, while the laughs delivered a stinging indictment of government ineptitude, they also signaled the audiences' utter inability to create change. There was nothing that the average person could do to stop their government's ineptitude. So glaring were the government's deficiencies that even the common person could see what was wrong and how these wrongs could be righted. Yet they were the ones left to suffer at the hands of government incompetence. In this context, ridicule played an important function. It enabled speakers to replace or mitigate their audience's despair with laughter. By encouraging the audience to share a laugh together speakers created a spirit of solidarity. The laughter marked or constructed a border between those incompetent people in power and the competent people without.

Given the many uses and popularity of ridicule it should not surprise us to find it within the landscape of labor conflict. As with popular talk shows, speakers could count on ridicule to grab headlines and lampoon their opponents. Ridicule also provided them with a tool for differentiating themselves and their platform and for constructing the identity and mentality of their opponents. It should be remembered that labor conflict is the context for my study of ridicule. I am not concerned with surveying the extant literature analyzing ridicule for its own sake, which is a project unto itself (cf. Michael Billig, 2005). Neither am I concerned with differentiating and classifying the specific features of ridicule such as satire, invective, caricature, irony, or parody. This chapter is concerned with examining how union and government speakers used ridicule generally. It endeavors to survey how government and union used this discursive strategy. It then concludes by offering some thoughts on why such differences may exist and why speakers may choose to use ridicule.

Ridicule would seem particularly well-suited for labor conflict. In a context where emotions are running high ridicule provides speakers with the opportunity to exaggerate the differences between themselves and their opponents. It also enables speakers to take colorful and memorable swings at their opponents, which may help persuade audiences of their opponent's incompetence. Preminger, Warnke, and Hardison (1974: 739) note how, "[r]idicule, which in some cultures may kill and in our own kills symbolically, depends on shared assumptions against which the aberrant stands in naked relief." Ridicule enables speakers to construct the other as "aberrant." In this way, union and government speakers could wield ridicule as a discursive weapon. How ridicule was used as such a weapon and the ways in which its usage differed between government and union speakers is the topic of this chapter.

Critical features of ridicule

In her study of American conservative talk-show radio, Rudd (2003) draws attention to the way in which Rush Limbaugh and Ken Hamblin attack those who hold opposing views from their own. Those on whom these speakers focus their vitriol are those who do not share their far right views. In particular, these speakers ridicule the arguments and assumptions of speakers who champion Liberal values. Rudd observes the important role of ridicule in their discursive efforts, especially how it allowed them to utterly dismiss their opponents' views. Limbaugh and Hamblin used ridicule to outcast their opponents and characterize them as buffoons to be scorned. Nothing good can come from them. Like Obadare, Rudd finds that common sense is revealed to be common to the average audience member but uncommon to those targeted by the speakers.

Limbaugh, for instance, "has mocked intellectuals as 'fuzzy-headed academicians,' 'sandal-clad theoreticians' and 'near-sighted pointy heads'" (Rudd: 44). Such a portrayal of those who challenge his views (and facts!) renders "them" cartoonish, making it impossible to take seriously what they say. In this way intellectuals are constructed as being out of touch with the real world inhabited by these talk-show hosts and their audience. They have their heads in the clouds and propose solutions that could never work in the real world. The images that Limbaugh presents of these intellectuals show that they are especially ill-suited for the modern world. They, along with their ideas, are out of place. They look different, comical. Perhaps if they picked up a shovel instead of another book they would understand better how things work in the real world.

Such simplistic and generalist labels like "sandal-clad theoreticians" lump together a vast and varied group of people, enabling Limbaugh to define and dismiss *carte blanche* an "intellectual" out-group. In the examples provided, all intellectuals are described as out of touch

and comical. As well, Rudd (2003: 47) notes how such characterizations send a powerful message: "I am a mature person with legitimate concerns, but my opponent has an infantile, hapless and irritating personality and is limited to issuing complaints that have no merit." Intellectuals are portrayed as masquerading their nonsense as serious argument when in truth they are just wasting "our" time.

Ridicule constructs the other as undeserving of our consideration and worthy only of our laughter. In the examples provided by Rudd, Limbaugh implicitly argues that intellectuals look funny, dress funny, and think funny. These intellectuals should not be taken seriously, and they are annoying, too. They hinder earnest and knowledgeable speakers like Limbaugh and Hamblin from their grand pursuit of truth. Their arguments simply muddy the waters in order to obfuscate the obvious. Limbaugh presents himself as someone who is sincere in his efforts to fix an America plagued by bleeding-heart liberals who are mooching off of hardworking taxpayers like himself and his listeners. Rudd argues that this is similar to Bjork's (1970: 92) finding that Hitler portrayed the German parliament as a "babbler's club." Limbaugh and Hamblin presented American Congress similarly.

Rudd's analysis sheds light on the ways that ridicule obliterates any middle ground or compromise. "They" are so different from us that we cannot help but laugh at "them." In ridiculing one's opponents and presenting their views as comical, speakers imply that we should not and must not listen to them. Their points are ridiculous and a colossal waste of our time. They cannot be taken seriously. Ridicule paints with a broad brush, implicitly arguing that the out-group is monolithic and deserves our laughter. We should reserve our attention for more serious matters, like the ones our speakers are trying to address. The element of humor encourages the audience to adopt the speaker's perspective, to share a laugh together as the out-

group's concerns and objections are shown for what they are and discarded. By ridiculing the out-group, speakers imply that this group should be outcast; their arguments are without merit. Such a wholesale dismissal means that we should disregard everything that they say. It also provides an opportunity to define and calcify who we are and what we know to be true. We are not at all like "them."

A discussion of ridicule may overlook a critical point: how do we know when someone is using ridicule? How, for instance, do we know that Limbaugh is using ridicule when he refers to intellectuals as "sandal-clad theoreticians"? What is wrong with wearing sandals? As with other semantic strategies, or with explaining a joke, it is very difficult to say precisely how we know that ridicule is being used. In many ways, if you have to ask whether or not ridicule is being used, then you have identified yourself as an outsider because you do not "get" it. If you do not understand how sandal-clad can be used as a weapon of ridicule, then you are not conversant with the social milieu from which the image has been drawn. Ridicule relies upon certain social connotations or embedded cultural beliefs for its power. If you understand that a speaker is using ridicule, then you can identify with that speaker, which may forge or further strengthen social bonds.

Like choosing to tell a joke, then, speakers face an inherent danger in using ridicule. Their audience may not understand that they are ridiculing their opponent. As such, speakers must be confident that they know their audience, that their audience understands when they are using ridicule. Speakers must know what the group holds in common, and what images, phrases, etc., will resonate with them. Limbaugh, for instance, would have to be confident that his audience would recognize "near-sighted pointy heads" as a jab at intellectuals; otherwise his attempt at ridicule would be ineffective. The effectiveness of ridicule then depends upon an audience that

shares certain cultural assumptions and embraces a particular view of the world. To construct an opponent as an aberrant requires a common view of what is "normal," what is not aberrant.

Union

Such commonality or norms raises an interesting feature of ridicule. Ridicule depends on a curious and critical balance of norms. As Preminger, Warnke, and Hardison (1974: 739) observe, those periods marking the greatest use of ridicule are times "when ethical and rational norms were sufficiently powerful to attract widespread assent, yet not so powerful as to compel absolute conformity." In this way, speakers could draw upon certain norms in formulating ridicule while enjoying the liberty to exercise it. Generally speaking, ridicule requires conformity and fragmentation. It requires conformity so that a speaker can draw upon assumptions and norms, but also fragmentation so that another group can be targeted for ridicule. To be effective, ridicule requires an in-group that shares a set of stable beliefs concerning what is or should be held in common. Through ridicule speakers create an out-group that is marked as aberrant, illogical and wholly different. The in-group is characterized as the measuring stick against which the out-group is judged.

Unions would seem ideally suited for providing such a critical balance. On the one hand, uniting in their pursuit of a common goal would attract widespread assent among members. On the other hand, such conformity is generated in its opposition to a common foe, a government refusing to grant the concessions necessary for union to attain its goals. Labor conflict provides an ideal setting for ridicule in that much of the heavy-lifting has been done for the speakers. The opponent has already been defined, which provides a clear target. As well, since the opponent is

not just "the government" but rather a particular member of that government, the scope is necessarily delimited. The conflict constricts the focus, enabling the crosshairs to be clearly placed on one or two members of government.

As the following utterances suggest, the Premier and the Learning Minister were the primary targets for union ridicule. In focusing his attack upon them, ATA President Larry Booi created a common adversary for his members. Booi was no stranger to ridicule. Neither was he lacking in his ability to use it. In almost all of the instances, Klein and Oberg were the targets of Booi's ridicule. In this way Booi provided his audience with a clear target: Klein and Oberg were the reason for the teachers' headaches. These leaders were incompetent and their ineptitude was creating a great many problems. Booi need not have turned to ridicule to tell his listeners this, and yet employing such a semantic move allowed him to craft memorable images and wield a kind of symbolic power against his government adversaries. And, as with those in the popular media who use this strategy, it may have enabled him to capture the public's attention and place greater pressure on the government.

3.1 When you take this heavy-handed and, quite honestly, ham-fisted approach and say there is no more money and 'I will not fold,' you're not engaging in any sort of dialogue, you are ignoring the fundamental problems that are causing this … This is not a card game, it is not a contest. It is an attempt to work out genuine problems and they won't even acknowledge that there are problems (Booi. "Union president accuses Alberta government of trying to intimidate teachers." *Edmonton Journal*. September 6, 2001).

3.2 The question among teachers is, what is going on with Dr. Oberg? In that statement [that the Alberta teachers are being used as pawns by the Canada Teachers Federation which, in turn, is trying to win high settlements that can be applied across Canada], he has gone from being unreasonable to being hysterical. He is either in denial of obvious troubles, or he is putting an unreasonable spin on things so he is losing credibility (Booi. Olsen, Tom and Scott McKeen. "Teachers 'Pawns' in Wage Fight." *Edmonton Journal*. December 17, 2001).

3.3 If anyone thinks they can just tighten the pressure cooker lid and make the problems go away, they're mistaken. They'll just face more heat and more pressure (Booi. Brooymans, Hanneke and Suzanne Wilton. "Minister Calls on Teachers, Boards to Talk." *Edmonton Journal*. January 21, 2002).

3.4 If you think you can wave a legislative wand and make all the problems go away, it's not going to be that way and we will find other ways to fight it (Booi. Holubitsky, Jeff. "Alberta Teachers Ready to Work to Rule." *Edmonton Journal*. January 22, 2002).

3.5 If Dr. Oberg spent one-quarter of his energy into solving the problem, we might not be at this point. Since last April, he's decided to pick a fight with the teachers with a string of press releases, and now these ads suggesting that Alberta teachers are the highest paid on average in the country, that the classroom sizes are small, and that the government is investing heavily in special-needs children. It's a pugnacious attitude that is really angering teachers because they know he's wrong. Dr. Oberg likes to use averages when he tries to make his point. But what do averages mean? If you average temperatures, you can get rid of winter (Booi. Thomson, Graham and Ed Struzik. "ATA Calls Oberg's Ad Blitz 'Misleading'." *Edmonton Journal*. February 2, 2002).

3.6 Our fight is not really with our school boards who are cash-strapped. Our fight is with the people in this building [the legislature] who have refused to provide the proper funding for education, and they need to hear that message. So where's the government? The Premier is in Asia [Premier Klein left the country on February 5 for 18 days] and the Learning Minister is in denial (Booi. Holubitsky, Jeff, Duncan Thorne, and Kelly Cryderman. "Where is the Government?" *Edmonton Journal*. February 8, 2002).

3.7 Dr. Oberg has a series of bad ideas, and if one of his bad ideas doesn't work he turns to bad idea No. 2 and No. 3. This minister has dropped the ball so badly it is remarkable he has stayed in his portfolio (Booi. Thomson, Graham. "Legislation to End Teachers' Strike Still an Option." *Edmonton Journal*. February 21, 2002).

Ridicule to gain attention

Through ridicule Booi crafted memorable images. In some instances (3.7, 3.4, 3.6), these images seemed designed to elicit our laughter, which, like a good joke, allows us to share a laugh with the teller. Perhaps, too, we will share the joke with others. Booi's images were remarkable. In 3.5, for instance, Booi turned the government's use of averages against them: government said

that on average classes were not overcrowded; Booi countered that on average winter could be dismissed. In 3.4, Booi likened the government's proposal of using legislation to address the conflict as that of a fairy waving a magic wand, something only happening in the land of make believe. In 3.3, Booi invoked the image of a pressure cooker to ridicule government attempts to put a lid on the problem.

In these instances, Booi painted the government generally and Oberg specifically in memorable terms. By drawing on such images as winter, wands, and pressure cookers Booi accomplished several things. First, he wrenched these images from their natural context and placed them in the political arena, creating an unexpected and comical contrast. This was well-suited for capturing his audience's attention and identifying himself as one of them. In some ways the use of such images is analogous to metaphor, since one (usually unfamiliar) thing was explained by means of another (usually familiar) thing.

Drawing on common images helped him to identify himself with the common person. Amer (2009: 23) argues that speakers use common images and the informal style of spontaneous, unscripted utterances to signal to their listeners "an equal relationship with them which positions … [them not as an elitist] but rather as a like-minded person." In this way, Oberg could let his listeners know that he was one of them. Like them (and unlike those in office) he knew that you could not use averages to banish those harsh Alberta winters, and that clamping down the lid of a pressure cooker would result in an explosion, not peace.

Booi used images drawn from common stories to paint government speakers as belonging to a different group and even a different world. Booi described government as thinking that legislation was akin to a "magic wand" that could make all their problems effortlessly disappear. But as "we" all know fairy wands belong in fairy tales, not in the real world of public sector

conflict. This knowledge was presented as common to the in-group yet alien to the out-group. In this case, the government thought that it could just wave a magic wand and its problems would vanish. Perhaps Booi hoped to bring to his listeners' mind the type of people who usually wield such a magical instrument; namely, fairy godmothers and other tinkerbell-like characters. While these characters are familiar and agreeable in the context of bedtime stories, picturing government actors in such a light renders them cartoonish.

Images like winter, wands, and pressure cookers also underscored the differences between fact and fiction. Not even the most creative use of numbers can average away winter; magic wands do not exist; and tightening the lid of a pressure cooker is a recipe for disaster. In this way, Booi ridiculed government by describing it as thinking it could suspend reality for its own convenience. This recalls Obadare and Rudd's notice of how commonsense may be constructed by speakers as common to the average audience member but foreign to their opponents. Apparently, the only person who believed that winter could be averaged away was the minister in charge of learning, which in itself was comical.

Earlier I remarked how ridicule draws upon an audience's unstated assumptions or beliefs. Limbaugh's picturing of intellectuals as "near-sighted pointy heads," for instance, relies on a high degree of cultural awareness. By comparison the images used by Booi were more general and better suited to the average audience member. Unlike Limbaugh, the images Booi used were less esoteric and less sophisticated. Anyone living in Alberta knows what winter is and that it comes every year, despite our best efforts. Similarly, little cultural awareness is needed to know that there are no magic wands that can be waved to make labor conflict disappear. Even though one may not be familiar with kitchen appliances, it is clear that tightening the lid on a pressure cooker is a bad idea.

Dismissing the opponent

Cuninghame (2007: 168) argues that "language is the site of political struggle and the derisory laughter born of irony is one of the most potent weapons a social movement has, humiliating the 'powerful' and inspiring the "powerless.'" For Cuninghame, the defining and innovative aspect of the 1977 Italian resistance movement was its use of irony to ridicule its opponents. Irony enabled resistance leaders to create a rich and comical context that eviscerated the grey, humorless political system against which it fought. Irony also marked a cultural and political break with the institutional old and vanguardist new lefts. The old guard was characterized as stodgy and rule-bound. For Cuninghame, resistance leaders used ridicule to humiliate the powerful: ridicule became a symbolic club for taking swings at their oppressors. It opened a new avenue for their protest and gave structure to their disenchantment with the old regime.

In the same fashion Booi used ridicule to symbolically defeat his opponent. In 3.7, for instance, Booi described Oberg as plagued with a series of bad ideas: "if one of his bad ideas doesn't work he turns to bad idea No. 2 and No. 3." Even though his bad ideas do not work (of course not; they are bad ideas!), he continued to reach for them. Not only is this comical, but it also rendered Oberg incompetent. He was a bumbling bureaucrat reaching for bad ideas. His incompetence was exaggerated by the fact that he was the Learning Minister. Such a characterization, at least figuratively, allowed Booi to deride a stronger opponent while encouraging union members and possibly others to share a laugh at the minister's expense.

In 3.2, Booi told us the lesson that we should take from his depictions of the minister's actions: "he has gone from being unreasonable to being hysterical. He is either in denial of obvious troubles, or he is putting an unreasonable spin on things so he is losing credibility." As if

being unreasonable was not bad enough, now he was hysterical. Regardless of whether he was in denial or "putting an unreasonable spin on things," his credibility was undermined. It should be noted that throughout the conflict Oberg was often referred to by union speakers as "Lyle in denial." In this way, he was depicted as deliberately denying the true state of affairs: his head was buried in the sand. In sum, one theme of Booi's ridicule was that Oberg was incompetent and should not be taken seriously.

Oberg's incompetence was underscored in 3.1. Booi characterized the minister as taking a "ham-fisted approach." As an aside, it is worth mentioning that ridicule often makes fun of someone's physical appearance. Ham-fisted refers to the fact that the human hand, when clenched, may be seen to resemble a ham roast. To be ham-fisted implies that someone with big clumsy hands is trying to perform a delicate task. The result is comical since their huge hands defy their earnest attempts. Though the minister had been entrusted with an important portfolio, he was ill-suited for managing the subtleties and delicacies of his post.

In 3.6, Booi informed his audience that though his union was trying to talk with the government it could not be found: Klein was in Asia and Lyle (Oberg) was in denial. According to Booi, the government itself was irresponsible because they could not be reached. The situation itself was ridiculous. At a time when they were most needed, both the Premier and the Learning Minister were missing in action. The union was bringing forward serious concerns about a most important institution and the government leaders could not even be bothered to show up.

"They" are dangerous

Van Dijk (1991: 192) argues that "if arguments fail, ridicule is a potent strategic move to discredit one's opponent." The preceding discussion explored some ways that Booi discredited the government. But in seeking to humiliate and dismiss his opponents a more subtle theme is revealed. In his examination of ridicule van Dijk provides several laughable examples of how a "right-wing Press" ridiculed anti-racist teaching for young children. Importantly, van Dijk (1991: 193) notes that behind the "forced laughs … the business of this newspaper is dead serious, and there is no doubt about the real message: anti-racism is not just ridiculous, it is dangerous." He makes an important point easily missed among the laughs—such statements do not only dismiss the actions and arguments of their targets, but also they imply a level of danger by demonstrating the absurd measures the out-group would implement if allowed. If incompetent people have power, dangerous consequences will follow.

Applying van Dijk's insight to my study reveals a similar finding. The Learning Minister was not just a ham-fisted oaf, but also he was dangerous. He was the proverbial bull in a china shop. Not only was the minister plagued with bad ideas, but he had the means to implement them! In 3.3, for instance, Booi argued that the government, or "anybody" for that matter, who thought that they could simply tighten the lid of the pressure cooker was creating a dangerous situation. Tightening the lid of a pressure cooker would result in an explosion and injuries, which everyone but the government appeared to know, and yet it was the government that had the power to do this.

In this way Klein and Oberg were marked as dangerous. They were a threat to the very people they were supposed to be leading. Since they were dangerous they could not be ignored.

In 3.6 the danger was their absence. On the one hand, picturing the Premier in Asia and the Minister in denial provided comic relief. At a time when they were needed by their country, they could not be found. On the other hand, this was dangerous. Booi was bringing the serious concern of proper funding for public education to the government's attention, but they did not care. In fact, they had left the building. Those entrusted with guiding the province through this conflict and ensuring the integrity of public education could not be bothered to listen to their teachers.

This illustrates Rudd's (2003: 47) finding that ridicule can send a powerful message: "I am a mature person with legitimate concerns, but my opponent has an infantile, hapless and irritating personality and is limited to issuing complaints that have no merit." In like fashion, Booi framed his union as having legitimate concerns. In 3.1, Booi declared how the teachers wanted to "work out genuine problems and they [the government] won't even acknowledge that there are problems." Trying to deal with such people was frustrating and irritating. Unlike the government the union was genuinely concerned with addressing a crisis in funding for public education.

Dangerous, powerful, but not unbeatable

In his examination of how, during the winter war of 1939-40, the Finns depicted the Russians as uncultured and comical, Vesa Vares (2010) provides a memorable title ("Ridiculing the Demon: The Comical Image of Lazy, Stupid, Ineffective, Helpless, Uncultured Russians During the Winter War 1939-1940 in Finland") while arguing that these characterizations served to encourage the Finnish resistance movement. Though the Russians were the stronger army and

possessed superior fire power, they were ridiculed as buffoons, wildly incompetent in the wielding of their power and lacking appreciation for the finer things in life. Therefore, the resistance was encouraged to persevere because the Russians were susceptible to the Finns' clever tactics. The resistance movement was characterized as superior in its intellect and planning. As in films where the powerful villain is depicted as an oversized buffoon, Vares argues that ridicule enables speakers to present their opponents as powerful but incapable of matching wits with their less-powerful adversary.

