

**B.C. S. & R.D.A.**  
**2nd VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT**  
**AGM 2016**

This will be my final report to the BCS&RDF since I have come to the end of my tenure as a member of the executive. I was appointed to the position of 3<sup>rd</sup> VP in 2008 and have worn out my welcome in every Vice Presidential position known to man since then. For those of you who don't know, an individual is allowed to occupy each executive position for no more than two two-year terms.

My first assignment as a member of the executive was to find novel ways to promote square dancing and recruit new dancers. I proposed a Dry Grad Fund Raiser Dance which could be run province wide. Not too much interest from our square dance community on that. We tried it locally with modest success. I heard about the ABC programme so ran a few cycles but found that with no commitment and insufficient numbers of new dancers to start with it withered & died. A couple years later, I came up with the "Class of 2010" contest which the Federation ran for a couple of years and I collected feedback from the entrants about their recruiting practises and passed this along to our membership by way of a report each year. Then I got involved with a focus group which included Nick Turner and Brian Elmer and we put together a presentation for the 2012 BOD meeting entitled "Square Dance Makeover - A New Menu for a New Customer." Working with these guys I realized that maybe the problem wasn't promotional – maybe it was the product. All the research that Brian had gathered pointed to the fact that our product, 25 – 30 square dance lessons to become an entry level Mainstream dancer, was out of step with the modern customer who didn't like the idea of lessons in the first place and wouldn't sign up for more than 8 – 10 sessions of anything. After that BOD meeting, I spent the next few weeks writing the first draft of the West Coast Square Dance Program. With a few modifications, our region has been using the program since Sept 2012 to introduce new dancers to the activity. Upon completion of West Coast, weekly dances at that level have been held on a rotating basis throughout the region while new dancers continue lessons to complete their Mainstream training.

**CALLER SURVEY:**

An informal survey was done of callers in our region to see what they thought of the West Coast Program. Of the callers using the program, five

were generally pleased with the way it has been working for them, one was generally displeased. Most clubs have enjoyed better attendance at their West Coast dances than at their Mainstream dances. The most common concern raised by callers was that for the program to be successful, all callers who call for West Coast dances need to stick to the advertised program. One caller noted that dancers were starting to stay away from his West Coast dances. His club in particular has been spearheading an effort to reduce the number of West Coast dances held in our region. On the other hand, another caller said that what makes West Coast work is that dancers will support WC dances because they have a Mainstream feel. Most are of the opinion that overall, the program has improved their ability to retain new dancers.

My club has used West Coast as a destination program for a few years. Before we started West Coast, our club had shrivelled to a little fewer than forty broken down dancers. An average dance night was 2 squares and shrinking. Our latest roster shows just under 70 dancers and we had an average of 4½ squares attending our dances in 2015 – 2016. We draw our dancers from a small town of 15,000 people; we need to welcome everyone who walks through the door. Dancers cycle in and out of the program at their leisure and to be quite honest, few have any interest in dancing outside of our club. I have observed that most new dancers don't think about leaving the safety of the nest until they've been involved with the activity for two to three years. Even then, I'd be surprised if more than 20% of dancers ever venture outside of their own area to dance. Have a look at your own club and do the math. How many people are we losing to accommodate those 20%?

It was stated at the BOD meeting that using West Coast as a destination program is doing a disservice to your dancers because Mainstream is the only international entrance level program into "regular" square dancing. If you don't teach them Mainstream, they can't dance outside of our province and not even at the summer dances in your region.

I have a hard time fathoming how teaching people to square dance at *any* level could be construed as doing them a disservice. After all, catering to the needs of your customer is kind of the definition of service is it not? The ten week training period makes this program so much more accessible to almost everyone. Of course you have to make it clear to them that they can't attend any dance events that aren't using the same program as they have been

taught. And you have to have a mechanism in place to provide further training for those who do want to learn more.

Below, an excerpt from an overview of Callerlab's Condensed Teach Order talks about using their condensed program as a destination program. Note the parallels to what I've been saying.

“A group that uses this Condensed Teach Order method of learning that is not affected by any other outside groups might find it unnecessary to teach any of the deferred actions at all. If the dancers are content to stay within these boundaries why bother to show the remaining deferred actions that they will not know are missing. These dancers must realize however that they cannot attend any other dance events other than their own unless the other group is using the same condensed teach order. Current leaders seem entrenched in not changing anything. Some see the results but are unwilling to compromise anything less than what is currently being danced. Sooner or later they will be forced to change or be left with empty dance halls”....

In my opinion, West Coast Square Dancing can be viable as a destination or as a stopover on the way to Mainstream. Mainstream should be the goal for dancers who are capable, ready and willing and they should be encouraged to move forward, especially if they have any desire to explore the larger world of square dance. And by the way, “West Coast Square Dancing” is way more marketable than “Condensed Teach Order Square Dance Lessons.”

It's been both interesting and enjoyable working with this revolving group for the past eight years and I thank you all for humouring me along the way.

This concludes my report,

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