The lesson of ridicule so used is that the opposition should continue their fight. In 3.4, for instance, the government was described as hoping to wave a "legislative wand" to make the problems go away. While it is true that legislation could be so interpreted, Booi told his audience that "it's not going to be that way and we will find other ways to fight it." The answer to the government's waving of its magic wand was for the union to find "other ways to fight it." In other words, members should not give up: they must fight.

Similarly, in 3.7 Booi expressed his astonishment that despite dropping "the ball so badly" Oberg was still in his portfolio. And yet perhaps Oberg was but one more dropped ball away from being dismissed. His record of bad ideas spoke for itself, chronicling his legacy of incompetence. Therefore, members should not be discouraged with the minister's current bad idea—he was always having bad ideas. Given Booi's depredations, we may speculate that by contrast the ATA was full of good ideas. They knew the answers; they knew how to solve the crisis in public education. They were in the classrooms and knew what was going on. They knew how to improve those classrooms and it was against the standard of their good judgment that Oberg was being judged. Perhaps, then, teachers were encouraged to continue trumpeting their

good ideas because they would eventually triumph. Time would reveal the folly of Oberg's solution and the wisdom of the teachers' proposal. It was up to the members to simply persevere.

Government

Turning our attention to government uses of ridicule reveals an entirely different landscape. Immediately evident is the scarcity of government examples. Combing through the government data revealed there to be no explicit instance of ridicule. Nonetheless, I did find three instances that, depending on the reader's view, may qualify as ridicule. I have included these three instances not to initiate a discussion concerning the parameters or definition of ridicule but because they reveal critical aspects of how government speakers disparaged or, depending on one's view, ridiculed the ATA. Frankly, I am not sure whether these instances qualify as ridicule, but they do exaggerate or at least oversimplify the views and actions of the ATA.

3.8 I'm just curious whether or not the Alberta teachers are used as pawns by the Canada Teachers Association (Oberg. Olsen, Tom and Scott McKeen. "Teachers 'Pawns' in Wage Fight." *Edmonton Journal*. December 17, 2001).

3.9 Please go back to negotiating. I've heard lots of stories around the province on both sides of school boards not negotiating. I've heard about mediation sessions that lasted 15 minutes. I think it's time we got down to some serious negotiations, some serious issues, because kids are going to be at risk (Oberg. Holubitsky, Jeff and Graham Thomson. "Get Back to Negotiating." *Edmonton Journal*. February 2, 2002).

3.10 Speaking at a Tokyo luncheon, Premier Klein told an audience he had spoken to the husband of a Japanese teacher who said that his wife "makes about the same" as a Canadian teacher. The difference being, instead of working four or five hours a day, she works eight hours a day. And she only gets one-month holiday instead of two. And only one week at Christmas and one week in the spring instead of two weeks. And she has to work two Saturdays a month, … and she doesn't go on strike (Klein on CBC radio. Holubitsky, Jeff and Allyson Jeffs. "Teachers Outraged by Klein Criticism." *Edmonton Journal*. February 9, 2002).

A conspicuous feature of these three instances is the absence of a single target. What is the point against which the spear of language is being pointed? It is not clear. As well, if these are instances of ridicule, and I am not sure that they are, the way in which ridicule is being used is less explicit and less aggressive than customary. Booi had used ridicule to skewer Klein and Oberg, portraying them as ineffective and incompetent. Booi had made it clear that these two people were directly responsible for the current conflict and were ill-suited for its resolution. Yet neither Klein nor Oberg reciprocated. They did not point to Booi as the source of the conflict. In these few instances, Klein and Oberg did not lampoon the union leader nor did they poke fun at the teachers. If ridicule invites the audience to share a laugh with the speaker, then such laughs were few and far between in government discourse.

Part of my hesitation to assign these instances to ridicule is demonstrated in 3.8 when Oberg questioned whether the Alberta teachers were being used as "pawns by the Canada Teachers Association." First, it is not evident that Oberg was so much making fun of the Alberta teachers as he was arguing that his government was being unfairly pressured by them. But neither did he accuse the teachers as being used as pawns by the ATA. Instead, he deflected such blame onto the more distant entity of the Canada Teachers Association (CTA) itself, since it was this entity that was using them as pawns. In this way, Oberg blamed the CTA and not the ATA. Second, if the Alberta teachers were being used as "pawns," then they were being unfairly manipulated. Such a scenario characterized the teachers as clueless: a larger and less caring organization was using them for its own purposes. Presumably, the ATA needed someone to stand up for it, and that someone might be the Alberta government.

Third, Oberg's statement removed the ATA from the conflict altogether by re-contextualizing the conflict as occurring between the CTA and the Alberta government. Apparently, this conflict had very little to do with the ATA, who now found itself caught between two powerful forces. In this way, the battle was between the Alberta government and the CTA, which was attempting to use the ATA as leverage for increasing the salaries of teachers across Canada. Hence, the ATA was not to blame for the conflict. Finally, it is worth remembering that Oberg had prefaced his remarks by saying that he was "just curious" whether this was the case. He did not explicitly argue that the Alberta teachers were being used as pawns.

What is remarkable about Oberg's statement is that while it strips the ATA of its power it does not make fun of their powerlessness. Importantly, such a stripping of power also absolved it of responsibility, which meant that the ATA was not to blame for the conflict. Such sentiment contrasts starkly with Booi's argument that the government was trying to use averages to do away with winter. For Booi, such an attempt was funny since the government was attempting to control something it could not. By comparison, Oberg implied that the ATA had no control over its decision to pursue strike action, but this was not funny. In fact, it would seem that he was inviting his audience to ask the government to stand up to the CTA, which was callously manipulating the ATA for its own purpose. Perhaps, too, Oberg hoped to send a message to the teachers to reassess the situation.

Ridicule?

Oberg's measured and tactful statement underscores an important aspect of the ruling government's use of language generally; namely, its tameness. If this is ridicule, then it has been

domesticated. Unlike the union's use of ridicule, both Klein and Oberg appeared far less willing to fully exploit its rhetorical capabilities. In 3.9, for instance, Oberg appeared to ridicule the process, not the people involved in that process. His complaint was that he had heard of mediation sessions lasting a mere 15 minutes. Presumably, it was ridiculous for both parties to go through all of the motions of a meeting only to head for the exit. Additionally, it was ridiculous for the parties to not take the process seriously since the stakes were high. Nonetheless, Oberg's statement did not explicitly poke fun at the people involved. Similarly, he did not appear to lampoon these brief sessions but rather was concerned that they be taken seriously by those involved.

A distinct feature of Oberg's utterance is that it does not assign blame. In fact he appeared to go out of his way to appear impartial and nonjudgmental. He stated that he had "heard lots of stories around the province on both sides of school boards not negotiating." In some ways, saying that he had "heard" of these stories is similar to his earlier claim that he was "just curious" whether the teachers were being used as pawns. In both instances, Oberg distanced himself from his own statement. He had simply "heard lots of stories"; he had not witnessed the sessions firsthand, and presumably any attempt to discredit him could be deflected by claiming that he had received faulty information. Oberg did not accuse the teachers of being used as pawns nor did he accuse the parties of disingenuous negotiation sessions. He treaded lightly.

Oberg portrayed himself as having been in touch with "both sides," though no proof was given. Apparently, "both sides" had confided in him and told him of their frustrations, which implied that he was trusted, well-informed, and listening to all sides. Oberg was also concerned that the process be taken seriously, and that both sides try harder to come up with a solution. Yet he did not deliver a stinging critique of those involved in the process, but rather appeared to urge

them to bargain in earnest. He mitigated his critique by including himself among the negotiators, even though he had not been directly involved: "I think it's time we got down to some serious negotiations." In this way, what began as a critique of those people responsible for 15 minute meetings, concluded with Oberg urging everyone, including himself ("we"), to conduct "serious negotiations."

A ridiculous story?

One utterance that deserves closer attention is the story that Klein told (3.10). His story of the hard-working Japanese schoolteacher appeared to ridicule the plight of the Alberta teachers by presenting their struggles as minor in comparison. Klein told his audience how teachers in Japan worked much harder with fewer benefits and yet they did not feel it necessary to go on strike. This story illustrates the difficulty of applying the term ridicule to a speaker's utterance. First, the Alberta teachers were not explicitly mentioned. If one did not know about the labor conflict back home, then presumably the point of the story was simply that Klein admired the dedication and gumption of Japanese teachers. Perhaps the fact that these teachers did not take strike action was mentioned simply to convey Klein's admiration for the sacrifices that these teachers were willing to make. Perhaps, too, Klein was simply relating a story that he had been told that he felt characterized a positive aspect of the Japanese people. These are all speculations, however, since Klein never mentioned why he felt it necessary to relate this story.

It is also possible that Klein was ridiculing the teachers back home in Alberta. If so, then presumably he was belittling the nature of their concerns or shaming them. In contrast to this hardworking Japanese schoolteacher, Alberta teachers had it easy. Yet they were complaining

about classroom conditions and demanding more money. This is a connection, however, that Klein left his audience to make. He did not explicitly ask his audience to compare teachers in Alberta with a teacher in Japan. It is not clear why Klein should have felt it necessary to offer his criticism in such an oblique fashion. Why would he not simply tell his audience that Japanese teachers worked much harder than their Alberta counterparts?

As with Oberg's technique for distancing himself from the event ("I've heard lots of stories"), Klein too constructed himself as simply passing along information that he had received. Klein said that he "had spoken to the husband of a Japanese teacher." How Klein had met this person was never explained. Did this person even exist or was the entire story contrived for effect? Klein did not say whether this person's spouse was representative of all Japanese teachers. The point appeared to be that the visiting Premier had his finger on the pulse of the Japanese educational system (and knew the Canadian system, too). He had spoken with the average person and seen how things really worked.

Earlier I noted that ridicule depends upon a set of shared assumptions and how Booi drew upon common aspects of Canadian culture. Klein did something similar by sharing a simple and accessible story. Amer (2009:23) argues that political speakers may adopt an informal and simplistic style to portray themselves as "someone who just speaks what is on his mind rather than carefully planning and advancing his arguments." For Amer, this allows speakers to signal an equal relationship with their audience; they are "one of us." In Klein's story, he portrayed himself as someone who happened to be having a conversation with someone whose wife was a schoolteacher. Klein did not provide statistical or other quantifiable data. Instead he did something that most people do: he told a story that he had heard. The audience was left to decipher the message.

Discussion

My examination of ridicule reveals its use to represent the greatest difference so far between government and union. While Booi provided many colorful instances of ridicule, the Klein-led conservatives provided none. If we define government utterances as ridicule, then it was toothless, achieving its effect through inference and indirection. Yet the whole point of ridicule is to sink symbolically one's teeth into an opponent, to bring them down by depicting them as ineffectual and incompetent. In so portraying them, all sympathy for the prey is removed, leaving the predator free to hunt with impunity. Yet Klein and Oberg did not take this route. They did not make fun of the teachers or ridicule their demands but instead drew attention to the seriousness of the situation. At most, Klein perhaps pointed out that teachers in Japan were working a lot harder with less grumbling. But throughout these instances, neither Klein nor Oberg targeted a specific person. In Klein's story, the Alberta teachers were not mentioned. Apparently, government speakers were sincere in their concern and genuine in their response.

Why were Klein and Oberg so reluctant to use ridicule to poke fun at the teachers or even to skewer Booi, their bitter opponent? Though I can only speculate, several reasons present themselves. First, their reluctance may derive from our cultural assumption that it is not correct for those with power to make fun of those without power. Those who violate this norm risk being viewed as "bullies." Instead, those with power are expected to be generous and benevolent; they are expected to consider the needs of the less powerful. This brings a curious aspect of the labor conflict to our attention. Apparently, union speakers are allowed to ridicule government speakers mercilessly but not vice versa. Government leaders it would seem were expected to play by a different set of rules. They were not allowed to ridicule the union or its leaders: statesmanship

was expected. If, however, it is not acceptable for a stronger group to ridicule a weaker one, then such a perception must first exist in the minds of the speakers. Is it possible that ridicule is used primarily or even exclusively by those people or groups who see themselves as holding less power than their counterparts?

Perhaps government speakers shunned ridicule because they wished to include not exclude Booi and the ATA from their political party. These were, after all, citizens under their governance. In this way, they may have avoided ridicule because its use creates a stark division between in-group and out-group. It portrays the in-group as possessing common sense which the out-group sorely lacks. Perhaps Klein and Oberg did not wish to outcast this group, but rather wanted to leave the door open to them, so that they could be regarded as extending an olive branch to them. Perhaps they felt that this might encourage the teachers to accept their offer or accept the government's version of events. Perhaps they hoped that it would reflect positively on them in the public eye.

Klein and Oberg may also have not targeted a specific individual so they could diffuse the blame. If no one is directly responsible for the conflict, then forgiveness and reconciliation are possible without contrition. If no one has caused the conflict, no one must accept the blame—there are no "bad guys" just a bad situation. No one is to blame; there are just tough choices to be made. In such a case absolution is a relatively easy matter. No one is responsible for the conflict, which means that no one needs to be punished or to seek forgiveness since the conflict has apparently arisen on its own, through subterranean channels. In fact, as Oberg carefully pointed out, he had "never" said a "bad thing" about the teachers; in fact, he admired them. Klein, too, made a point of telling us that teachers had been "part of the solution" years earlier. Such

sentiment makes forgiveness and reconciliation seem oddly irrelevant, since there has been no breach. It is a conflict for which no one is responsible. Resolution should be a small matter.

Such was not the case with the union. Booi used common images to show his government's laughable incompetence. Accordingly, the government was trying to average winter away and the "ham-fisted" Learning minister was full of bad ideas. Government lacked common sense. It thought it could wave a magic wand and all the problems would disappear. But the union knew better. It knew what the proper solutions were. Presumably, then, the audience was being asked to throw its support behind the union. Conversely, it stood to reason that government was dangerous because it had the power to implement its bad ideas. It would naively clamp down the lid of the pressure cooker until it exploded.

Apparently everyone but the government knew this. By describing the government as outside the scope of common sense Booi crafted a context which outcast the government. This polarized the landscape into the common sense camp of "us" and the non-sense camp of "them." "They" were senseless but also dangerous, since they could implement their bad ideas. Constructing such a stark divide between the teachers and the government enabled Booi to create two camps while laying the blame squarely at the government's feet. Unlike the government cases, blame was clearly assigned by Booi. Accordingly, the government was responsible for the conflict and should be held accountable. More pointedly, Klein and Oberg had created this problem, which meant that either they must seek forgiveness or else they must be deposed.

Why should government and union differ so greatly in this aspect? In grappling with this finding I recall van Dijk (1991: 192), who says: "if arguments fail, ridicule is a potent strategic move to discredit one's opponent." Perhaps such a failing is a type of perceived powerlessness. It is not so much that an argument fails because it is a poor argument, but rather it fails because

one's opponent has failed to be swayed. That is, the argument has failed to achieve its purpose. In the face of such a failing, a speaker may resort to ridicule to discredit or disempower their opponent. If speakers perceive that they have power, they might be less likely to use ridicule.

The speaker employing ridicule, then, might be guided by the assumption that their opponent is more powerful. Earlier, I cited Cuninghame (2000: 168), who argues that ridicule can humiliate the powerful and inspire the powerless, which implies that it is a tool for those who perceive themselves in such a light. Presumably, those with power do not need to humiliate the powerless. In fact, such an act may be negatively perceived. This may help to explain why examples of ridicule are so often drawn from marginalized groups, resistance movements, or those confronting a much stronger and entrenched opponent, like the government. Perhaps this is one reason why ridicule was used more frequently and explicitly by the union leader.

In his study of emotions and social movements, Jasper (2011: 297) observes how "the routines of protest must offer satisfactions along the way, especially considering how remote many movement goals are." For Jasper, such "satisfactions" need not be strictly monetary but rather "emotions are part of a flow of action and interaction, not simply the prior motivations to engage or outcomes that follow." The opportunity to simply vent one's spleen, for instance, may provide protesters with a measure of satisfaction since they "feel" that they have spoken, acted out in defiance, or even shared an experience with others. It may be that ridicule provided such a "satisfaction" since it gave speakers and their audiences an opportunity to share a laugh at the expense of their stronger opponent. Symbolically, it allowed speakers to defeat their opponent, to belittle them and depict them as inferior. Perhaps, then, ridicule allowed Booi to provide union members with a type of emotional satisfaction.

A further aspect is that the political situation of Oberg and Klein was unique. Practically speaking, they needed to get re-elected. Teachers were not simply an out-group to be shunned and discarded; they were potential voters. Hence it is possible that they were reluctant to upset potential voters among the teachers and the rest of the public. They treaded lightly not only to appear impartial but also to not alienate themselves from those who would be casting ballots in the next election. They were not only bargaining with those instructing the children of the province but also those potential voters.

Conclusion

My study of ridicule has revealed it to represent a significant point of departure between government and union speakers. While Booi offered frequent and colorful examples of ridicule, Oberg and Klein did not. Ridicule can be used as a weapon to expose the folly of one's opponent and present them as someone who does not belong with the in-group. It would also seem commonly used by those people or groups who perceive themselves to be fighting against a more powerful opponent. Though one's opponent is stronger or, as an elected official, is "in power," ridicule can discredit them, portraying them as ham-fisted buffoons lacking common sense. By lacking common sense they lack that which is common to the in-group and therefore belong to the out-group. Klein and Oberg did not reciprocate. Instead, they mitigated the differences between the teachers and themselves. They admired the teachers. And since no one was responsible for the conflict, since there were no villains, there were really no separate groups fighting for different goals. In such a scenario, forgiveness and reconciliation could come very easily and potential voters need not be alienated.

Chapter 5: Time

"I must govern the clock, not be governed by it."

--Golda Meir

Introduction

Time holds profound power and importance in our society. Most of us live in the shadow cast by the clock. Unlike Golda Meir, we find ourselves governed by the clock. It is the clock that wakes us up, warns us if we need to hurry up, and tells us if we are leaving work early or working late. We are accustomed to classes, meetings, weddings, funerals and even births beginning and ending at a certain time. While the writer of Ecclesiastes famously invoked time to contextualize our lifespan within the span of eternity, it was time conceived of far differently than our own. Now, mechanical precision has enabled us to define precisely how much time is in a lifetime, a school year, a work day, an event, and even a minute. Ours is the age of Blackberrys and iPhones, celebrity tweets and selfies, instant updates and memes. Instantaneousness trumps substance. Reporters "embed" with attacking forces to deliver breaking news "live." Social media not only provided live feeds as the search for the Boston Bombers unfolded, but it also allowed us to see the covered boat in a Waterton district backyard where Dzhokhar Tsamaev was hiding before the police had even arrived.

Having our eyes glued to the screen of current events, however, may deprive us of perspective. Stahl (2008: 74) argues how current fixations with time have "come to claim a dominant role in civic discourse." The cost of such prescience is not fully known, but focusing exclusively on the present may blind us to the wisdom of the past and the hope of the future.

Considering times beyond the present brings perspective and meaning to the momentary. Being up-to-date is not the same as being informed, and watching a manhunt unfold eludes other larger questions. Our obsession with the present can be used against us. Not only may it deprive us of a larger perspective but Stahl (2008: 81) warns that speakers may also exploit it to justify their political agenda.

The rise of mechanical time transformed human existence and held powerful implications for our sense of time. For Postman (1993: 17) the clock enabled time to be understood as a commodity, as something that "could be divided … filled up, [and] even expanded by the invention of labor-saving instruments." In allowing a unit of time to be assigned a monetary value, mechanical time made it possible to quantify human labor. Until the fourteenth century, however, only the Church was interested in measuring and dividing time, and their interest was spurred by a desire to ensure that a single day would accommodate their seven prayers, as ordered by Pope Sabinianus.

Modern time originated with the Benedictine Monks of the 14th century. As Postman (1993: 14) observes, "the bells of the monastery were to be rung to signal the canonical hours; the mechanical clock was the technology that could provide precision to these rituals of devotion … by the middle of the 14th century, the clock had moved outside the walls of the monastery." In this way, one of the monastery's functions was structuring the day of those inside and outside of its walls. The bells punctuated the monastery's central role while providing order and continuity to everyday life. But the clock turned out to be especially valuable to those devoted to material pursuits. Postman argues that without mechanical time capitalism would not be possible, since it allows the activities of workers to be standardized, coordinated, and broken into temporal units that can then be assigned a monetary value ($/hr).

Time is a recurrent theme in government-union discourse. Speakers often evoked the past to explain the current conflict and frame it in a particular way. The future was also invoked to justify and legitimate the actions that they were now taking. Past and future were constructed by speakers to lend significance and urgency to the present time. The present time was a product of the past, but action now could address what had happened while determining what would happen in the future. While speakers appealed to various aspects of the past and the future to argue for different actions now, they nonetheless used these categories to generate an in-group and out-group dichotomy. Time was also used by speakers to assert their own authority. To explore how speakers used time to justify their actions I use the categories of past, future and present to organize their utterances. I analyze the present time last since speakers used the past and the future to argue the inevitability of present action. The present is thus a culmination of speakers' use of the past and the future. Past and future were used to frame a particular view of the present. Understanding how the past and the future were manipulated illuminates the extraordinary power of words to generate a particular view of reality.

The Past

"Who controls the past, controls the future; who controls the present controls the past."

--George Orwell, *1984*

Reflecting on current fascinations with the past Andreas Huyssen observes how memory and musealization are increasingly being called upon by public figures to provide their nations with a bulwark against obsolescence and the ever-shrinking horizons of time and space. For Huyssen

(2003: 18) the turn toward the past is "subliminally energized by the desire to anchor ourselves in a world characterized by an increasing instability of time and the fracturing of lived space." Reaching for the past may express a desire to identify with a more stable and simpler time; or perhaps it expresses a form of nostalgia. Evoking the past may allow consumers to feel "connected" with and even participating in an earlier and more authentic time. Perhaps the past is simply less intimidating and less uncertain than the present. Regardless of the reason for the popularity and attraction of the past Huyssen observes how it would appear to be selling better than the future. And yet any representation of the past must necessarily be a re-presentation. The past must be reconstructed so that certain values, aspects, and beliefs can be evoked and capitalized upon.

Depictions of the past can provide a bridge between an uncertain present and the perceived stability and permanence offered by a collective and often idealized past. But pasts are not neutral. Modern uses of the past are subject to politicization as various groups compete to ascribe a view to the past that inscribes their own political agenda. By connecting their line of clothing with an earlier and more authentic time, for instance, companies may attempt to portray themselves and their behavior similarly, so that their organization embodies ideals drawn from an earlier time. The spirit of honesty and hard work exemplified by 1950s American coalminers, for instance, not only inspires a line of clothing by Left Field but also aligns the company with those values; it, too, is honest, hardworking, and as genuine as those men who worked underground. Reaching for the idealized past evoked by mid-century coalminers is as easy as reaching for your favorite pair of trousers.

Organizations may not always be eager to reach for the past. For some organizations or nations, the past may be a source of shame, or it may possess a truth that the organization would

prefer to forget. This is especially true for those who have had their reputation damaged. Sims (2009), Watson (2010) and Poppo and Schepker (2010) argue that inadequate attention has been paid to how organizations go about rebuilding their reputation following a scandal. Nonetheless, we do know that organizations respond variously to such damage. They may try to normalize the practice or event ("not a big deal"); acknowledge the practice and indicate the steps taken to reform their ways ("we messed up; we will change"); decouple the practice from their core activities or identity ("that's not who we are"); deflect responsibility onto individuals or groups within the organization ("rogue trader"); or highlight positive aspects of the organization ("we do a lot of good things"). Organizations may also use a combination of these approaches. In their analysis of how social movement organizations use illegitimate actions to acquire legitimacy, for instance, Elsbach and Sutton (1992) find that vestiges of institutional structures that are isomorphic with those of legitimate organizations are forwarded while the illegitimate actions of members are decoupled from the organization.

The past also provides a linguistic opportunity to create a starker difference between an "in" and an "out" group. Graham, Keenan, and Dowd (2004: 209), for instance, observe how war discourse draws a connection between the "exhortations being voiced and the popular historical consciousness of the audience." Wodak and de Cillia (2007: 339) describe the vital roles that founding myths and the (re)constructing of collective experiences play in the forming of a nation-state's official past, with recollection and retelling transforming an audience's perception of the past and persuading them to accept the speaker's claims. For Martin (1995: 13) recollection and retelling also "changes the organization of human groups and creates new ones; it alters cultures by emphasizing certain traits and skewing their meanings and logic." As such, it

may expand or constrict the boundaries of social groups, allowing speakers to claim citizenship in certain social groups or to claim that other groups do not belong in the same family tree.

Depictions of the past form a "shared belief" (Beasley, 2004) that can be infused into the collective memory of an organization or a nation. For Fairclough (2002), power and control are reinforced through structures that "naturalize" discursive goals so that the audience understands the situation as truthful and perceive the stated goals as their own. Referring to the thrift and conservatism of previous generations, for instance, can enforce the view that "our" predecessors unanimously held those values and that we should too. But speakers may inscribe their political agenda on the past by vilifying their predecessors' actions, portraying past political actors as reckless and irresponsible in their spending. Not only does this require and justify the current government's corrective efforts, but also it enables speakers to outcast these past actors and those who may still support them. In this way, the past is "an ideologically significant site in which dominant political actors ... exert power and control" (Dunmire, 2007: 19).

The potential of the past, however, brings to light a unique feature of Alberta. In this case, the governing Progressive Conservatives had been in power since 1971, making it difficult to trace the current problems to the previous government: the current government was the previous government! This prevented leaders from simply dismissing the actions of their predecessors or casting them in a negative light. They could not blame another political party for their current financial state. Unlike other provincial governments, Klein and Oberg could not trace the source of the current labor conflict to a previous government. Perhaps this allowed the union greater opportunity to blame the government for what they argued had been steadily declining levels of funding for public education. Perhaps, too, it prevented government speakers from capitalizing on some of the opportunities associated with uses of the past.

Yet surely this was a different past than that described by Huyssen. Unlike the powerful past existing a few generations earlier, government and union speakers looked to a more recent past. Theirs was not the distant past of their parents and grandparents, but rather the past decade. Given the significance of those events this should not surprise us. It is worth recalling how in 1993 Klein initiated his ambitious fiscal plan, popularly known as the Klein Revolution, to balance the budget in four years and eliminate the provincial debt by 2010. In 1994, the total education budget was reduced by 13.0 percent over three years. Teachers accepted a 5.0 percent pay cut followed by two years of wage freeze. That same year, the government passed Bill 19, the School amendment Act, which removed the local school boards' taxation power and placed it in the hands of Cabinet. Now the government would collect the tax money and distribute it among the school boards on a per-student basis.

The consequences were felt by teachers across the province. First, the restructuring led to the creation of 60 new school boards which replaced the existing 146 boards. Second, the number of teachers was also reduced. By early 1997, there were approximately 1,500 fewer teachers than three years earlier (about 5.0 percent of the 1993 teaching work force). Teachers were not the only ones to feel the sting of Klein's "revolution." Between 1993 and 1997, the number of government employees dropped by 23.5 percent, from 27,705 to 21,193. These were difficult times that left a mark. Presumably, teachers felt that since they had shared in the belt-tightening, they should now share in the ballooning provincial surplus. This, however, was not how the provincial government saw things. So how did the union and government describe and make sense of the past? Given that it was the same Premier who had asked teachers to accept his recipe for bad times that was now presiding over a surplus, how would he explain his decision to award them a smaller amount than that given to other groups?

Union

For union speakers, the past was a site rich with discontent. They had accepted the -5, 0, 0, scheme without taking to the streets. They had shared in the sacrifice and now it was their time to share in the fruits so wrought. As the following quotes illustrate, speakers reached for the past to explain why they were so unhappy with the present. The past provided a compass which revealed how the present government had completely lost its bearings. For union, the current government was responsible for having perpetrated a great wrong. Looking to the past revealed the enormity of the current government's misdeeds and it also demonstrated why the union felt certain actions were necessary.

4.1 The government's refusal to make the necessary investments has left school boards with funds that are inadequate to deal with our concerns and, as a result, negotiations are breaking down across the province. (Booi. Derworiz, Colette. "ATA President Urges Union to Remain Strong." *Calgary Herald*. January 8, 2002).

4.2 Not only have we not abused the strike weapon, we haven't used it for 10 years. That's how reluctant we are. There's a lot of regret, but it's regret combined with determination. (Booi. Braid, Don. "ATA Boss Carries a Big Stick." *Calgary Herald*. January 15, 2002).

4.3 We come dressed in black to symbolize the seriousness of our mood and our intent … And now we expect government to be serious about addressing the 5-per-cent rollback. (Foothills president Judy Nielsen referring to the 5 per cent wage cut ordered by Premier Ralph Klein's government in the budget-balancing days of the early 1990s. Harrington, Carol. "Thousands attend Alberta teachers' rally; Almost 15,000 educators off the job as strike enters second week." *The Spectator* [Hamilton, Ont] February 12, 2002).

4.4 The reason they had this strike in the first place is that they were not going to see another 10 years of deterioration of public education and decline of the profession. (Booi. Derworiz, Colette. "ATA Boss Vows to Fight Back." *Calgary Herald*. February 16, 2002).

4.5 We had the audacity to point out that Alberta has the highest class sizes in the country … We got messages at the time that that was a serious mistake and that there was going to be payback. (Booi. Rusnell, Charles and Graham Thomson. "Teachers' Stabbed in the Back." *Edmonton Journal*. March 12, 2002).

4.6 The age of martyrdom just ended. You will see in classrooms right across this province teachers walking away from any voluntary activity wherever they can. (Booi. Williamson, Kerry. "Anger Simmers over Arbitration." *Calgary Herald*. March 13, 2002).

4.7 Why would teachers want to continue to try to bargain with trustees who, first of all, don't have the money and second, don't have the nerve to stand up and get more money? We've gone through seven years of surplus and we didn't make the gains we wanted. We've gone through 10 years of cuts – obviously the system is broken. (Booi. Derworiz, Colette. "Provincial Bargaining Proposal Should Have Boards Worried." *Calgary Herald*. March 21, 2002).

Using the Past to Assign Blame

A recurrent theme was that the conflict had a history. This was not a conflict that had suddenly appeared or was caused by a rash decision. In this case, history could be traced to a government source. In their summoning of the past, union speakers assigned blame to the government. They told their audience of a crisis in public education some time in the making. The teachers were not responsible for creating this problem or initiating the conflict. Rather, the problem was pre-existent and was the direct result of the present government's misguided actions. In 4.3, Judy Nielsen pointed to the government's failure to address the 5 percent rollback that it had instituted in the early nineties. Similarly, in 4.4 and 4.7 Booi traced the current conflict to a government source. It was the result of an action taken by government ten years ago when it had decided to reduce its funding for public education. Not only had the government refused to address this initial wrong but also they had spent ten years ignoring the problem. They allowed it to become chronic. There had not been a solution that was now being broken by the union, but rather ten years ago the government had switched on a time bomb.

The teachers were not responsible for the problem, since the government had created it. But neither was the problem new or unexpected. In fact, over the past ten years the union had apparently watched on in horror as public education deteriorated and their profession declined. As such, they had firsthand experience of the government's refusal to address these issues. They had seen this coming. They possessed a unique perspective. Not only did they have ten years of evidence that demonstrated the government's culpability, but also these years provided an index of the government's stubborn refusal to address the problem. The past provided a body of evidence which proved that the government had refused to take responsibility for their actions or listen to the union's concerns.

As Booi made clear, this was not because of lean years or government hardship. In fact, the past had included seven years of budget surpluses. It had been a time of blessing and plenty. Yet it was a bounty in which the teachers had not shared. Despite seven years of surplus public education had undergone ten years of cuts. This may have escaped public notice, yet the union was acutely aware of the worsening conditions. Union speakers constructed the past as bearing powerful testimony to the government's misdeeds. It provided a chronicle of government mismanagement and neglect, which also held an ominous warning for the future. In this way, union speakers constructed the past as a model of continuity. The present conflict was not new: it could be traced to the government's earlier actions. The union would not allow the downward spiral to continue.

Such a model absolved the union of wrongdoing and placed the blame squarely on the government. According to the union speakers, there had never been a time of accord. Rather, unrest and wrongdoing had persisted over the past ten years. The roots of the present conflict were thus traced back ten years to their genesis with the Klein government. Thus the union was

simply bringing to light a problem that the government had created. The problem of deteriorating public education and decline in the teaching profession had worsened. The present conflict was a crisis ten years in the making, and its cause could be clearly traced to the present government.

Using the Past to Assign Responsible Behavior

The past was also summoned to demonstrate how seriously the union was taking the current issue. It was not being hasty nor was it simply reacting to the actions of the Learning Minister, but rather the government had a proven track record of mistreatment. Elsewhere, Booi had explained that the strike was "a weapon of last resort" and his union was "down to last resorts" (Hagan, Susan. "Strike Position Draws Near." *Edmonton Journal*. September 11, 2001). Apparently, the union had exhausted all of its options and was now left to wield its only remaining weapon. Previously, the union had not been down to last resorts, but now it was. Though it is beyond the scope of the present discussion, it is worth noting that Booi considered his union's ability to strike as a "weapon." Perhaps he wished to have union members regard themselves as powerful actors that were capable of wielding such a "weapon" against their government opponent. Perhaps the union simply regarded its ability to strike as a "weapon." Further speculation is possible but unwarranted at this point. We do know, however, that at no point did government speakers refer to their ability to introduce legislation as a "weapon."

What requires less speculation is how the union framed the past to demonstrate its own responsible behavior. Apparently, union members had thought long and hard about their decision to take strike action. Booi remarked that they were now down to last resorts; there were no other options available. In 4.2, Booi explained that not only had they not "abused the strike weapon,"

they had not "used it for 10 years." Here, the past was used to demonstrate the magnitude of their restraint. The union would have preferred to not reach for the "strike weapon," and proof of their reluctance was borne out by the fact that they had not used it in the past ten years. Similar to how the past ten years registered the enormity of government irresponsibility, this span of time demonstrated the union's responsibility. Booi implied that the union could have reached for the strike weapon at any point in the past ten years, but they had chosen not to.

The strike weapon had not been used because the union understood the gravity of such an action. They were reluctant to go on strike and preferred to adopt another, less drastic course of action. Apparently, they had a strong sense of moral duty and understood what the consequences of their actions would be for their students. Yet while they grasped the scope of their actions, they also knew full well that these were desperate times that called for them to advocate desperate measures. They were answering a higher calling. The past ten years justified their assessment of the situation. It demonstrated the government's refusal to acknowledge the crisis it had created in public education. In this way, the teachers' sentiment must not cloud their better judgment. Painful as it may be, it was time for action.

The government was not only responsible for creating the current problem but also they were irresponsible for refusing to "make the necessary investments" (4.1). By comparison the union had behaved admirably by bringing their concerns to the school boards. They had followed the appropriate protocol and adhered to the rules. And yet government made it impossible for school boards to address the union's concerns; they had refused to provide them with the adequate resources to bargain in earnest. As such, the breakdown in negotiations was not a fault of the school boards or the union, but yet another example of the government's irresponsibility.

The Past Forces us to Take Action

It was the government's refusal to invest in public education rather than low wages that was causing hardship for the teachers and their students. The past not only allowed union speakers to assign blame to the government but also to demonstrate their own long-suffering. Perhaps speakers were attempting to have their audience feel sorry for the hardworking teachers who had been doing so much with so little for so long. Perhaps speakers hoped to let union members know that they were suffering or that the speakers understood fully the tremendous sacrifices made by members. Regardless of their intended audience(s), speakers made it clear that teachers had been left to stagger under a mushrooming workload. And things were not getting better. Government refused to address the problems that teachers faced daily. The situation was becoming increasingly untenable.

This was not because the government did not know there was a problem. The teachers had sounded alarms earlier, but government refused to listen. In 4.5, Booi argued that "we had the audacity to point out that Alberta has the highest class sizes in the country … We got messages at the time that that was a serious mistake and that there was going to be payback." Booi's statement is notable for its level of ambiguity. Who was responsible for sending these "messages" and what was the content? Also, though no specific time was given, just "at the time," Booi stated that his members had received "messages" that they should have kept quiet about the size of Alberta's classes. Apparently, through some murky channels they had been told to expect payback for broadcasting what government wished to keep confidential. Presumably, someone with less moral fiber than the union members would have recanted.

These veiled threats had not deterred the teachers. Despite the government's bullying tactics the union had not desisted from letting the public know the true state of their province's classrooms. They refused to be threatened or intimidated and would continue to alert the public to the government's plan of simply packing more students into already over-crowded classrooms. Perhaps Booi was implying that the current conflict was a direct result of the government's earlier threat. Since the union had sounded the alarm, the government would use legislation or low wage raises as a form of "payback." Regardless, Booi made it clear that the teachers were undeterred by such threats. Like noble heroes fighting a powerful adversary they continued to fight for what was right despite their opponent's powerful advances.

According to Booi (4.6), the past had been a time of martyrdom for teachers. The government was obstinate in its refusal to address the problems plaguing public education. During this time, teachers had continued to give of themselves by volunteering for extra-curricular activities. Yet despite these laudatory actions the situation had only worsened. Booi declared that "the age of martyrdom just ended," which meant that people should expect to see "right across this province teachers walking away from any voluntary activity wherever they can." Teachers had had enough. If people were alarmed by the teachers' actions, then they should understand that they were no longer willing to be martyrs. They had been pushed past the breaking point.

But why should now be the breaking point? Booi's statement raises an interesting paradox. If teachers had been behaving like martyrs in the past, then why not simply continue to take it on the chin? If they had accepted a -5, 0, 0, wage scheme before, why were they now rejecting a wage increase? It would appear their selflessness was no longer considered helpful or effective. By simply being martyrs the teachers had been unable to enact meaningful change in

public education. In fact, their martyrdom had allowed the situation to worsen. Not only had the government not recognized their efforts but they had continued to siphon money out of public education, despite years of surpluses.

The past demonstrated that teachers must adopt another strategy. Their martyrdom had not worked. As a consequence, the teachers would now take a less passive strategy; they would "walk away from any voluntary activity wherever they can." Yet the reason they were walking away was not because they did not want to volunteer (they had been martyrs after all), but because the government's actions had forced them to take these drastic measures. Walking away from voluntary activities would compel the government to address the sad state of public education. After years of martyrdom, union members would now stand up and fight on behalf of their students.

More time could be spent discussing the various nuances contained in the union data. And yet the themes of using the past to assign blame, to demonstrate responsible behavior, and to argue that action must be taken reveal some of the key ways that union speakers used the past. Importantly, the conflict was embedded in a history. It had originated with the government. Union speakers absolved themselves and their members of responsibility while laying the blame at the government's feet. The past enabled speakers to present themselves positively both in their past inaction and in their present action. Apparently, the union had thought long and hard about the course of action that they were now taking. The strike weapon was a weapon of last resort. The situation was dire. Drastic action was required. That the union would take such action following years of inaction was offered as evidence of their restraint.

Government

Given the deep cuts initiated by the Klein-led conservatives, perhaps it should not surprise us to find that their memory was less vivid than the union's. They appeared less willing to recall the lean contract that the teachers had accepted 10 years ago. The amount of available data reflects this since there were only a handful of instances where government speakers explicitly mentioned the past. Also, the past they invoked was either immediate or ambiguous; there was no middle ground. Government speakers did not use the past as a comparison with the present. When the past was invoked, it was used to show how seriously government took their responsibilities and the importance they placed on public education. The past revealed that they were exemplary leaders. They had made difficult decisions but only after listening carefully to what Albertans had to say.

4.8 There is no doubt about it, Alberta teachers were part of the solution a few years ago. … We'll make sure that our teachers and instructors and professors are fairly compensated and given as good a work environment as they can have so that they know how much they are appreciated. (Klein. Thomson, Graham. "Klein Hints at Hefty Pay Hikes for Teachers." *Edmonton Journal*, April 6, 2001).

4.9 This money [the six-per-cent raise over two years] is final. This is the amount of money that is in the Learning budget for the upcoming year. I think that is quite reasonable. (Oberg. Jeffs, Allyson. "Teachers Offered 6-Per-Cent Raise." *Edmonton Journal*. April 25, 2001).

4.10 I thought I was doing good for teachers, because in essence what I was doing is that I had got an extra $150 million for the education system. The four and two was a guarantee for teachers and they still had more money to negotiate with. (Oberg. Holubitsky, Jeff. "Demands Tough on Teachers." *Edmonton Journal*. January 3, 2002).

4.11 I have heard from more than 1,000 parents who are at their wits' end. Two days ago, on our legal advice, we did not have a case. We have since solidified our case. We have had a lot of phone calls, a lot of hardship stories that have come into us over the past two days. We feel it's absolutely hideous students are in the middle of this. What we have done today is take students out of the equation. (Oberg. "Manipulation 101." *Calgary Herald*. February 22, 2002).

4.12 Strikes are meant to be an inconvenience. This government will only step in if job action by the teachers causes unreasonable hardship to third parties. … History tells us that in the vast majority of teacher strikes, the parties were able to settle these disputes themselves. When these strikes end, I want school boards to be able to say they found local solutions to the issues in dispute. (Clint Dunford, Minister of Human Resources and Employment. Derworiz, Colette. "Public Teachers Up Strike Force." *Calgary Herald*. February 13, 2002).

4.13 My sense is that it is a priority – the whole issue of governance, the whole issue of whether teachers are an essential service. I have received many, many letters from teachers – even today, I received another stack of letters from teachers – indicating how important and essential they are to the future of our children in the province. (Hryciuk, Dennis and Tom Barrett. "Klein to Teachers: You Can't Win: Gov't Vows to Remove Their Right to Strike If Court Rules in the Union's Favor Today." *Edmonton Journal*. March 1, 2002).

What Past?

A stark difference between these quotes and those of union speakers is where in time the past was located. The past which Huyssen describes as preoccupying the modern mind is not a long ways back; rather it may be thought of as the kind of past evoked by the term "retro." It is a past, but a relatively recent one. It is one upon which the sun of the modern day has recently set and around which the clouds of nostalgia have begun to form. For union speakers the past belonged to recent memory. They looked back a decade to locate the source of their current woe. In this way they gave the conflict a history and placed blame on the government. By comparison, the past evoked by government speakers was at once ambiguous and immediate. On the one hand the past was "a few years ago" (4.8) and was telling us an important truth (4.12); on the other hand the past was "two days ago" (4.11), and "even today" (4.13).

Government speakers evoked two different types of past. First, Oberg remarked how the events of the past "two days" had effected a change in his government's stance. Similar to union utterances that sought to remind government of the sacrifice made by teachers ten years ago,

Oberg's reference to this specific time may have imbued his utterance with greater authority and perhaps this specific date gave the illusion of objectivity. For Oberg (4.11), the past two days were offered as evidence of the government's careful assessment of the situation. During this time they had heard of parents "at their wits' end," had heard of "a lot of hard luck stories," and had availed themselves of legal consul. The government had not hesitated to change their tack.

Though two days ago is no great span of time, it nonetheless marked a concrete period. During this time, the government had listened to parents, consulted their legal team, and fielded a great many phone calls. The two days had also given them time to decide how best to act upon their convictions. Government felt it "was hideous" that students were in the middle of the conflict, and the two days enabled them to discover how best to take the students "out of the equation." Though only two days, this period of time demonstrated that government was both thoughtful and quick to act. The situation had been carefully considered, but there was no paralysis of analysis. The past proved that the government had heard from parents and witnessed the suffering of students. The "past two days" had opened a window onto this anguish, and made it clear that government that action was necessary.

And yet these are the only two instances (4.11, 4.13) in which government speakers appealed to a specific time. These two instances invoke the immediate past of "two days ago" and "even today." In this way, the government invoked a recent past. This past is more present than past. Nonetheless, it was offered as evidence that the government had its finger on the pulse of the province. They had heard from parents, considered the students, and even heard from the teachers themselves, all of which made it clear that it must take action.

In comparison to this use of the past Klein (4.8) and Dunford (4.12) evoked an ambiguous past. Klein, for instance, asserted that teachers were "part of the solution a few years

ago." But to what time does this point? When was "a few years ago"? Presumably Klein's statement was tacit recognition of the teachers' acceptance of the 1993 -5, 0, 0 wage scheme. And yet Klein did not explicitly point to this event. He did not, for instance, refer to the reaching of a solution ten years ago. Instead, "a few years ago" pointed to an unspecified period of time. Presumably he meant the past of -5, 0, 0, but it was not clear. The ambiguity of his statement was heightened by his contention that teachers were "part of the solution." Apparently there had been other "parts."

On the whole, then, government speakers were selective and ambiguous in the past they evoked. A curious feature is the past that was not evoked. Speakers spent little time, if any, reminding their audience of how things used to be. No mention was made of the good old days, but neither was the audience reminded of the bad old days. Speakers did not tell their audience how things had improved and how far the education system had come. Notably, the Alberta government did not invoke the past to create a contrast with the present. Again, this is likely the result of the same conservative party having held power since 1971.

And yet the government's long reign could have been offered as proof of how they had brought the province to a time of prosperity. Speakers, for example, could have spoken of how the province had been transformed into a promised land of prosperity and hope. It was a significant surplus, after all, that the Klein-led government was now presiding over. Perhaps any talk of prosperity would have made bargaining with the ATA more difficult. If the province was enjoying the fruits of prosperity, then why would those who had contributed to this "solution" not share in the rewards?

Prosperity would seem a tricky label to apply, however. Union speakers, for instance, had told us that any talk of prosperity overlooked the tremendous price at which it had come.

Teachers had been martyrs and students were suffering. The past invoked by union cast a long shadow on the present. According to union speakers, the past revealed that government had balanced its books on the students' backs. Consequently, public education was in crisis. Conditions used to be much better; teachers used to be respected; classrooms used to be properly staffed with kids receiving the help that they needed. This was no longer the case, and it was the government that had set the ball in motion. By contrast, government speakers pointed not to a golden or a troubled past. No past at all was mentioned. For government speakers, the problem was now. They were hearing of parents at their wits' end and students caught in the middle. Apparently, the conflict had emerged suddenly. Its roots did not stretch back in time.

Sacrifice or Solution?

Government had apparently heard the cries of its people and was now acting on their behalf. Klein recalled that teachers had been "part of the solution a few years ago"; but in so doing, he interpreted the past differently than the union. The "solution" of which Klein spoke had been portrayed as a sacrifice by the union. The difference is telling and opens a window onto the differing perspectives held by government and union. The concessions that the teachers had made were framed by union speakers as a sacrifice. Teachers had put aside their requests to accept a lean contract. As a result they had made due with overcrowded classrooms, dwindling resources, and wage cuts. It is worth recalling how, in chapter 2, union speakers described members' actions as demonstrating altruism. Now, the past was invoked to remind the audience of the sacrifices made by teachers a decade earlier. Perhaps the assigning of a clear time, "ten

years" (4.2; 4.4; 4.7) illustrated how clearly teachers remembered their earlier sacrifice; perhaps it implied that the time had come for them to be rewarded.

For government there had been no sacrifice. Instead of locating the event in a specific time Klein spoke only of "a few years ago." This ambiguity helped to cover his government's tracks and disassociate the present time with the earlier event. When Klein looked to the past he found only that teachers had been "part of the solution." Apparently there had been a solution and the troubles had been solved. All had been taken care of. Teachers saw things differently, which reflects the differing perspectives of union and government and may also illustrate why labor peace was elusive.

The terms used by government and union bring different expectations with them; sacrifice should presumably be rewarded while contributing to a solution is expected. Klein did not assign a role to the teachers. They had simply been part of the solution. The part that they had played and the significance of their concessions which allowed the solution to occur were not mentioned. Since it had been a solution government was not obligated to repay or reward the teachers. This did not mean that the government did not appreciate the teachers. In fact, speakers made it clear that they were deeply appreciative. Government harbored no ill will. Conditions had not deteriorated and this was no grudge match. There was simply not enough money.

Nonetheless, government believed it had put a significant amount of money on the table. In 4.10 Oberg complained that he had been grossly misunderstood by the ATA: "I thought I was doing good for teachers, because in essence what I was doing is that I had got an extra $150 million for the education system. The four and two was a guarantee for teachers and they still had more money to negotiate with." Earlier, he had declared how he had "never ever said a bad thing about a teacher." Oberg invoked the past to demonstrate his sincerity towards the teachers.

He had been operating under the assumption that he was "doing good for teachers," but this "good" had been misinterpreted. Oberg clarified that he had teachers' best interests at heart. He had secured an additional $150 million, and teachers "still had more money to negotiate with."

In this way, the past was contested. The so-called Klein revolution, which included asking teachers to swallow the bitter pill of a -5, 0, 0, contract was regarded by government as part of the solution. For the union, however, this had constituted a tremendous sacrifice. In accepting these conditions, the teachers had become martyrs. When they looked to the past they saw that the government had set off a time bomb that was now threatening to explode and blow apart public education. For union, the bomb was ticking and action was required to defuse it. Government saw things differently. There was no time bomb, neither had a sacrifice been made. What there had been was a solution with the teachers being only a part of the solution; they had not even played a major role.

The Past as Special Access

Government's interpreted the past to demonstrate that it held a privileged perspective. Similar to the union's strategy of speaking on behalf of members and students, government speakers told us that they saw the conflict through the eyes of parents, students and even teachers. They could also see the fiscal challenges facing Alberta. The past proved that the government had heard from the people and knew how they were feeling. Since the government had heard from parents, students, and teachers, it was now acting in accordance with the wishes of these groups. Perhaps this is how teachers had comprised "part of the solution." Hearing from these groups gave government a unique perspective.

The past requires interpretation, but for government speakers the past was presented as not requiring such work. One had but to look to the past to see what had been written on the kingdom's walls. The stack of letters on the Premier's desk (4.13), for instance, was presented as proof that the Premier had the teachers' blessing in seeking legislation to make them an essential service. As well, hearing from parents and students was portrayed as synonymous with knowing what it was that they wanted. To hear them was to understand them, and the action that the government was now taking expressed that knowledge. Similarly, Dunford (4.12) presented "history" as telling an important lesson. It did not need to be debated, interpreted, or contextualized; one need only have ears to hear. The past provided understanding and insight, but what the past had to say could not be heard by just anyone. Not everyone could hear the whispers of the past.

In asserting that they had special access to the perspectives of those involved, government speakers presented themselves as enjoying a larger view than the union. The ATA may have had heard from members believing their profession was under siege, but this was just one perspective. Government speakers had heard from everyone involved and understood the heavy toll of the conflict. Unlike their union counterparts, government speakers constructed the past as demonstrating the reach of their vision. They pointed to multiple audiences that had confided in them. In fact, they had recently heard from these groups. This was not long ago and far away, but rather just a few days ago—the news was fresh. This portrayed government as having its finger on the pulse of the province and enjoying a larger perspective.

The Past Cannot Be Changed

Government speakers constructed the past as having bequeathed a reality that they were powerless to change. This is noticeable in utterances where finances are mentioned. Budget addresses, for instance, frequently depict the past as having created a reality with which we are now stuck. In 4.9, Oberg announced that "This money [the six-per-cent raise over two years] is final. This is the amount of money that is in the Learning budget for the upcoming year. I think that is quite reasonable." According to Oberg, the money apportioned for the learning budget had been decided in the past and could not now be recalibrated. It was "final."

Yet the budget did allow a six per-cent raise, which was presented as something that had been completed. Oberg could not change the budget because it had been decided upon in the past. Since the budget was a product of earlier actions, it was impossible to change the amount of money it had made available for the teachers. The fact that such budgets are a product of human action and could in fact be modified to reflect present concerns was not mentioned by Oberg. Rather the budget represented the cards that he had been dealt. It had left him with no other options and with no further room for bargaining. There was no one at which to point one's finger. There was simply "the budget."

Oberg's words presented him positively. On the one hand he admired teachers; on the other, he was handcuffed in what he could offer them. His response was thus driven not by any personal feelings but rather by an institutional force (the budget) that was larger than any person or group. Following the terms of the budget allowed Oberg to present himself as a good steward of the people's finances. He was prudent. In terms of the past, the budget was an entity beyond

the control of human agents, like Oberg. Portraying the budget in such a way imbued the product of human action with an authority that superseded human agency.

Positioning these events in the past reified the process and people involved in the making of the budget, but also it absolved Oberg and by extension his entire government of any responsibility. He was a well-intentioned but powerless agent caught between powerful forces. He was following or administering the prescribed measures set out by the budget. And yet, as Oberg remarked (4.10), he had thought that he was "doing good for teachers, because in essence what I was doing is that I had got an extra $150 million for the education system." Though the budget had set the amount of money available for teachers, Oberg had been able to carve out an additional $150 million. In this way Oberg was both following the budget yet also demonstrating generosity through his own agency.

Discussion

In considering how speakers used the past we should recall that Alberta is unique. Unlike other provincial governments, the governing Progressive Conservatives had been in power since 1971. The current government could not blame another party for having signed too generous labor contracts or for the current state of the province's finances. Conversely, they could not present themselves as coming to the rescue of a province that had been plundered by their predecessors. This also meant that the union was left to battle once more the same government and many of the same people that they had squared off against ten years earlier. For both government and union, this also meant that they were familiar with each other: the opponents were well-known, the field defined.

So, too, were the themes that arose. In looking to the past, union speakers painted a grim backdrop for the current conflict. In the past, the government had created a problem. There had never been a solution and this had been compounded by the government's unwillingness to address the spiraling decline it had set in motion. For union speakers, the past provided clear evidence of the government's guilt and underlined the seriousness of the current situation. It also demonstrated that they were not responsible for the problem but rather were the only ones behaving responsibly. They alone were taking a stand to prevent public education from crumbling. So dire were the problems plaguing public education that the teachers were being forced to take drastic measures on behalf of students and the teaching profession, not because they suddenly wanted better compensation.

The past further revealed that the teachers had exhausted all of their options. For ten long years they had selflessly given of themselves, but this had proven ineffective. The martyrs were martyred. The past proved another tactic must be taken. The teachers must rise up together. Now they would hammer their ploughshares into swords. There was a time for peace and a time for war. The past was marshaled to justify this new time and the need for a new strategy. The earlier sacrifices showed that change would only come with drastic action. The past proved the futility of martyrdom. For union speakers the past served a dual purpose. On one hand it demonstrated the teachers' unselfishness and altruism, but it also justified the action that they were now forced to take.

For government the past demonstrated its ability to come up with solutions. It had fixed the problem earlier and what it now faced was not a crisis in public education long in the making but simply teachers who wanted a more generous contract. While government speakers respected and even admired the teachers, there were handcuffed by larger economic forces. The budget

had been decided. Even though the budget was the work of human hands, it was presented as written on tablets of stone and received from on high. The budget was its own entity. It prescribed the government's actions and the union's compliance. It laid down the rails on which the current government must run. In this way, it marginalized human agency.

Conclusions

Both union and government speakers returned to the past to explain the present and to justify their present actions. Fundamentally, they characterized themselves as being forced: they had not taken these actions out of self-interest or to flex their muscle. For both, the past enabled them to construct a narrative that followed a traditional plotline, complete with background, rising action, and now climax. The denouement would have to wait. Such a narrative provided union and government speakers with the tools to construct the present time as critical. But the reason for this crisis was presented very differently. For union speakers, the present conflict had its roots in the past. But while the conflict did not begin with them, they would do their best to ensure that they ended it.

Government speakers also looked to the past, but it revealed how teachers had been part of an earlier solution, not how government had set in motion a series of unfortunate events. The past was the site of concord. The past to which government reached was the immediate past. The past two days revealed that it must resolve the conflict. This immediate past provided government with a window onto the views of concerned parents, children, and even the teachers themselves. For government this was a conflict that had emerged in isolation; it was not connected with or a consequence of an earlier time.

That speakers should invoke the past to explain the current situation and the actions of their group signals the general human tendency to understand the present in terms of the past. And yet pasts require interpretation and are by nature contested. Government and union, for instance, looked to the past and saw very different things: one saw a solution while the other saw sacrifice. But while they saw different things the past they summoned nonetheless absolved them of wrongdoing. The government had orchestrated a solution and the teachers had been martyrs. What their recollections did not reveal were the interpretive lens put in place to render such a past meaningful.

The Future

"The future is not what it used to be."

--Paul Valery

Unlike the past, the future provides unique potential for speakers. Since it has yet to happen, it remains a blank slate, a tabula rasa of possibility. As well, actions can be projected onto the future without requiring speakers to take those actions. Heroic action can be described even though no heroic action has been taken. Describing the future consequences of the actions being taken today imbues those actions with power, since they will create a certain reality; there are no intervening or mitigating variables. Speakers construct themselves as powerful since they are the ones determining our future reality, or the future that our children will inherit. Speakers are thus not simply prognosticators but creators of the future. Their actions today are tomorrow's reality.

While speakers in different contexts may appeal variously to the future, for political speakers consequences may be starkly described. Reyes (2011) argues that political leaders often

justify their decision to send their nation into war by constructing a hypothetical future. Unless armed action is taken now, our enemies will attack us and destroy our way of life. In this scenario, our future is threatened by them. Or speakers may extrapolate their opponent's views onto the canvas of the future to render them ominous and threatening (Dunmire, 2007). For Reyes, what distinguishes political speakers' use of the future is the absence of uncertainty. It is a future presented as one that "will"—not "might"—come to pass.

The future so described more closely resembles an event that has happened. It is static and offered to the audience as concretely as the past. Specific details are provided without acknowledging the inherent uncertainty of the future. As well, speakers assume that no intervening action will occur which might alter the outcome. Spending must be cut now; tomorrow is too late. The dearth of intervening variables imbues the speaker with authority, for they have seen the future: they are the voice crying in the street. Dunmire (2007: 19) argues that such a strategy renders the future ideologically significant, since it becomes another arena where speakers attempt to inscribe their ideology onto their audiences' consciousness.

Fairclough (2003) argues that speakers can invoke doomsday scenarios without having to mention actual facts. Projecting disastrous scenarios enables speakers to "deviate the attention from the present itself and to avoid pertinent questions about the decision making" (Reyes 2011: 794). Proposing a military invasion in order to secure our children's peace and security evades pertinent questions concerning the legitimacy of such action. Is such an action legal? How was the decision made, by whom, and on what evidence? As intimated by these questions, researchers have been principally concerned with how the future has been mobilized to justify armed conflict.

My focus is on conflict, but not the armed variety. Yet the conflict between the Alberta government and the ATA is well-suited to uses of the future, since both parties offered visions of public education's future. While the past revealed the mistakes and hidden agenda of their opponents, the future demonstrated the merits of the speaker's proposals. Both government and union speakers expressed their sincere concern for the wellbeing of students. And both drew upon future scenarios to justify the actions that they were taking or were planning to take. Government and union imbued the present conflict with greater importance by contextualizing it within the future yet the future to which they looked differed in important ways.

Knowing the Future

Dunmire (2005: 481) argues that political evocations of the future "tap into—indeed, prey upon—the public's general anxiety about the inherent ambiguity and indeterminacy of the future in order to influence social perceptions, cognitions, and actions." Speakers invoke the future to influence contemporary behavior. Politicians, for instance, may describe a future where expenses are out of control and the government cannot sustain essential public services to argue that tough measures be taken now. Though the future is unknown, speakers may nonetheless create a strong causal connection between the present and the future so that tomorrow's landscape is shaped today. Establishing this connection helps remove the ambiguity and indeterminacy of the future. The future is rendered a consequence or a product of the present which is controlled by the speaker. Following the speaker's admonitions allows us to shape a future reality.

Such uses of the future are not new. The Hebrew prophets, for example, warned their audiences of the wrath that was to come unless they abandoned their current apostasy and

returned to the Lord (the only exception is the enigmatic story of Noah where no warning is recorded). But the legitimacy of the old Jeremiads depended upon their sacred calling. They had been chosen to see the future. It was the Lord who had shown them the terrible future looming just beyond the horizon. In some ways, politicians, economists and others are the new prophets of our secularized world. They have seen the future and they know what lies ahead. Government speakers know that our children will be taken captive by debt; the province will go bankrupt; prosperity will be no more. Yet should we heed their words, a promised land flowing with government services and surpluses awaits. As with their sacred precursors, these speakers portray themselves as knowing what must be done to avoid a calamitous outcome or to enjoy the fruits that will result from current prudence. Similarly, the sackcloth and ashes prescribed by the prophets would appear to find its equal in the stark austerity measures proposed by government speakers.

In depicting the future as directly related to the present actions that they are proposing, political speakers can endow their proposals with authority. Edelman (1988: 18) argues that the function of such political discourse is to present proposals and premises that must be pursued for the sake of the future. For Edelman, speakers make declarations about what will be in the future. Dunmire makes a similarly important distinction. First, she urges us to understand representations of the future as articulated in and as operating through two modalities: deontic and epistemic. For Dunmire (2005: 484), deontic modality is "the modality of 'ought' and 'should' and is concerned with future action and policy, and expresses obligation, conviction, and permission." By contrast, epistemic modality is the "modality of 'will.' It is concerned with knowledge, belief, and truth about the future, and expresses judgments as to the status and/or certainty of that knowledge, belief, and truth." Dunmire argues that such a distinction highlights

the fact that political discourse not only forwards arguments about actions that we should take (deontic) but also makes claims to knowledge of the future; what will be (epistemic). Ultimately, speakers endeavor to provide a view of the future that positions their vision as *the* vision. They know what will come to pass and which actions will produce what results.

Such speakers cast themselves as holding special knowledge of the future; they know what "will" happen and so we should listen to them. Dunmire (2005: 483) follows Edelman in saying that, "political institutions have supplanted the role of religious institutions in guiding people's expectations of and orientations toward the future." In this way, political institutions have usurped a critical aspect of the earlier authority enjoyed by religious institutions. Where religious leaders could but counsel prayer and obedience, political leaders offer more palpable and "legitimate" means of prognostication. The future may be wrested from the hidden hand of God and placed in the more visible hands of the present government, who can confidently describe expectations of future welfare. They alone can bring a future world into existence, but it is a future that can be used to shape perceptions and interpretations of the present.

Looking at the Future

What did speakers mean when they spoke of the future anyways? Practically speaking, the future may refer to any point of time beyond the present one. So any event following the present—from a few hours, days, years or even generations—is the future. This raises an interesting point: how far into the future did government and union speakers look? Did they tend to evoke a future close at hand or distant? Was there a palpable difference between their orientations or did speakers appear to draw from a variety of future times depending on the situation? Was the future limited

to the end of the conflict or did speakers invoke a future that they believed would result from the conflict? Speakers can choose from a variety of times. Dunmire (2007), for instance, has looked at how Bush focused on a future event that was anchored in a specific time close at hand, while Fairclough (2003) has examined the generalized world of children and grandchildren evoked by politicians urging for globalization.

We can generalize by saying that there are two futures: short-term and long-term. By short-term I mean those instances where speakers invoked a future close at hand, within the next couple of days, weeks or months. By contrast, I use long-term to mean a time that is set much farther in the future: the future of our children and our children's children. There may also be utterance in which the speaker refers to some distant undefined point in the future. Nonetheless, it is a future that is the result of the present. In this way, it might be the classroom occupied by our children a couple of years down the road or perhaps even by the next generation of students, but it is a classroom directly shaped by today's events.

A further aspect relating to speakers' use of the future is the degree to which speakers portrayed themselves as knowing the future. In describing a known future, speakers may present themselves as certain of what "will" happen. They possess a special knowledge of the future and know what is going to happen. In such a scenario, a future that has yet to occur is described with a precision reserved for events that have already occurred. Such a future is described as a reality, and it is a reality that justifies the course of action prescribed by the speaker. Dunmire (2007), for instance, notes how Bush's descriptions of what Iraq would do once it invaded Kuwait enabled him to construct a future that was known and must be avoided at all costs. As well, Reyes (2011) has argued that the explicit details provided by Bush of the atrocities that would be

perpetrated by the terrorists if they were not hunted down and stopped were used to justify American action.

But the future may also be described as unknown, as something that can only be known later. Government speakers, for instance, might warn that the offer they are making may not be tenable in the future. Or else they may describe the current level of government spending as unsustainable. Changes will have to be made; dark days are coming but the precise nature of such darkness is left unstated. Or else speakers may tell us that money must be put aside for future contingencies though the nature of those contingencies is unknown. Perhaps, too, more belt-tightening will be necessary, but for now they must wait and see.

Accordingly, some utterances described the future as known and others as unknown. Presumably, we should expect those utterances that characterized the future as known as providing more concrete details. They should be more specific and more certain. The future should be described as what will happen and not as something that might happen. Conversely, the future as unknown should be described as something that may or may not happen or it might be depicted generally with an absence of detail. Speakers should present such a future as enigmatic. They should not know how certain events will unfold or what tomorrow will bring.

Specifically, I am interested in the knowledge claims that speakers made concerning the future. To what degree did speakers present themselves as "knowing" the future: how certain were they? What advantage might they have gained by projecting themselves as un/certain of the future? Were there certain moods or attitudes that they may have hoped to elicit from their audience? These questions signal the direction that the investigation will take. Taken together, examining speakers' utterances along these two dimensions opens a window onto the different ways that government and union speakers used the future to legitimate their current actions. It

should be remembered that this study is exploratory and not exhaustive. By surveying the contours I offer a topography of how union and government speakers described the future.

Union

Union speakers did not hesitate to describe the future that awaited their audience if government got its way. Union knew the grim results of the government's current actions. They knew that the glory days of public education were gone and they could see clearly a future of overcrowded classrooms in which students received increasingly inferior instruction. Distraught parents, anxious students, and overwhelmed teachers inhabited the classrooms of tomorrow. The reasons for this sordid state could be found with the current government. Union speakers presented themselves as knowing the consequences of the government's actions. The union leader, in particular, presented himself as possessing a special knowledge of the future. He knew very well how the union members would react to the government's latest offer. He knew how the future would unfold and he did not mince his words when describing that future to his audience.

5.1 We are facing a looming teacher shortage. If you want top- flight educators, you have to give conditions and salaries to lure them here. (Booi. "Alberta teachers welcome Klein's hint of a pay increase: They're looking for 20% or more as contract talks get set to begin." Hagan, Susan. *Edmonton Journal*. April 7, 2001).

5.2 It doesn't matter if you are in the north of the province or the south, in a public or Catholic board, or if you are urban or rural. Teachers across the province are prepared to confront the provincial government over its failure to invest adequate resources in public education, which is played out in unacceptable classroom conditions, inadequate salaries and a loss of teachers in the profession. (Booi. Holubitsky, Jeff. "Monday Strike Would Idle 117,000 Kids." *Calgary Herald*. January 17, 2002).

5.3 If they order us back, the fight isn't over. If you think you can wave a legislative wand and make all the problems go away, it's not going to be that way and we will

find other ways to fight it. Look at B.C. [British Columbia] right now, you take away their [teachers'] right to strike and they start with withdrawing voluntary services and extra-curricular activities … What I can tell you is we are not going away until the problems are addressed … The only guarantee is if we don't take strong action, nothing is going to change. (Booi. Holubitsky, Jeff. "Alberta Teachers Ready to Work to Rule." *Edmonton Journal*. January 22, 2002).

5.4 This government cannot legislate away the problem and they are not going to be able to bully their way out of this … You have to be very careful about backing people into a corner because you won't like how they will fight. (Booi. Henton, Darcy "The bitter labour dispute between Alberta teachers and the province has its roots in a long-running battle over control of the education system, some observers say." *Canadian Press NewsWire* [Toronto]. February 17, 2002.).

5.5 If [Premier Klein] doesn't want to antagonize teachers, how can he say if the courts uphold our rights he'll take them away [by declaring teaching an essential service]? As soon as you use it, you lose it. Just in case there's any misunderstanding, not only is it not over, it's going to get more intense. We will shut Alberta Learning down. Work to rule will probably be ruled illegal, so we won't do it. But there are other things. (Booi. Hryciuk, Dennis and Tom Barrett. "Klein to Teachers: You Can't Win." *Edmonton Journal*. March 1, 2002).

5.6 The saddest thing is this all could have been over this week if we had just got a fair arbitration process. We would be going onto labor peace but instead we are headed into another big fight. If teachers can't even get a fair arbitration process they are going to start withdrawing and they will concentrate totally on teaching and learning. They will do the best possible job they can do with children but they will do nothing more. (Booi. Holubitsky, Jeff. "ATA Fears Long-Term Conflict." *Edmonton Journal*. March 10, 2002).

5.7 This action will inflame teachers, destroy co-operation, and undermine our classrooms right across this province. This is a form of bullying. What they have now is a completely poison atmosphere in schools across the province … Every negative thing that happens, every problem that emerges from this point on, is the direct result of the school boards' and government's betrayal of teachers' goodwill. (Booi. Rusnell, Charles and Graham Thomson. "Teachers' Stabbed in the Back." *Edmonton Journal*. March 12, 2002).

5.8 Wildcat strikes (are) the big fear right now … There was a lot of talk of mass resignations … some of our people are so enraged that we have real fears that they may do things that will backfire. (Booi. "Alberta teachers' union urges members to refrain from wildcat strikes." *Canadian Press NewsWire* [Toronto]. March 17, 2002).

When is the Future?

Union President Larry Booi invoked a variety of future times. On the one hand, he was certain that a "big fight" (5.6) was coming and that his government should expect a fierce battle. On the other hand, he did not say when this fight was coming. As such, the clash was anticipated but not located in a specific future time. Such ambiguity was common. In 5.1, Booi warned that the province was facing a "looming teacher shortage." But to what time does "looming" refer? Similarly, talk of "not going away," of shutting down "Alberta Learning," of things becoming "more intense," or of the union doing "other things" were not anchored in a specific time, but were left to loom large in the audience's mind. Apparently, these events could happen at any time in the future.

All of these actions demonstrated the immense power wielded by the union. But the time that was evoked to construct the union as a powerful agent was not anchored in a definite time. The present conflict was apparently just the tip of the iceberg. Government was not going to simply "bully" their way out of the conflict because there were "other things" that the union could do. The union would neither go away nor relent. By drawing from an indefinite future Booi accomplished at least two things. First, he endowed his union with power. It would ensure that the government did not simply use legislation to kick the can down the road. Second, union had the power to launch a "big fight" and make the conflict "bitter." It was the union, not the government, who would decide when the fight was over. Government might think that legislation would quickly resolve the conflict, but this was not the case. The union's collective muscle was stronger than government legislation.

One further aspect deserves attention: the complicated nature of the union's position. In 5.6, Booi remarked that "If teachers can't even get a fair arbitration process they are going to start withdrawing and they will concentrate totally on teaching and learning. They will do the best possible job they can do with children but they will do nothing more." In this instance, we glimpse the thin line that the union was forced to walk. First, Booi explained that such a withdrawal was the result of a tainted arbitration process. Teachers were being forced to do something they did not want. Their decision demonstrated that they would not meekly accept the government's offer. And yet Booi was quick to reassure his audience that teachers were professionals who would give their best efforts and full attention to the students. The acrimony between the teachers and their employer would not contaminate the classroom. But what did Booi mean when he said that teachers would "concentrate totally on teaching and learning?" Is that not what teachers were supposed to be doing anyway? Teachers were thus forced to walk a fine line. They were professionals who liked their students and would not take their frustrations out on them. If legislated back to work, they would do their best. So what options did they have to force the government's hand?

Knowing the Future

While the time when union would take action was unknown, the action that would be taken was known. For instance, in 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.8 it was not a lack of knowledge about whether or not members would take action, but what form their action would take. This is a critical distinction because it signals Booi's certainty of the future. He knew that the teachers would flex their collective muscle, but he did not tell his audience what form their action would take or when

action would be taken. Booi (5.3, 5.4) knew that the teachers would fight, and he knew that the government would not like "how [the teachers] will fight." But what was the nature of this "fight" that they were going to launch?

Booi (5.5) explained that "Work to rule will probably be ruled illegal, so we won't do it. But there are other things." He did not know how government would react to his union's use of work to rule. He thought it would "probably be ruled illegal," but it was the government's decision not his. Nonetheless, he knew that there were "other things" members could do. In 5.8 he worried that members were so enraged that they might do "things" that would backfire. Apparently the members' actions would not be known until they had occurred. Even the union President did not know, but he did know that they would do something. Perhaps this was intended to magnify the fear. What were these "things" that they might do? Were they planning to hire men in dark coats to make the government an offer it could not refuse, or were they simply planning a letter-writing campaign? Perhaps the lack of certainty was meant to tell the government it had better sweeten its offer or else.

Booi's knowledge of the future expressed the agency of his members. The union had an impressive armory at its disposal. Teachers would not go away (5.3); they would not allow the government to bully its way out (5.4). Government would not like how the teachers would fight (5.4). The conflict was going to get more intense and Alberta Learning would be shut down (5.5). Teachers were going to start withdrawing and concentrate "totally" on teaching and learning (5.6). Negative things were going to happen and problems would emerge (5.7). These utterances were all described as actions that would—not might—occur. The union held all the cards. Even legislation, apparently, was no match for the teachers.

The future also revealed that government was not as powerful as it may have thought. In 5.3 and 5.4, Booi remarked that the government could not do whatever it wanted. The government could not simply wave "a legislative wand" (5.3) and make the problems disappear. In fact, the teachers would not go away until the problems were addressed. Such statements presented Booi as possessing a special knowledge of the future. He knew that the tactics used by the government were doomed to fail. Government may think it could use legislation to solve its problems by simply bullying teachers back into the classroom, but Booi knew legislation was not that powerful. He knew that the teachers would fight tooth and nail and that the government would not like how the teachers were going to fight (5.4).

In this way, the future which had yet to come proved that the tools the government was relying on were inadequate. Legislation was insufficient for addressing the problem, and the teachers would not cease until the problems were resolved. The future portrayed by Booi demonstrated that the government did not have the powerful resources at its disposal that it thought. Furthermore, the future demonstrated that the teachers were not simply passive recipients of the government's actions, but rather they held the cards. There were a great many actions that would be forthcoming. The government was put on notice that it must abandon its current strategy. The union President had seen the grim consequences of the government's current strategy.

But what would the union do? What does it mean when we are told that teachers are "not going away until the problems are addressed"? How did the teachers intend to "fight" the government? What were the "other things" (5.5) that they would do? The actions remained nebulous. It would seem this was an attempt to aggrandize the actions that the union could take. Fundamentally, there was not a lot that it could do. If legislated back to work (as they were), then

they would have to return to work or face hefty fines. They might withdraw from extra-curricular activities, but how important were such activities anyways? And would the teachers themselves withdraw *en masse* from them? The negative things (5.7) that were going to happen were never defined; they were left to simply hang in the future.

Perhaps Booi hoped that the lack of specifics would allow his words to sound more ominous. Like the schoolyard bully who obliquely threatens, "you're gonna get it," the "it" was never specified. The absence of concrete terms and specific details leave the event to loom large in the victim's imagination. One cannot prepare for an action that is not defined. As well, the event was not located in time, and the absence of a clear time marker implied that it was the speaker who would decide when this action would be taken. Perhaps, too, neglecting to mention how the members would accomplish their acts of resistance imbued the utterances with greater power. The audience did not know how the teachers were going to attack; they knew only that an attack was on its way. The fight was presented as a *fait accompli*. Any decision relating to such an act, had already been made. It was a question of when, not if.

Government

Government speakers also looked to the future to justify their current actions. Yet unlike their union counterpart, the future that they described was less ominous, at least for students and their parents. The future may be uncertain and yet government speakers described themselves as having tools at their disposal to address such uncertainties. There were fears associated with the future, but these fears were different from those described by Booi. The future further enabled government speakers to cast themselves as caring and conscientious guardians of the realm.

Though they seemed more willing to acknowledge the uncertainty of the future, it was an uncertainty that required the audience to trust the government. Government had a plan and though it was not entirely clear how that plan would play out, we should trust that all would be well.

5.9 This [pension deal] is as far as we can go. It's a huge thing. It is not something we do lightly, but we want our kids back in the classroom. I am the Minister of Learning and I am there for the kids. If it goes to a strike position I am not sure that this (offer) will be there. (Oberg. Pederson, Rick. "Oberg's Proposal Not Enough, Teachers' Union Says." *Edmonton Journal*. January 12, 2002).

5.10 I have to ensure that students get their education and where I draw the line in the sand is where students won't be able to complete their year. That is not acceptable. There is absolutely no way the public, the government or anybody else would tolerate kids missing six months of the year, half a year of schooling, because someone is on strike. (Oberg. Williamson, Kerry. "Oberg Fears Strike Can't Be Averted." *Calgary Herald*. January 12, 2002).

5.11 Over the coming days our priorities will be to examine whether this action is causing unreasonable hardship to students, families and other third parties. One of the key criteria to me as Minister of Learning is ensuring that students do not lose their school year. That would be completely, absolutely 100 per cent unacceptable. (Oberg. "No End in Sight for Strike." *Edmonton Journal*. February 20, 2002).

5.12 That's [back-to-work legislation] something I don't necessarily favor, but that is an option. (Oberg. Thomson, Graham. "Legislation to End Teachers' Strike is still an 'Option,' Oberg's Says." *Edmonton Journal*. February 21, 2002). [Beside negotiation] the other tool the government always has is to bring forward and pass legislation. To just give you a personal comment, I think it's remote (Dunford. Ibid.).

5.13 If we lose the case [i.e., the ATA court appeal of the Order in Council] then I am prepared to bring in legislation to put them back to work, because students have had enough. (Oberg. Thomson, Graham and Jeff Holubitsky. "Oberg Won't Tolerate 2nd Walkout." *Edmonton Journal*. February 23, 2002).

5.14 Whether the arbitration process meets the needs of everyone is doubtful to say the least. You can't make everyone happy all the time. (Klein. "Alberta teachers will temporarily lose the right to strike and face fines of up to $10,000 if they walk off the job under legislation introduced by Premier Ralph Klein's government Monday. Cotter, John. *Canadian Press NewsWire* [Toronto]. March 11, 2002).

5.15 Let's everyone calm down and see how the arbitration process works out. (Klein. "Alberta government passes bill for arbitrated settlement in teachers dispute." *Canadian Press NewsWire* [Toronto]. March 14, 2002.

The Future is Now

Government speakers focused on the immediate conflict. It was the arbitration process or the possible introduction of legislation that marked their horizon. The future that they invoked was definite. It was composed of concrete events. Oberg clarified that his government would not tolerate students missing their school year because of strike action. For Oberg, his future looked only to the immediate conflict. His future was about ensuring that students could complete their school year. The consequences of using legislation to ensure that teachers were in the classroom were not mentioned, and neither did Oberg discuss the future of public education in Alberta. Was there a crisis in public education? Such a question was not addressed by government speakers. They focused on ensuring that today's students were in the classroom with their teachers.

Those instances where government speakers did invoke a more distant timeframe sounded more like the uttering of an axiom. In 5.11, for instance, Oberg remarked that as Minister of Learning a key criterion was that students not lose their school year. But surely this utterance was intended to convey his thoughts on the current conflict rather than on conflicts that might erupt in the future. Similarly, Klein's declaration (5.14) that "you can't make everyone happy all the time" may have been offered as an enduring lesson of leadership, but it seemed more likely aimed at letting his audience know that it was perfectly normal if union speakers should complain about the way in which their dispute had been settled.

Knowing the Future Today

Government speakers invoked an unknown future that reflected positively on them. In 5.9, for instance, Oberg stated that if the union were to take a strike position, he was "not sure that this (offer) will be there." In other words, Oberg presented himself as making a generous offer that his government might not be willing to make again. The uncertain future implied that union should accept his generosity now. In 5.11, Oberg remarked how his government would "examine whether this action is causing unreasonable hardship to students, families and other third parties." Apparently, the government did not know whether the union was causing "unreasonable hardship." It would take time to investigate the consequences of the union's actions. The government did not have an agenda. Their concern was not with using legislation to force the ATA to accept their offer, but rather they wished to discern whether the hardship was "unreasonable."

When legislation was mentioned it was presented as something that the government was not sure it would use. In 5.12, for instance, Dunford remarked that while his government could use legislation he thought it was "remote." Apparently, government would prefer "other" options. Two days later (5.13), Oberg provided a franker assessment: "If we lose the case [i.e., the ATA court appeal of the Order in Council] then I am prepared to bring in legislation to put them back to work." Here again, legislation was not offered on its own terms; it would only be used if the government lost its case. Even so, Oberg did not definitively state that legislation would be brought in, but rather he stated that he was "prepared" to bring it in, after which it would be debated and voted on by the house. A most powerful tool was characterized by government as something it preferred not to use.

In comparison to the gears of war set in motion on the union side, government speakers appeared less certain about the inevitability of conflict. This is unusual, I think, given that the government had more powerful tools at its disposal. Government speakers used the language of statesmanship. Legislation, for instance, is a powerful tool that governments have at their disposal. And yet, in 5.12, Oberg stated simply that it was "something" that he did not "necessarily favor" though it was "an option." Similarly, Dunford stated that besides negotiation legislation was a "tool" that government could "bring forward and pass."

Government speakers did not present legislation as something that would necessarily be passed. It was not an action that had been taken and it was by no means a done deal. Furthermore, Oberg appeared reluctant to reach for this tool. This is different from Booi's invoking of a future where he could confidently assert that the ATA would "shut Alberta Learning down." In comparison, Oberg presented a future in which he might have to reach for a tool that he did not favor. Whether or not such a tool would be wielded was apparently up to the union. If legislation was introduced, it was because he had been backed into a corner by a recalcitrant union that had left him with no other option.

When Oberg (5.13) said that he was "prepared to bring in legislation" it was only because the students had "had enough." First, it is interesting that even at this point of heightened emotion Oberg provided a rationale for his actions, and it was nothing personal. It was the students who had "had enough." They had been put in an impossible situation by their teachers. By contrast he did not tell his audience that the government was upset or had "had enough." He did not say that his government was being "bullied" by an obstinate union. Rather, Oberg expressed the students' sentiment not his own. Finally, Oberg mentioned only that he was

"prepared" to introduce legislation, which he would do only because of the students' exasperation not his own or his governments'.

Oberg (5.10) knew that it was unacceptable for students to miss half of their school year "because someone [was] on strike." He also "knew" that it was intolerable not just to the government but also to other parties. In 5.11 Oberg framed the ATA's actions as threatening the loss of an entire school year. But while Oberg constructed the ATA's actions as resulting in the loss of either half (5.10) or an entire (5.11) school year he did not explain how he knew this. The future enabled Oberg to present the teachers' actions as costing students either half or a full year of their schooling. These two time frames, though entirely conjectural, were presented as factual. Oberg knew how much schooling the "kids" would lose.

An outstanding example of how the future was exploited is found with Premier Klein. In 5.14, Klein argued that "Whether the arbitration process meets the needs of everyone is doubtful to say the least. You can't make everyone happy all the time." In the future, therefore, we should expect some people (union?) to complain about the result of the arbitration process. Klein's utterance sounded like an axiom: "you can't please all the people all the time." Klein would seem to be anticipating the objections that others, like the union, might have regarding the arbitration process. His audience was told that there would be objections because not everyone can be made happy all the time. This was a fact of life, not the result of government action.

Despite the limitations of arbitration Klein (5.15) asked "everyone" to "calm down and see how the arbitration process works out." According to Klein, the arbitration process should be given a chance. "Everyone" (the union?) should wait to see what the result of the process would be before objecting. The outcome of the arbitration process belonged to the future so it was unknown. Therefore, only once the outcome was known should objections be raised. Klein's

utterance portrayed him as a statesman. No particular group was being targeted. He was simply asking "everyone" to give the process a chance and wait to see what the outcome was.

This is a skillful blurring of the line between a future that is known and one that is unknown. Such a blurring would seem to afford Klein the opportunity of invoking a future that portrayed his government as fair and just. He did not, for instance, say that he knew his government's actions would, as Booi claimed, "inflame teachers, destroy cooperation, and undermine our classrooms" (5.7). Klein did not target the teachers or any specific group, but rather he expressed his knowledge of the limits of the arbitration process and that not everyone would be happy. The lack of specificity also invoked a future in which it was not known who would be unhappy. Klein implied that his government, too, might be unhappy with the outcome. In this way, Klein presented a future in which he knew that not everyone would be happy, but also one in which he did not know who would be unhappy.

Klein used the future to deflect criticism from the arbitration process. The outcome could only be known in the future. But this was nearly the precise opposite of how he had invoked the future three days earlier (5.14) when remarking that "You can't make everyone happy all the time." In this instance, the future was presented as known; Klein knew that not everyone would be pleased with the arbitration process. And yet the result of both statements (5.14, 5.15) was the same. Because it is known that you cannot please everyone (5.14), we should listen to Klein and support his government's use of the arbitration process, despite the protests and complaints that others, like the union, might have. But we also know that the future is unknown (5.15). Therefore, the outcome of the arbitration process could not be known. So we should listen to Klein and support his government's use of the arbitration process. In this case, two different uses of the future (known/unknown) were both used by Klein to argue the same point.

Discussion

Both government and union offered competing visions of who was in charge of deciding the timing of future events. When was the union going to launch its "big fight" or do "other things" to ensure that the problems were addressed? Only the union knew. It had the power to decide when these powerful actions would be taken. The government would have to wait to see what the union would do and what form their agency would take. Yet for government speakers, it was the government that had the authority to choose the timing of the conflict. It was Oberg who would decide when he would introduce the legislation. He was "prepared" to take this step but the timing of this event was in his hands. As well, it was the government who would decide whether or not there was an unreasonable hardship. Equipped with this knowledge it would decide when the hardship would end.

Booi appealed to the future to demonstrate that all was not well. Government may think that legislation would solve all their problems, but this was not the case. The union had an impressive armory at its disposal and a fierce battle lay ahead. It alone knew the measures that could be taken and when. But if the war drums were being sounded, government speakers were quick to tell their audience that everything was under control. Government had pre-determined the boundaries for this conflict. Students would not lose their school year. The conflict was framed within a short-term context. The union may put up picket lines, but there were lines in the sand that the government would not allow to be crossed. Government knew the tools at its disposal even though it preferred not to use them.

Union speakers created an ominous future by not assigning a time frame for their members' actions. Audiences were not told when the "big fight" would erupt or even what form

this fight would take. It was a matter of when not if. And yet if government speakers were troubled by this they did not let it show. Instead, they reassured their audience that the conflict was restricted to the short term. It was unacceptable for students to lose their school year. This was a line the government had drawn in the sand. In so limiting the conflict government speakers accomplished at least two things. First, it limited the conflict to the short-term. Arbitration and/or legislation would resolve the conflict. The end was near. There was no talk of a "big fight" waiting after the legislation or of a mass exodus of teachers. Second, government speakers portrayed themselves as powerful actors. They had set boundaries for the conflict; it would not be allowed to go on indefinitely. They would decide when it would end, not the union. Government had the tools and the power to impose its timing on the conflict.

Fundamentally, both union and government portrayed themselves as in control of determining when action would be taken. They controlled the clock. Union did not say when they would take action or what form that action would take. Presumably, this was information that was known by the union alone. It would decide the when and what. Consequently, government should recognize that it was at the mercy of the union and offer a satisfactory solution. By contrast, government made clear the action it could take. But when legislation would be introduced was at its discretion. For both union and government, the future demonstrated the power they wielded and their ability to decide when action would be taken.

Conclusions

Dunmire (2005:487) argues that "visions of the future" are attempts by the speaker to position their vision as the true vision of the future. Such visions deny competing versions. For example,

perhaps teachers were not as willing to fight the government as Booi supposed, or perhaps there were no "other things" that they could do. In 5.5, Booi had stated that the teachers would "shut Alberta Learning down." This was stated as a fact, not as something that the ATA might do. But was such an action reasonable or even plausible? Oberg had stated that his government would not accept students missing 6 months or a year of their schooling because of an union strike. But how could he know that the strike would last this long? There was no historical precedence for such a statement. Furthermore, if such a state was intolerable, and if education was so important, then why not simply sweeten the offer to the teachers?

Besides demonstrating the power of their parties, speakers also summoned the future to attribute blame. At some future time the union would take action, but this action would only be taken because the government had not addressed the fundamental problems flagged by the teachers. Hence, any action by the union was essentially taken because of government inaction. Conversely, Oberg was only "prepared" to introduce legislation if the union took action that created a "hardship." For both union and government, the reason for their action was traced to the other side. Perhaps this was one reason why speakers hesitated to say when they would take action: it depended on the action or inaction of their opponent.

In examining some ways that government and union speakers used the future an important point is raised. Government speakers knew exactly what measures they could take to end the conflict, but they were uncertain whether they would be taken. Conversely, the union leader did not know what measures his members would take, but he was certain that action would be taken, though he did not say when. In both cases, speakers invoked a future that constructed them as powerful actors capable of changing the future. Theirs was the authoritative vision of the future which beckoned that a certain course of action be taken now. The future may

not be what it used to be, but in the hands of skilled speakers its remains a powerful tool for shaping the present.

The Present

"Time is Money."

--Benjamin Franklin

It is common to hear how the time is now for reigning in government spending, strengthening our borders, stimulating the economy or implementing austerity measures. Within the context of urgent calls for action, questions regarding the suitability of such actions and the availability of other options are marginalized or rendered irrelevant. So, too, are such civic and democratic activities as debate and discussion, which are pushed to the periphery in the face of a pressing need for action. Stahl (2008: 81) warns that the imposition of time is "an authoritarian discourse that preempts its own questionability." Calls for action generate scenarios in which time itself occupies a position of supreme power. Time demands immediate action and we know that "time and tide wait for no man." The moment is opportune and must be capitalized on, which implies that it is time itself issuing the summons and not the speaker alone. In this way, time can represent a valuable resource for speakers to exploit.

In obeying the powerful prompting of time speakers may portray themselves as simply seizing a moment ordained by time as propitious. The concerns raised by Stahl are especially relevant for my study since both government and union speakers invoked time as a crucial determinant of their action. While Stahl demonstrates some of the ways that political speakers use time to persuade their audiences of military action, he is less interested in why these tactics

hold such immense power. Why, for instance, do we accept there to be windows of opportunity when action must be taken? Van Leeuwen (2008: 75-87) explores one possible answer by analyzing the role of formal education in habituating us to the authority of time. Van Leeuwen's corpus is first day at school texts which are educational texts (including teacher manuals) that describe children's experience of their first day at school. In these texts, van Leeuwen finds an abiding concern with daily applications of time, and the ways that children are taught and learn the authority of time. They learn that activities have time constraints: activities are timed and mapped out according to their duration. One does not simply play in the sandbox until interest is lost, but rather a bell sounds or a teacher signals that it is time for another activity. For van Leeuwen this is a critical lesson of education.

Van Leeuwen is particularly interested in how power is connected with the activity of timing. Not powerful leaders alone exert their power through the imposition of time, but school teachers and parents similarly assert their authority. It is the teacher who tells students when it is time to leave the sandbox, wash their hands, and open their books. And a parent may announce to their toddler that it is "bath time" or "bed time." Fundamentally, children learn that their activities are timed by another person or entity that has the authority to do so. Perhaps, too, they learn what happens if deadlines are missed. In his analysis, van Leeuwen builds on the earlier work of Glasser (1972: 285), who asserted that the ability to control time, to decide when an event will occur, should be understood as indicating "wealth and power."

The power to time the activities of another is defined by van Leeuwen (2008: 76) as the "time summons" in which "timing is represented as being imposed through an authoritative summons." Those on whose activities timing is imposed lack the authority to begin or end a given activity. They must wait until the signal is given by another person with the power to issue

that signal. It is not their place to question why the signal is being given at this time, but rather to obey the summons. Telling one's students that it is time to go outside, that class is over, or that it is lunchtime, exemplifies the authority wielded by the person issuing the time summons. It would be inappropriate, for instance, if students should tell their teacher that math time was over or that it was time for recess. And yet, in later stages, students may signal their burgeoning power by gathering up their books (or shuffling their papers) to indicate to their teacher that the class should end.

Types of Power

The power to time an activity, the "right to time," is not new. Van Leeuwen (2008: 76) notes how it "has always been a sign of absolute power. In ancient China, the management of time was a privilege of the emperor, and the same was true in the Roman Empire." In exploring how power is manifested through the timing of an activity van Leeuwen finds the time summons to take at least three forms: personalized, instrumentalized, and disembodied. In the personalized time summons, someone who has the authority to time the activities of another (a referee, teacher, or supervisor) issues the summons. In van Leeuwen's analysis of first day at school texts, he finds that parents and teachers are represented as possessing this authority. But he further notes that managers, team leaders, bosses, coaches, etc., are similarly endowed. Generally, it is those with power who possess the right to time the activities of those with less power.

In the instrumentalized time summons, the power to time activities is invested in an external object. It is thus impersonalized and institutionalized. It is no longer a person who is

issuing the time summons but rather an externalized object in which authority has been invested that provides the summons: the buzzer sounds and the players leap into action or head to the locker room. Van Leeuwen (2008: 77) provides the following examples of the instrumentalized time summons: “the alarm clock, the school bell, the church bell, the factory whistle, the traffic light, and so on.” Within his corpus of first day at school texts, van Leeuwen offers the following as an especially pertinent instance: “the final bell rang, and it was time to go home.” Here, it is the bell rather than the teacher that possesses the authority to time the activities of the students. In this instance, the bell is imbued with more authority than the teacher, since it also dictates the teacher’s activities. The bell informs teachers and students that the lesson is done; the day complete. Now it is time for both teacher and student to put away their books and go home.

In addition to the “personalized” and “instrumentalized” time summons van Leeuwen also describes the “disembodied time summons.” For van Leeuwen (2008: 77) this time summons “has a more intangible source of authority, time itself.” It is as though time itself has ordained that a certain course of action should now be taken. This time summons can be presented as a type of internalized timing, “I will know when the time comes,” which characterizes time itself as the active agent. To illustrate this last instance, van Leeuwen offers the following examples: “the great day came”; “it was time to go.”

These two instances provide several key considerations. First, it would seem that one is powerless to stop the advance of “the great day.” Agency is accorded to the day itself, not to any human actor. Second, how does one know when it is “time to go”? In this instance, it would seem that knowledge of when it is “time to go” depends on a person’s ability to tell time. In some ways, it is as though the person possesses an uncanny ability to read time from natural events. Such knowledge may endow speakers with a privileged status since they possess a quasi-

extrasensory ability. It is the speaker who knows that there is a window of opportunity, that this is the liminal moment when action must be taken.

Though his focus is on first day at school texts, van Leeuwen nonetheless notes some of the powerful ways that the disembodied time summons has been capitalized on by speakers. In particular, he notes how it was used in the run-up to the Iraqi war, "in which timing was a crucial aspect of the process and an equally crucial signifier of American power" (2008: 77). The time had come for action to be taken, which tacitly asserted that time itself was dictating or sanctioning American military action. To argue against American action was to argue against the authority of time. A further example would be the popular use of such a term as "window of opportunity," where speakers assert that it is time for action because time itself has declared a propitious moment that must be seized. Often such a statement is imbued with fear and a threat: if action is not taken now, the window will close and the opportunity lost.

As a student of Industrial Relations, the preceding discussion of time is particularly relevant. Throughout the conflict between the ATA and the Alberta government, speakers reiterated the importance of time and drew upon it to justify their actions. The clock was ticking and speakers told us how action had to be taken to forestall a calamity. In asserting their authority and justifying their actions, speakers issued a variety of "time summons." To help shed light on how speakers used time to legitimate their position and justify their actions, I draw upon the three types of time summons provided by van Leeuwen. Of course, my discussion also oversteps the strict boundaries of these definitions since, as we have seen in previous chapters, language challenges and conflates the categories we employ in its study.

Union

Why were teachers choosing this time to take strike action? The most obvious reason, that their contract had expired and it was time to renegotiate with their employer, was not mentioned by the ATA President. Furthermore, Booi did not justify his union's decision to pursue strike action solely as a result of the power they wielded. The ATA was not going on strike simply because it had the power to do so. Instead there were other, more powerful forces compelling it to act. These powerful forces were not simply presented on their own (i.e. "things are bad"), but had a timeframe superimposed on them (i.e. "things are getting worse"). Additionally, speakers asserted their authority by issuing a variety of time summons. They presented themselves as knowing how long public education had been suffering at the government's hands and that the time had come to address this decline.

6.1 We have to do this [strike] if we want to see things changed. It is a weapon of last resort and we're down to last resorts (Larry Booi, ATA president. Hagan, Susan. "Strike Position Draws Near." *Edmonton Journal*. September 11, 2001).

6.2 This [the government paying the liability portion of the teachers' pension plan] … takes us up to nine per cent over two years instead of six per cent. We are a step closer to a settlement but this is absolutely not a deal-maker. If this is the only thing that happens, there will be a strike across the province somewhere between January 21 and February 8 (Booi. Pedersen, Rick. "Oberg's Pension Proposal not Enough, Teachers' Union Says." *Edmonton Journal*. January 12, 2002).

6.3 We don't do it lightly, but the short-term pain of a strike is a heck of a lot better than the continued erosion of public education (Booi. Mahoney, Jill. "Few Albertans Back Strike by Teachers." *Globe and Mail*. February 2, 2002).

6.4 It's fine for Dr. Oberg to say we should bargain all weekend but I believe the government should be trying to solve the situation. At this point we've done everything we can at the table and without more money from the government, there's nothing left to bargain for (Karen Beaton, President of the Edmonton local

union. Holubitsky, Jeff. “No School for 240,000 Students as Teachers Start Strike.” *Edmonton Journal*. February 4, 2002).

6.5 These people are passionately committed to kids, but the reason they had this strike in the first place is that they were not going to see another 10 years of deterioration of public education and decline of the profession (Booi. Derworiz, Colette. “ATA Boss Vows to Fight Back.” *Calgary Herald*. February 16, 2002).

6.6 We need smaller classrooms … One of my class sizes is 38 kids for Grade 6 science. The working conditions are the worst they've been and I’ve been teaching 22 years. (Wendy Porteous [teacher]. “First picket line goes up in 18-day-old Alberta teachers strike.” *Edmonton Journal*. February 20, 2002).

6.7 The age of martyrdom just ended. You will see in classrooms right across this province teachers walking away from any voluntary activity wherever they can (Booi. Rusnell, Charles and Graham Thomson. “Teachers’ Stabbed in the Back.” *Edmonton Journal*. March 12, 2002).

Time as a marker

Booi exercised his power to decide when an event would occur. As the President of the ATA, he possessed the authority to declare that his union was “down to last resorts” (6.1). Apparently all other options had been exhausted and strike action was all that remained. Implicitly, Booi argued that his union was being forced to take strike action now. In 6.2, Booi asserted that though they were a “step closer” to reaching a settlement, if the government took no further action a strike would occur “between January 21 and February 8.” Perhaps this date was assigned to provide the government with a deadline and pressure them into offering further concessions. Perhaps Booi wanted union members to know that the government only had so much time to respond to their demands while signaling to members when they could expect further action to be taken.

Regardless of why Booi assigned this window of opportunity, it should be noted that he portrayed himself as possessing the power to assign it. He held the authority to declare when the

province-wide strike would occur if government did not improve its offer. Stahl (2008: 80-81) argues that the "rhetoric of the deadline" enforces a "rhetoric of submission to the authority of the countdown." Here, Booi assigned authority to this time so that it was this date that would decide whether or not strike action was taken. In this way, authority was conferred on an arbitrary date. If the government did not improve its offer by this time, then strike action would result. This implied that there was something about this date itself that held power. It was significant and it would decide the union's actions. Booi's utterance depersonalized the union's agency. He did not say that the union would call a strike but only that "there will be a strike" if government did not take further steps.

By implementing a deadline Booi constructed the conflict matter-of-factly. If the government did not act by a certain time, there would be a strike. Such a context placed the burden of action on the government. It had to take action otherwise unpleasant consequences would result. It follows that if strike action were to occur, then it would be due to the government's unwillingness to negotiate rather than the union's willingness to pursue strike action. As well, Booi constructed strike action as the only available option (6.1). The imposing of a deadline absolved Booi of his actions. It was not that Booi would call a province-wide strike, but rather that the government had breached a deadline which consequently set the strike in motion. This is similar to van Leeuwen's notice of how teachers assign deadlines for their students, which, if missed, may trigger a variety of penalties.

Booi's utterance demonstrates the intricacies of the time summons. On the one hand his imposing of a deadline could be classified as a personalized time summons, since it was Booi himself issuing the deadline. And yet the deadline itself served the function of the instrumentalized time summons. Authority was invested in the externalized object of the

deadline. It was the deadline, not a human agent, dictating whether or not there would be a province-wide strike. But we might argue further that deadlines also provide a version of the disembodied time summons, since time itself had ordained the window of opportunity (January 2—February 8). Presumably, it was the union that had decided on this time and yet the imposing of a deadline accorded agency to this time. It was this time that would dictate whether or not strike action would occur.

One important qualification should be noted. First, it is not clear that Booi was in fact assigning a deadline. Rather, he stated that "if this is the only thing that happens, there will be a strike across the province somewhere between January 21 and February 8." Perhaps these dates were provided to signal how much time the government had to improve its offer, but this was not explicitly stated. What was clear was that there would be a strike between these dates if this was the only offer made by the government. So was Booi assigning a deadline to the government or to the union? Perhaps both? It is not clear. Nonetheless, the assigning of a deadline, even one as open-ended as this one, externalized the source of authority by placing it in time.

Time was also summoned to justify the teachers' actions. In 6.5 and 6.6 the alleged deterioration of public education was assigned a temporal value. Public education had been neglected by the government for the past 10 (6.5) and 22 years (6.6). Time quantified the degree of government's neglect. Perhaps, too, the assigning of a time period added credibility to the teachers' claims, since it portrayed them as having endured government indifference for at least 10 years. Booi did refer to teachers' willingness to continue doing the best job they could with dwindling resources as "an age of martyrdom" (6.7), one that had now ended. In 6.8, Porteous marked the present time as having the worst working conditions in the past 22 years.

These utterances further nuance the personalized time summons. In describing the conflict as building over a long period of time, speakers identified the present time as critical. Their experience enabled them to discern that public education was at the breaking point. The authority for making such a frank assessment was traced, at least in part, to the time that they had spent in the classroom. Working conditions were not only intolerable because of the number of students in the average Alberta classroom, but because speakers could compare current working conditions with those of an earlier time. Time enabled this comparison, and since the speakers possessed a large amount of time (experience), they should be heeded.

Now is a window of opportunity

In asserting that public education had reached its lowest point teachers drew authority from their professional experience. Erosion (6.3) and deterioration (6.5) are activities that evolve over time. Only through time can their effects be witnessed and assessed. In ascribing time to the attrition of public education, speakers used a form of the personalized time summons. They knew how long the government had been neglecting public education and what the effects had been. The decision to pursue strike action had not been taken lightly. According to the ATA President things were bleak. Classrooms were overcrowded; the government was indifferent to public education. For Booi, public education was now at a crossroads. A choice had to be made. Something had to be done. In 6.5, Booi declared that teachers would not stand by idly. They had endured 10 years of deteriorating conditions. But if teachers had been sacrificing for so long, why take action now? Why had teachers waited 10 years to pull the trigger?

The current moment signified a turning point, a liminal point in time. The past dictated that action must be taken now. Van Leeuwen argues that the power to decide when an event will occur (the "right to time") is a sign of absolute power. Porteous (6.6) exercised such an authority by declaring working conditions as the worst they had been in 22 years. Booi also "timed" his union's activities when he proclaimed that "the age of martyrdom just ended" (6.7). Presumably, only the union President had the authority to issue such a judgment. As well, Booi characterized the current time as marking the critical juncture between the past decade and the next one. If the union were to do nothing, then we would "see another 10 years of deterioration of public education and decline of the profession" (6.7). The present was characterized as a fulcrum with 10 years on either side. Only union action now would tip the balance in the correct direction.

This is similar to van Leeuwen's notice of how the teacher is given the power to announce that gym class has "ended." Such a time summons was issued elsewhere: "we're down to last resorts" (6.1); "we are a step closer" (6.2); "at this point we've done everything we can" (6.4); "not going to see another 10 years" (6.5); "the age of martyrdom just ended" (6.7); "working conditions are the worst they've been" (6.6). In these instances, speakers exercised their power to time certain activities. And yet if speakers held the right to time, it was a power they wielded carefully. The data would suggest that union speakers conceived of their union as having been "pushed" to the turning point. This demonstrates a subtle twist on van Leeuwen's analysis. Booi, for instance, portrayed himself as having the power to determine the breaking point that the union had been pushed to by the government. Union had not moved to the brink—they had been pushed. Nonetheless, union knew that public education and the teaching profession was precipitously close to falling into the abyss. Booi characterized himself as

knowing that his union could not bear anymore of the government's mismanagement. They were being forced to take a stand—this was a hill to die on.

Pain is temporary

Time can also be summoned to aggrandize or minimize the importance of the present time. In the disembodied time summons, the present is constructed as a liminal moment charged with significance. In so doing the present is transformed from being simply another point on the long continuum of time to that of a critical juncture. Significance is conferred on this moment since it will set the course for future generations; today's actions become the legacy inherited by tomorrow's children. But the present time can also be minimized; it can be portrayed as one small wave lapping upon the shore of eternity. Union speakers invoked both of these aspects, for on the one hand the present was depicted as marking a turning point. Action must be taken now to prevent irreparable damage to public education and it was critical that union members take a stand now. Yet the conflict was also an episode in the long process of public education's continual deterioration.

Fundamentally, speakers portrayed the union's action as curative: it would bring healing to an ailing system. As with most curative efforts, the union's action would cause temporary discomfort but the benefits produced would be immense. Like holding one's nose to swallow a spoonful of bitter medicine, strike action was momentarily unpleasant and yet the healing it would bring would more than compensate. The conflict marked a necessary correction in the trajectory of public education: short-term pain would equal long-term gain. Into this view union speakers inserted their demand for a wage increase.

The pain that strike action would cause was constructed as momentary by contextualizing it within the larger trajectory of public education's deterioration. In 6.3, Booi compared the "short-term pain of a strike" with the "continued erosion of public education" and concluded that the pain was "a heck of a lot better." Similarly, in 6.5 Booi juxtaposed the current strike with "10 years of deterioration of public education and decline of the profession." In 6.6 Porteous described the worsening of classroom conditions over the past 22 years. The time frames constructed in these utterances painted a picture of an ongoing, systemic problem that would not get better without union intervention. Yes, the strike would cause pain, but within a long-term context the pain would be temporary.

Though the strike would be brief, it would bring long-term benefits to public education. Speakers possessed years of experience and had witnessed firsthand the declining state of public education. Compared with the time spent laboring under the yoke of deteriorating working conditions, strike action would be fleeting but curative. Speakers made it clear that any negative consequence would pale in comparison to the large scale change wrought by their actions. The strike would occupy one small point of time. It was an interruption which would force the government to take public education seriously. It would reverse the downward spiral of the past decade. As well, time helped shift blame for the pain of the strike onto the government. Not only had government caused the problem, but if it did not take action soon, then a province-wide strike would result. In these ways, the use of time helped union speakers render a strike legitimate.

Government

We have seen some of the ways in which union speakers utilized the time summons. So how did their government counterparts construct the time summons? How did government speakers describe their decision to quickly intervene in the strike and legislate the teachers back to work? How was the current conflict framed vis-à-vis the teachers' claims of a long tradition of underfunding and neglect? Would government similarly appeal to a larger time context in order to justify its current decision? Did time even serve as a basis for government action or did speakers assert simply that the action they were taking was a consequence of their authority?

6.8 I have to ensure that students get their education and where I draw the line in the sand is where students won't be able to complete their year. That is not acceptable. There is absolutely no way the public, the government or anybody else would tolerate kids missing six months of the year, half a year of schooling, because someone is on strike (Oberg. Williamson, Kerry. "Oberg Fears Strike Can't Be Averted." *Calgary Herald*. January 12, 2002).

6.9 Please go back to negotiating. I've heard lots of stories around the province on both sides of school boards not negotiating. I've heard about mediation sessions that lasted 15 minutes. I think it's time we got down to some serious negotiations, some serious issues, because kids are going to be at risk (Oberg. Holubitsky, Jeff and Graham Thomson. "Get Back to Negotiating." *Edmonton Journal*. February 2, 2002).

6.10 Over the coming days our priorities will be to examine whether this action is causing unreasonable hardship to students, families and other third parties. One of the key criteria to me as Minister of Learning is ensuring that students do not lose their school year. That would be completely, absolutely 100 per cent unacceptable (Oberg. "No End in Sight for Strike." *Edmonton Journal*. February 20, 2002).

6.11 I'm putting teachers and school boards on notice: It is time for them to return to the bargaining table and renew their efforts to find local solutions to the issues in dispute (Clint Dunford, Minister of Human Resources and Employment. Mahoney, Jill. "Alberta Government Threatens to Force Teachers Back to Work." *Globe and Mail*. February 20, 2002).

6.12 I have heard from more than 1,000 parents who are at their wits' end. Two days ago, on our legal advice, we did not have a case. We have since solidified our case. We have had a lot of phone calls, a lot of hardship stories that have come into us over the past two days. We feel it's absolutely hideous students are in the middle of this. What we have done today is take students out of the equation (Oberg. "Manipulation 101." *Calgary Herald*. February 22, 2002).

6.13 I have received many, many letters from teachers – even today, I received another stack of letters from teachers – indicating how important and essential they are to the future of our children in the province (Klein. Hryciuk, Dennis and Tom Barrett. "Klein to Teachers: You Can't Win: Gov't Vows to Remove Their Right to Strike If Court Rules in the Union's Favor Today." *Edmonton Journal*. March 1, 2002).

6.14 Binding arbitration will provide teachers and school boards with a fair process to resolve current salary issues and will ensure that students can continue their learning and successfully complete the school year (Oberg. Cotter, John. "Alberta teachers will temporarily lose the right to strike and face fines of up to $10,000 if they walk off the job under legislation introduced by Premier Ralph Klein's government Monday." *Canadian Press NewsWire* [Toronto]. March 11, 2002).

We must do something now

Unlike their union counterparts government speakers interpreted the conflict within a more immediate context. The conflict was not contextualized as an episode within an unfolding process but itself constituted the context. The conflict framed and informed government action. Strike action was not pointing to a larger systemic problem, or even a problem created in the past that would become chronic, but was itself the problem that had to be resolved. And it was a problem that called for action because it had to be dealt with quickly.

One way that a call for action can be constructed is by imposing a deadline. A deadline is an authoritative summons that creates urgency. It forces action to be taken by assigning a date. Stahl (2008: 82) argues how deadlines demand "the reply of the countdown." When a deadline is assigned, the countdown begins. Participating in a countdown implies that one recognizes and is submissive to the inevitability and authority of the deadline. Deadlines also illustrate how

personalized time summons come to assume the impersonal authority of the instrumentalized time summons. It is human actors that create deadlines, who decide when an action must be completed. Yet once deadlines are created they can be assigned an impersonal authority. In providing students with a deadline teachers can then point to the deadline itself as dictating when the assignment must be submitted. Hence the student is subjected to the authority of the deadline. It is the deadline itself that must be obeyed (instrumental) even though it has been issued by a speaker (personalized). Deadlines create a context of urgency since the action must be completed by a certain time. Such a call for action, however, may mask the reasons for the deadline while eluding the appropriateness of the consequences for missing the deadline.

In Stahl's (2008: 88) analysis of George W. Bush's keynote address to the 2002 West Point graduating class, he cites Bush's declaration: "if we wait for threats to fully materialize, we will have waited too long." Stahl notes that because the new threat is "so instantaneous, so unpredictable, and so ubiquitous, we no longer have the luxury of time to make such judgments" (ibid). Time was constructed as so pressing that it required America to act now and think later. The present time became the deadline. There was simply "no time" to spend contemplating the situation and formulating a response to it, much less exploring other options. The consequence of deferring one's judgment or delaying one's response was framed as leading inevitably to an unacceptable and horrific outcome. Every day that America spent in debate was a day that the terrorists grew stronger: while we talk they plot. Action was required immediately to forestall a calamitous future. Within context the deadline for American action was now.

When action is the only option, a discourse of inevitability dominates. America, according to Bush, had to take action. There were no other options. For Stahl (2008: 81), the theme of inevitability resonates throughout the politics of time ("chronopolitics"), and it is

generated in large part by the deadline and its henchman, the countdown. If a certain target has not been reached by a certain point, then a response will be given. This has much in common, I think, with van Leeuwen's discussion of how teachers exert their authority and absolve themselves of blame. If a child does not complete their work by a certain time, for instance, then punishment is meted out. It is not the teacher per se that is responsible, but rather the onus is on the child to meet the deadline. The deadline itself is the authority. Not meeting the deadline is the fault of the child not the deadline or the teacher who imposed it.

The pressure generated by a deadline, however, is a sword with two edges. While a deadline can shift responsibility onto the party that must meet it, it also demands that the party responsible for imposing it in the first place administer consequences should it not be met. In this way, a deadline is only as good as the person or entity enforcing it. If the student does not submit their work on time, then the pressure is on the teacher to mete out the promised punishment. Not meeting the deadline may also represent a challenge to the issuer's authority. Hence the student may be depicted as defiant or rebellious. Refusing to meet the deadline is thus an affront to the authority that issued it, which implies that consequences must be administered. Should the deadline pass without consequence, then either the deadline was not important or else the party issuing it did not have the power to enforce it. Either scenario reflects poorly on the party issuing the deadline.

Oberg crafted a context which made strike action analogous to the loss of the school year. The "line in the sand" that Oberg drew (6.8) was a deadline, but it was conflated with strike action, so that strike action by the ATA equaled the loss of a school year. Oberg did this again in 6.10 when he equated the union's action with the loss of the school year. In both instances, the loss was framed as "unacceptable," so that the action producing that result became a line that

could not be crossed. Strike action itself became a deadline that, if passed, would bring a swift response from the government. Such a context may have helped to shift the focus away from the reason for the strike action (and the government's role in it) and onto the deadline itself. The emphasis, at least according to Oberg, was not on why there was a strike but on how the strike would negatively impact students and how his government could not allow a school year to be lost.

Placing emphasis on the implications of the strike helped government speakers distance themselves from the imposition of the personalized time summons. By raising strike action to a critical level (students would lose their school year), a context was created that demanded government action. But also, it made other scenarios irrelevant. For instance, if the loss of a school year was "unacceptable," then why not simply give the teachers what they wanted? If education was so important, then why not simply grant teachers raises similar to those granted to nurses, doctors, and MLAs? If a deal was so critical, then why not make additional money available to ensure that a deal could be reached? These questions were not asked neither were answers offered. Rather, a context was created in which government did not have the luxury of considering other options. Their immediate action was required to save the school year, and legislation alone was characterized as allowing for such immediacy.

Now is everything

It is worth recalling briefly how union speakers contextualized the current conflict within a larger timeframe. Union speakers situated the present moment within a long period of deterioration and decline. Things had been getting worse and action now, though painful, would bring healing. I

described this context in terms of medicine: short term discomfort would bring long term health. Such a sentiment is markedly different, however, from that of the government. By comparison, government speakers never invoked a context beyond the school year. Speakers' concerns were not with how this point had been reached or what lay ahead, but rather with stopping the conflict immediately. Unlike the union theme, government appeared to argue that the medicine being offered by the union would kill the patient. A year would be lost and this was time that could never be regained; it was "absolutely 100 per cent unacceptable" (6.10).

The present conflict was therefore no mere blip on the timeline of public education: it was all there was. If immediate action was not taken, a year would be lost. While union speakers had looked far into the past (10 plus years), government looked to the past few days. In 6.12, for instance, Oberg spoke of the volume of phone calls and hardship stories that had "come into us over the past two days." Klein, too (6.13), noted how he had received many letters from the teachers, "even today, I received another stack." For government the conflict was described as enveloping the present. The present moment was a crisis crying out for their intervention. So overwhelming was the conflict that speakers could not see beyond its boundaries. This was no mere disruption, but rather it was a full-blown catastrophe that would strip students of a year of education.

Earlier, I remarked how union speakers likened the present to a fulcrum on which the past and future were balanced. Government speakers constructed the present differently. They did not provide temporal markers outside of the current conflict. That is, the conflict was not contextualized within a larger time frame: origins and ends were oddly absent. In essence, this made it very difficult to assign perspective to the conflict. Like air, the conflict filled all of the available space—it was all-consuming. If there was a past that had led to this point, it was left

unstated. The future that was invoked was the future of the students' school year, not the school years of future students or lingering teacher bitterness. If government did not move swiftly, a school year would be lost. In this way, the conflict was situated between the present and the next 6-12 months.

The word crisis refers to a crucial stage or turning point. Standing at a crossroads, for instance, is to be at a critical point since one is at a turning point. Union speakers constructed this juncture by situating it between a troubled past and a problematic future. Yet government speakers constructed this liminal point by declaring that action was required immediately. It was the current situation itself that was the crisis. Students were going to lose six months or even a year of their schooling; letters from parents and teachers were piling up; hard luck stories were being voiced across the province. They created a context necessitating immediate action. It was a situation crying out for government intervention. Yet the urgency masked a critical question: why was their conflict now? What issues had led to this situation and what were the root causes? How could a solution address future problems? The emphasis on immediate action overshadowed such questions or rendered them moot.

Why was it so important for the government to resolve the strike so quickly? Perhaps the strike was a political embarrassment for the government, a fire that they had to put out quickly. Perhaps it drew unnecessary attention to the handsome salary increases that other groups (including the MLAs) had been granted and raised questions concerning the fairness of the government and its priorities. Perhaps, too, the union's decision to strike was viewed by government as a challenge to its authority. A strike, after all, is a potent and visible expression of a union's collective power. It represents a collective refusal to accept the terms of employment. If the conflict was the context for government, then it was the union deciding the boundaries of

the context. It was the union that could decide the timing of the event since it would dictate when the strike would be over and when its members would return to work.

The time is now

One feature that government speakers shared in common with union speakers was their use of the disembodied time summons. Recall that this summons "has a more intangible source of authority, time itself" (van Leeuwen, 2008: 77). One feature of this summons which van Leeuwen does not explore is how it avoids the assigning of blame. By constructing the present as a window of opportunity one may avoid assigning blame. In persuading an audience that action is required now speakers may avoid having to explain why action was not taken earlier. First, the pressing need for action renders such a question irrelevant. What is most important is the current response, not the earlier lack of one. Second, if now is the time for action, then earlier times were not the right time. Earlier inaction may thus be attributed to the absence of a window of opportunity rather than to stubbornness or poor decision-making. Furthermore, if time itself is urging action, then the speaker, too, can be absolved from blame, since she or he is simply responding to the promptings of a greater authority. It is the moment itself forcing the speaker to adopt a course of action.

The Minister of Human Resources and Employment, Clint Dunford, for instance, stated that he was "putting teachers and school boards on notice: It is time for them to return to the bargaining table and renew their efforts to find local solutions to the issues in dispute" (6.11). First, Dunford did not assign blame to the teachers or school boards. He did not clarify whether it was the ATA or the school boards that were responsible for the stalled bargaining, but rather, he

argued that it was time for them to return. Why they were not currently at the bargaining table was not as important as the fact that it was now time for them to return. Dunford, too, was absolved from blame. On the one hand, he was exercising a form of the personalized time summons by "putting teachers and school boards on notice." And yet, on the other hand, he was simply responding to the power exerted by the disembodied time summons. Time itself was dictating that the parties return to the bargaining table. Hence, he was simply pointing out what time itself had made clear—it was time to bargain in earnest. Apparently then, he knew that now was the time for bargaining. Time itself was beckoning the parties back to the table, not Dunford.

The tension between the authority wielded by Dunford (personalized time summons) and that of time itself (disembodied time summons) can be appreciated further by comparing it with a similar statement issued by Oberg. In 6.9 Oberg stated, that "I think it's time we got down to some serious negotiations." Unlike Dunford, Oberg did not say that he was putting the parties on notice, and he appeared less assertive ("I think"). Oberg was less forthright, less commanding in issuing his statement. In using the plural "we" Oberg included himself in the time summons, which may have been intended as a participative gesture, that government and teachers should work together to find a solution. Perhaps, he wished to signal that he, too, was subject to the authority of time.

Like Dunford, Oberg framed the present time as requiring his government to act. Now was the time for "serious negotiations." Why those negotiations had not been serious before was not mentioned: blame was not assigned or else it was tacitly assigned to both parties. Would negotiations be any more serious without a sizable injection of government money? What was assigned was a context for action. Now was the time for serious bargaining. Something had to be done now. The reason why action had to be taken now was not only because the school year

might be in jeopardy, but also because the time for action was now. The argument would appear circular in that it was now time for action because now was the time for action. But such an assigning of authority also deflected attention away from the speaker onto the impersonal entity of time. Consequently, government too was characterized as subject to time. If the time to act was now, then government had a responsibility to obey the summons and act.

Discussion

Both union and government speakers made it clear that action had to be taken now. For union speakers, public education had been steadily declining for the past 10 years. But even though the roots of the conflict reached back to an earlier time, action had to be taken now to rescue public education and ensure its future integrity. Now was the time to address past wrongs and forestall the problems looming on the horizon of tomorrow. While union speakers contextualized their current action within a larger historical arc, government speakers constructed the conflict as the context. If events in the past had led to this point, they were overshadowed by the magnitude of the current crisis. For government speakers, something had to be done now: the woods were burning. The crisis was engulfing the province and kids were at risk. Creating a context of urgency made it seem as though there was no time for discussion, debate, or even negotiation.

In constructing a context of urgency government placed the burden of action upon itself. It alone had the tools and power to resolve the crisis. Action, not reflection was needed. It knew what had to be done. By conflating strike action with the loss of a school year and declaring it unacceptable, government placed itself in a context that demanded action. It no longer had the luxury of allowing the negotiations to unfold over time because time was something it no longer

had: action must be taken. Instantaneousness has serious implications, however, because it is ill-suited for dealing with complex situations. Complex problems require a measured and thoughtful response(s). Rare is the intricate problem that can be solved in one fell swoop. And yet a context of urgency makes such reflection difficult.

Issues beyond the money allocated for teachers' salaries, such as classroom size and composition, the number of special needs students and specialized teachers, extra-curricular activities, preparation time, the attraction and retention of teachers, were not mentioned by the government. Perhaps government speakers avoided mentioning these issues because they would make a swift response impossible. The multifaceted nature of these issues also made the crisis itself more complicated. If it had taken 10 years to reach this point, then presumably it would take more than 10 days to resolve it. The ATA had insisted that the strike was not simply about teachers' salaries, though clearly they expected to share in the province's wealth. But did government believe what the ATA was saying or were these issues interpreted as union tactics for forcing them to offer more money for teacher salaries?

Perhaps, too, government did not fully grasp the nature of the union's demands. A raise in salary is one thing. Clearly the government understood raises well since they had voted themselves three raises in the span of nine months, but classroom conditions particularly and the state of public education generally are less defined. What was required to stop the erosion of public education? Addressing the complex issues that the union was apparently willing to strike for would require a more sophisticated instrument than that of legislation alone. Perhaps government viewed a response to these issues as the opening of a Pandora's box that would require more time, energy, and resources than it had at its disposal or was willing to devote to this issue.

In some ways, these aspects are irrelevant since the context that government constructed did not allow for such questions. Earlier, I noted how the personalized time summons can be transformed into the instrumentalized time summons. Postman (1993), too, eloquently describes how mechanical time as a human creation now drives human activity. People may have created the clock but it is now the clock that orders our life and drives our economy. A similar dynamic is at work in the present study. Government speakers created a context of urgency but then they had to answer to it and conduct themselves accordingly: the urgency they created forced them to respond with urgency. While such a context ensured that the crisis would be resolved, it also predetermined the available solutions. Urgency sets strict parameters on the available options. Reflection, for instance, is difficult to justify when the affair cries haste.

Union speakers, too, created a context of urgency. The action that they were taking, after all, was intended to hold the government's toes to the fire. A strike would force the government's hand, and force was necessary to draw attention to the dismal state of public education. Though it may have taken 10 years to reach this point they had no intention of allowing conditions to worsen further. It is one thing to assert that something must be done, however, and something else to define what the "continued erosion of public education" (6.3) means. Would the money that the ATA sought for its teachers address such erosion or were there other, larger, issues that would require a more significant infusion of government money? In what ways had public education deteriorated and what was needed to restore its integrity? On only one occasion were details given (6.6) and those were provided, not by the ATA President, but by an elementary teacher, who complained that one of her class sizes was "38 kids for Grade 6 science." But how many kids were in her other classes, and how big is too big? What is the proper teacher-student ratio and what would it cost to ensure that the correct ratio was maintained?

Teachers appeared to expect compensation for their earlier sacrifices. Action was needed now, certainly, but any action would have to address the origins of the current crisis. For the ATA, the problems originated outside of the context of the current conflict. Yes, teachers were underpaid and overworked, but classroom size and composition, the attraction and retention of qualified teachers, general funding levels for public education, and the earlier sacrifices made by teachers were all issues that warranted government attention. These were issues with their roots in an earlier time holding profound importance for the classrooms of tomorrow. Like Janus, the Roman god with two faces, the solution would have to look both to the past and to the future.

The conflict also illustrates competing uses of the time summons. Who had the authority to decide the timing of the conflict, or, more critically, who would decide the event's conclusion? At the outset, the ATA exercised its power by choosing when the strike would commence. Once their action was initiated, the power to time its conclusion resided with them. Even if the government chose to make more money available for teachers' salaries, it would be the union that would decide whether and when the strike would be over. Government, however, possessed a powerful tool for circumventing this time summons. Legislation allowed it to exercise its authority and time the end of the strike. Through legislation the government could impose its time on the union's activity, but the union could choose to disobey the law. It is instructive to recall the earlier insight of Glasser (1972: 285), who regarded the ability to decide when an event will occur—to time the activity of another person—as indicating "wealth and power."

And yet the conflict was resolved. There was a compromise and a solution was reached. Though the government did use legislation, the teachers did receive wage increases through arbitration. More significantly, in June 2002, Oberg appointed the Alberta Commission on Learning to conduct a comprehensive review of Alberta's K-12 education system. This nine-

member panel was chaired by a former teacher and Edmonton City Councilor, Patricia Mackenzie. The commission's findings were published on October 2003 in a 230-page report entitled, *Every Child Learns. Every Child Succeeds* ("child" not "student"!). In September 2004, as part of the commission's recommendations, 1,250 new teachers were hired. As well, numerous other recommendations were implemented by the government. In May 2009, a five-year retrospective report was issued that detailed the impact of the Commission's original report and issued a roadmap for future work, including a timeframe for completion.

Conclusions

As noted at the outset, time may be money. But both government and union speakers characterized themselves as having very little of either. For them the present time was charged with an authority and importance demanding their attention and action. Though they were presently standing at a crossroads, a standstill was unacceptable. The affair cried haste and speed must answer it. Stahl (2008), however, warns us that speakers may use urgency to forestall such important activities as reflection, discussion, and debate, and to make the actions they are proposing appear inevitable. Imposing strict time constraints not only justifies the measures recommended by speakers but also registers their power to impose such a timeframe. Yet the current study suggests that urgency placed a burden of action on the speakers making inaction implausible. Crafting a context of urgency may force the moment to a crisis but in so doing it creates a crisis that renders action the only viable option. Urgency not only justifies a quick response—it demands it.

We began our discussion noting the profound importance that time plays in our society and the ways that power is manifested through various time summons. Both government and union speakers exercised their power by using a discourse that reflected and created a particular view of reality. In this case, a social reality was constructed using a discourse of time. In telling us why the present time was critical speakers crafted a context explaining and justifying their actions. Like mechanical time, discourse is formed but also forms the social actors who use it. The discursive reality that speakers constructed was not created in isolation. Rather, these were realities informed and challenged by discourses competing for ascendancy. And yet the contested and processual nature of discourse perhaps also enabled government and union to find and fashion a common ground between their discourses.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

Lodovico: You must forsake this room …

Othello: Soft you; a word or two before you go.

The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice. Shakespeare

This thesis has examined the role that language plays in labor conflict. Nelson (2003: 449) argues that words are necessary for conflict: words initiate, maintain, elevate, defuse, and can resolve human conflict. Following Nelson, my study has explored how during the Alberta Teachers' strike (2001—2002) speakers used language to bring the conflict into being and render it meaningful. Both the Klein-led conservative government and the Booi-led Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) used images, stories, and explanations to give the conflict dimension and gravity. Speakers used language to create a reality in which groups were defined, polarized and set in motion against one another. Groups were not only "words" but also "worlds" apart. Language brought these worlds into being and populated them, insofar as subjects and self-knowledge are realized through language.

Fairclough (1989: 3) argues that "nobody who has an interest in modern society, and certainly nobody who has an interest in relationships of power in modern society, can afford to ignore language." The discourse of government-union conflict demonstrates and demarcates a landscape of contested power, and so, heeding Fairclough, my study has scrutinized the language speakers used throughout the conflict. Though my study touched on relationships of power, it was explicitly concerned with how language enabled conflict. A study of how speakers use language to engineer conflict has been missing from the field of Industrial Relations generally and labor conflict particularly.

The conflict between the ATA and the Alberta government has served as the site for my exploration of how speakers used language to, in the words of Gee (2011), say things, do things, and be things. Dediac (2003: 1) argues that "Every dispute starts with 'othering.'" To achieve such an "othering" groups must be formed, their identities defined. In so doing speakers maximize differences between the groups to render them polar opposites. Polarization erodes common ground between the groups and sets them on a collision course. Within such a context conflict is presented as inevitable. The values, ideas, and morals of the out-group are framed as antithetical to those of the in-group. The out-group is constructed as a threat that must be stopped. Their actions, and in extreme cases their very presence, represent a threat to all that "we" hold dear. Within this heightened context, action is characterized as something that must be taken to protect "us" from "them."

The process of polarization or "otherization" was evident in the language speakers used to characterize the groups. When government speakers invoked and constructed such groups as taxpayers and parents, for instance, they denied teachers' membership in this group, even though teachers are certainly taxpayers and were more than likely the parents of children. Conversely, when union members spoke of the parents of their students, members of the government were excluded *carte blanche*. Hence government members were implicitly characterized as not having children in the education system. They were strictly government members, not concerned parents. Such exclusions helped to render the government and teacher groups as monolithic and having little in common.

In the introduction I identified four discursive moves and proposed that they would serve a function similar to Ariadne's skein of thread, since they would enable me to make my way across the field of language on which this conflict was waged. Yet, like threads viewed from

another angle, these themes reveal a tapestry woven together by speakers that brought the conflict itself into being. The moves gave the conflict structure and meaning and allowed people to locate themselves within it. Strong words were used and without them the conflict between the ATA and the Alberta government could not have become a reality that cast its shadow across the province of Alberta.

To provide structure to my conclusions, I follow Gee's (2011) dictum that language allows people to say things, be things, and do things. In using language to say things I summarize how speakers told us what the conflict was about, who the main actors were and the issues at stake. In using language to be things, speakers created roles and assigned identities to the groups. This heightened the stakes as the conflict took on the complexion of a battle between selfless heroes and selfish villains, with powerless victims hanging in the balance. Language was also used to do things. Importantly, speakers sought to persuade their audience that action had to be taken and a timeframe was imposed. It was not enough to define the conflict and identify the actors involved, something had to be done; action had to be taken.

Language to say things

Language was used to tell us why there was a conflict, who the main actors were, the issues at stake and why these issues were worth fighting over. Through altruism speakers created a context inhabited by protagonists and antagonists sparring on behalf of an important but vulnerable group. As such, the number of actors involved in this drama was reduced to three: antagonist, protagonist, and victim. Implicitly there was a fourth group, the audience, who was asked to sympathize with the victim group, applaud the actions of the protagonist, and

disapprove of the antagonist, though such directions were never explicit. In constructing a victim group speakers invoked a discourse of morality. For union speakers government had abandoned its duty to education, impoverishing students' learning and endangering the future of public education. Students had been left to suffer because the government did not care about them.

Government on the other hand described itself as taking the moral high road. It was unfortunately being forced to exercise its power because it cared for the students that the union would use as pawns to demand more money. Hence the conflict was characterized as a clash between right and wrong. Altruism illustrates how language draws upon a body of unstated cultural assumptions. Speakers, for instance, never told their audience why it was wrong for students to be exploited, or how the out-group's actions constituted exploitation. Furthermore, speakers did not explicitly ask their audience to admire or support the heroic actions they were proposing, but implicitly speakers drew extensively upon such sentiment. In characterizing themselves as good people, speakers appealed to a core set of beliefs about what behavior was exemplary and should be praised.

Speakers used language to identify and describe key issues. Importantly, speakers reiterated that the conflict was not about wage increases. When union speakers mentioned money it was presented as an instrument for attracting and retaining new teachers, keeping up with inflation, recognizing the value of the teaching profession, and/or maintaining parity with other public servants. Government speakers, too, characterized the conflict as about students at risk and their "hardship stories," not about refusing to allocate more money to teachers' salaries or public education. Yet money was attributed as a principal motive to the out-group. Teachers were thus described as the highest paid in Canada while demanding more, while government was portrayed as lavishing money on itself rather than those under its charge. Ironically, while both

union and government described themselves as willing to go to great lengths for vulnerable students, they would not simply resort to money. Teachers would do anything for their students, but they would not accept the government's offer and return to work. Similarly, though government cared deeply for their students, it would not simply allocate more money to public education.

Altruism was thus an incomplete strategy since on its own it did not explain why a group would not simply lessen its own demands to protect the victims. Situated within the context of the past, however, such acquiescence was presented by union speakers as irresponsible. Martyrdom would not solve the problem. Earlier, teachers had sacrificed on their students' behalf, but this had resulted only in deteriorating classroom conditions and continued government apathy. The past enabled union speakers to explain how members had been paradigmatic in their earlier actions. They had been willing to suffer but they would not allow their students to suffer. Language provided a view of the past that painted teachers as desperately trying to alert an uncaring government to the deteriorating state of public education.

Union speakers assigned the reason for the conflict with the government out-group. The government had earlier sown the seeds for the current crisis. Responsibility was laid at the feet of government. It had neglected public education for 10 years. Alberta is unique in that the same party has been in power since 1971, which made it difficult for government speakers to blame their predecessors. Plus it was Klein who had imposed the earlier austerity measures, which may explain why government speakers did not describe a history beyond the past few hours, days, or couple of years. For them, the conflict was about what was happening right now, not what had happened. The peace existing earlier had been shattered without warning by the union.

Dislocating the present from the past, however, allowed government speakers to shift emphasis. Resolving the conflict was thus not about addressing a problem with roots in the past, but rather ending the conflict immediately so that kids would not suffer. For government speakers the near future underscored students' suffering. The conflict was about students losing a year of their schooling because teachers did not care what their actions would cost them. In this way, government invoked a future that reached only to the end of the school year. The conflict was about what was happening right now. Children were suffering which the government could not abide.

Yet union speakers projected the conflict onto a grander scale since it was about the future state of public education. Their actions now were important only insofar as they forced the government to recognize the downward trajectory of public education. Teachers would force government to make the necessary correction. In the larger scheme of things the pain caused by their actions was momentary and would bring healing to a cankered situation. The futures invoked by speakers related to different times. Union looked much farther into the future so that the present conflict was about what future would be inherited, while government looked to the end of the school year.

Importantly, speakers described their actions as protective. They were taking action to protect an innocent and vulnerable group. This shares much in common with scholars' earlier findings of how leaders traditionally issued their call to arms (Lasswell, 1927; Graham, Keenan, and Dowd, 2004). Such a discourse was used by speakers to frame the conflict as occurring between an aggressor and a protector. The in-group was protecting a key group (students) against an out-group. As such, the in-group was not aggressive; it was not trying to conquer another group but rather assigned itself the role of protector. Language allowed speakers to frame the

out-group as more than mere villains; they were aggressors whose actions were imperilling a vulnerable and key group, a group incarnating the province's future.

In this way, speakers dilated the boundaries of the in-group so that the wider public could locate itself within. Because the in-group was protecting a group that parents and other concerned citizens held valuable, it shared something in common with them. Thus the union was on the side of all those who believed public education was important. Government speakers did something similar. They characterized themselves as on the side of the "kids" and fighting on their behalf. Therefore, all those who agreed with this sentiment should identify themselves with the government in-group. Both union and government constructed the out-group as a small, self-interested group with minority views.

Language to be things

A discourse of protection implicitly identified the in-group as protectors, not aggressors. They were good people protecting the treasures of the realm and our collective future. Constructing the out-group as an aggressor or as using bully tactics is akin to vilification. Yet in terms of polarization, it was ridicule that manifested the greatest difference between government and union. Ridicule cast the out-group's actions and beliefs as alien to those of society. But while Booi distinguished himself as an expert in his use of ridicule, there were lines he did not cross. The Learning Minister may have had a series of "bad ideas" but he was not a "bad person." Additionally, Booi did not ridicule his government; rather, he singled out Klein and Oberg. In this way, the government itself was not dismissed or marked as aberrant, but rather it was key figures that were dismissed as incompetent.

Ridicule allowed Booi to reduce the reason for the conflict to the incompetence of two government members. Two bad apples were ruining it for everyone. Union did not have a problem with the conservative government (for whom many of the teachers had likely voted), only with two of its members. Ridicule provided a clear target while suggesting that these two people held views that any "normal" person would recognize as aberrant. These two did not belong to the commonsense community of Albertans. Presumably, members of their own party would disapprove of their incompetence. In so doing, ridicule further dimensionalized the conflict, enlarging the in-group's boundaries to include everyone but the Premier and the Learning Minister.

For union, the core issue was that two incompetent people had been given the keys to the kingdom. Ridicule discriminated between those with commonsense and those without, while enabling speakers to describe themselves as "normal." Their group belonged to the community of commonsense, while marking the Premier and Learning Minister as the out-group. Booi's selective use of ridicule marked a departure from the findings of other critics. In Obadare's (2009) study, for instance, he noted how ridicule was used to critique the Nigerian government and not just a few of its members. Similarly, Rudd (2003) observed how Rush Limbaugh and Ken Hamblin targeted entire groups like intellectuals, liberals, and democrats. In Vares' (2010) study, the Finnish resistance movement used ridicule to target the Russians. The Finns did not target a few members of the Kremlin nor its military operations, but rather they used ridicule to satirize and out-cast Russians generally. Being selective in his use of ridicule contracted the scope of Booi's malcontent, suggesting that the out-group had a population of two.

That Booi did not condemn the government may indicate that his union wished to work within the existing structure rather than tear it down, or perhaps he recognized the conservatives'

staying power. Ridicule allowed the union to propose an easy answer to the conflict: remove a few incompetent people and our problems would be over. Perhaps, too, Booi indicated that the problem was not with the government but a few of its members. Furthermore, in ridiculing Klein and Oberg, Booi did not lampoon their political beliefs or the fact that they held views right-of-center. Government policies and bureaucracy, a popular topic for ridicule, were not targeted by Booi. Rather his set the crosshairs on two government leaders.

Government speakers did not use ridicule. This fact alone deserves more coverage than the current study allows. Perhaps this reflects the cultural assumption that those with power should not make fun of those without. Those who violate this norm risk being viewed as "bullies." Instead, those with power are expected to consider the needs of the less powerful. Ridicule polarizes the landscape into the common-sense camp of "us" and the non-sense camp of "them." But Klein and Oberg mitigated the differences between the teachers and themselves. They said that they admired the teachers. In so doing, a context was crafted that minimized differences and cast the source of the conflict beyond the people directly involved in it. For government, there were no bad people just a bad situation, which may have set the stage for resolution. Government presented itself as balancing the interests of all. It was taking into account the needs of the teachers as well as those of public education, parents, students, and taxpayers. It was an institution that sought to unify the interests of its citizens.

This theme of unification runs throughout the government utterances. Government speakers identified themselves as guardians of the realm and protectors of the public peace. In this capacity they were calm and sober statesmen keenly aware of their subjects' emotional state. Government speakers used emotion to tell us how the people under their care were feeling while union speakers used emotion to tell us how their members were feeling. Government speakers

thus expressed outrage without being outraged, which helped them appear as objective. Their judgment was not clouded by emotion. They had reflected on the "hardship stories" of their people and knew how they felt. Calm were the hands wielding the tools quelling discontent. Government had heard the cries of its people. It was not a cold-hearted and distant bureaucracy but rather it was in touch with the emotions of its people. It cared deeply about them and identified with those caught in the middle. It felt their pain.

Rather than saying that they themselves were angry, frustrated, or disappointed, government speakers intuited these emotions from the public. Government speakers characterized themselves as far less emotional than their union counterparts. Though they knew how their people were feeling, they were themselves not flustered by the conflict. They were thinking with their head and the public's heart. In this way, government was a conduit or spokesperson for public discontent. Public emotion informed government action. Legislation was a mechanism for putting the public will into action. Public sentiment sanctioned government action.

By articulating members' emotions Booi sent a clear message to his government, expressing members' solidarity and resolve. According to him, teachers were united in their outrage and spoke with a single voice, which silenced possible divisions between members while forestalling their potential objections. Booi's characterization of emotion let members know that the stakes were high and their support necessary. There was no room for apathy. In publically stating his members feelings, Booi signaled his union's intentions. They would not back down. Teachers were thinking with their hearts as well as their heads. They were emotionally invested in the conflict because they believed strongly in public education and cared deeply for their students.

In telling us that they were angry, frustrated, and at their wits end, union speakers could also hope to elicit sympathy. Teachers did not want to go on strike. These were good people who did not want to withdraw voluntary services from their students. But government had pushed them into a corner, leaving them with no other option. They were being forced to do something that they did not want to do. According to government speakers they were being forced to take actions they did not want. Both union and government were characterized by their speakers as decent entities caught in an indecent situation. Their leaders were being forced by the out-group to employ tactics they would normally shun.

In describing the emotions of others government and union speakers ascribed human characteristics to their organization. Their group was not a cold and impersonal. It could feel the pain of others. This was not an abstract entity caring only for itself, but rather it had feelings or was at least in touch with the feelings of others. Language enabled speakers to anthropomorphize the abstract entities of union and government and perhaps validate the emotions that members were experiencing. At a minimum, it painted a picture of a group that cared deeply about the students and appreciated the emotional consequences wrought by the conflict.

Language to do things

In exploring how speakers used language to do things I drew attention to how speakers created a context of urgency. It is one thing to assign identities and identify emotions and another matter to compel people to become agents of action. Furthermore, though a discursive move may implicitly suggest action, speakers must define and justify the action while making it appear as the logical outcome. They must also specify when the action should occur; that is, a time

summons must be issued. Saying that something needs to be done and saying when it needs to be done are two related but different aspects of conflict. Language enabled speakers to construct the conflict and to place it in time while marking a particular time as liminal. A context of urgency facilitated and animated the call to arms. It portrayed inaction as inexcusable while laying the rails for the direction the conflict would take.

Implicitly, all of the discursive moves embodied a call to action. Bad people should be prevented from actualizing their sinister designs by good people who should stand up for what is right. Similarly, if an innocent group is being exploited by a selfish out-group, then those with the means to do so should come to their aid. While a call to arms can assemble a group and identify the antagonist as an aggressor, it is the time summons that signals when action is to be taken. Assembling an army is one thing, telling it when to strike another. A call to action requires speakers to construct a certain moment as propitious for action.

In constructing a liminal moment speakers superimposed a timeline onto the conflict, complete with a past and a future. Through language speakers fashioned a past that rendered the present time critical. For union, the past was offered as proof that government would simply kick the can down the road unless it was forced to do otherwise. Its version of the past showed that we were standing at a fork in the road: either public education would be made a priority or it would not. The past demonstrated the intolerableness of the present situation. Through language union members were told they had suffered and their students were suffering. They were also told they must take extraordinary action.

Government, too, invoked a history revealing the necessity of action. The current state of affairs could not continue. Although the history these speakers described was less expansive than the union's, it nonetheless revealed the desperation of these times. Desperate measures were

needed. The past served as evidence that government intervention alone would avert a catastrophe. Earlier tools had proven themselves insufficient. Only drastic actions would address the union's aggressive action. The past was summoned as proof that government possessed special knowledge. It knew how the union's actions were wreaking hardship. It alone knew what was at stake. The past demonstrated to government that intervention was imperative. The present moment was framed as a crossroads with the events of the past leading in a straight forward manner to this point. Through language speakers imposed a timeline on the conflict and constructed the present time as liminal.

Time did not end with this moment, however. Speakers used language to chart the future path leading from this point onward. Because it had yet to happen speakers could project their visions onto the blank screen of the future. Visions of what lay ahead were described with the vividness of events that had already occurred. Like the past, visions of the future were offered as reality, as something that had already happened. The present time was thus constructed as critically important since it would determine our future. Speakers described themselves as certain of what the outcome of their actions would be before action was taken. Hence strike action would—not might—force government to increase its investment in education which would raise the quality of public education. Conversely, government knew—not guessed—that strike action would cost students a year of their schooling. Government knew legislation was its best and politically correct response.

The actions that speakers proposed today would determine the course of future events. No variables intervened in this unproblematic causality: today's actions were tomorrow's reality. In this way, speakers' held the keys to our future since they knew which path we should take. They were authoritative figures whose words should be heeded. In tandem, the past and the

future placed an immense burden on the present. Constructing the present as liminal made our next steps critically important but it also necessitated that steps be taken. It was not possible to simply remain at this junction. The past and the future not only explained the need for action but also made inaction untenable.

An important difference surfaced, however, in the scope of speakers' knowledge of the future. Union speakers knew that if the government was not forced to make public education a priority, a catastrophe would result: classrooms would be crammed beyond capacity, students would be left behind, and learning would suffer. It alone knew that public education was in jeopardy and it held a vision of the future which revealed the consequences of inaction. It also knew that the present action it was taking was curative; it would correct the trajectory of public education. Short term pain would bring long term health.

Government speakers expressed the future differently. The only future beyond the present time was one in which schools sat empty. Looking ahead revealed that if government did not take swift action, schools would be shuttered and students deprived of their education. Returning teachers to the classroom was imperative otherwise the school year would be lost, which circumscribed the future with the end of the school year. No mention was made of a future beyond this time. The Learning Minister knew that strike action would result in the loss of the school year. How he could claim to know this was never explained, but this knowledge was offered as proof that government must take action immediately.

Stahl (2008) reminds us that speakers construct contexts of urgency to forestall important activities like reflection, discussion, and debate, and to make certain actions appear inevitable. While union speakers contextualized their current action within a larger historical arc, they nonetheless framed the present as the time for action. Only immediate action would save public

education. For government speakers the conflict was the context. If events in the past had led to this point, they were overshadowed by the magnitude of the current crisis. Any problems laying farther down the road would have to wait. For government speakers, something had to be done now: the woods were burning. The crisis had engulfed the province and kids were at risk. There was no time for discussion, debate, or even negotiation. It must take action.

In so contextualizing the present, action became the only legitimate response. But while constructing this moment as critical enabled speakers to press for immediate action, it also condemned them to paint the present time as dire. If one only responds to a crisis, then a crisis must be presented to elicit a response. As such, a situation may be generated in which one hurtles from one crisis to another. Action thus becomes associated with critical moments rather than with a progressive and evolving relationship. In addition, the construction of critical moments requires speakers to radically dramatize the landscape, elevating the stakes and making the present untenable. A context of urgency emphasizes differences between the in-group and the out-group while downplaying the possible consequences of taking action.

Conclusions

Wodak (2003:133) argues that political discourse and communication are "fundamentally based on distinguishing between 'Us" and 'Them.'" Such a dichotomy does not occur naturally but must be constructed by human actors, a task for which the resources of language are uniquely well-suited. Conflict requires that groups be defined and distinguished before they can be set against each other. My study has examined four ways that speakers constructed an "us" and a "them," identified the key actors and assigned roles to them while prescribing a course of action

that must be taken. The four discursive strategies that I have used to explore how speakers achieved polarization and ultimately mobilization were also four ways that speakers brought the conflict into being. These are four ways that speakers endowed the conflict with volume and vigor so that it could be more than a disagreement.

This study has argued that words are profoundly important for conflict. Labor conflict must be constructed. Words are uniquely suited for this task, enabling speakers to create, identify, and mobilize groups. Speakers use words to assign motives, values, and worldviews to these groups so that the conflict can be presented as representing more than a disagreement over trivial matters. Conflict was characterized as having arisen from the identification of a problem, and here too words were summoned. Words explained how the conflict resulted from a clash of values. Words made it possible to explain why a certain action must be taken and when and against whom. Is conflict possible without words? Perhaps. But while it is customary to hear that "actions speak louder than words," my thesis has argued that words make collective action possible.

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