



Salvadoran health care workers win

Doctors took the lead in fight against privatizing health care.

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MIKE OLD PHOTO

CIENFUEGOS MURAL



Winning Support

Laid off care aides from Burnaby seniors' residence enlist community support to fight privatizing direct patient care. **PAGE 5**

THE COQUIHALLA. NOT FOR SALE!

TELL GORDON CAMPBELL AND YOUR LOCAL MLA

LAI D OFF!

Over 3,000 support staff receive layoff notices. **Page 4**

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Front-line health care workers' message to Victoria: we don't trust you, your word isn't worth the paper it's written on.



GORDON LAFLEUR PHOTO

57 PER CENT SAY 'NO'

Framework is rejected

Giving up too much for too little and profound distrust of any agreement reached with government meant health care workers voted 57 per cent against the framework agreement brokered between unions, health employers and the provincial government.

The deal, reached this spring, would have traded significant concessions in exchange for limits on the impact of health care privatization on workers.

"This was a difficult decision for many of our members to make, and I respect their decision," said HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt.

"At the outset I predicted that the tentative agreement would be controversial within our membership, and it was.

"In voting against the tentative framework agreement, I believe that health care workers didn't reject efforts to find alternatives to health privatization," said Allnutt, who is also spokesperson for the 10-

union bargaining association that represents 46,000 health and support workers in hospitals and long-term care facilities in B.C.

During the vote, common themes emerged that foreshadowed the outcome.

"The trust factor loomed large. Many of our members believed that a government that ripped up one

contract would not hesitate to shred another," said Allnutt. "For others, the tentative agreement was too lopsided – they felt it involved too many concessions while up to 5,000 workers could still lose their jobs. There were also those who believed they would be unaffected by the government's privatization plans."

After the defeat of the agreement, the union's Provincial Executive began discussion with union members about the next steps in the fight to protect jobs and public health care.

Allnutt acknowledged difficult and stressful times lie ahead for union members. "But we're also united in a common cause – defending our rights and the

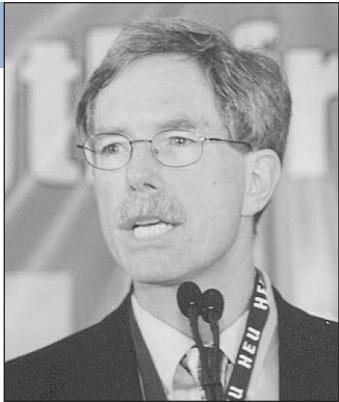
services we deliver to the public. That commitment will take us through these difficult times."

On announcing the ratification vote results, he urged health authorities to exercise restraint and to not shut the door to pursuing alternatives. He pointed out that the province's recent brush with SARS in B.C. demonstrated that breaking up the infection control team by privatizing critical services like cleaning, security, laundry and food services is not in the public interest.

The tentative framework agreement would have seen \$500 million worth of savings for government over three years through forgone wage and pay equity increases, longer hours of work and wage reductions.

In exchange, government would have capped the number of positions that could have been contracted out and provided better severance provisions and more bumping options for laid off workers.

Within a month of the vote announcement, Vancouver Coastal and Vancouver Island Health Authorities had announced they were going ahead with their plans to lay off hospital support staff.



CHRIS ALLNUTT

The fight to save jobs is far from over

We have always been scrappers and fighters

The first half of this year has been one of the most difficult in the history of this union and in the working lives of HEU members. British Columbia's public health care system has been under systematic and constant attack from the provincial government and many health care workers are losing their jobs with many more under imminent threat of losing theirs.

HEU's leadership could not run away from the reality of a government intent on destroying everything this union has achieved through its more than 50 years of existence – achievements like winning a living wage and good benefits for health care workers and pay equity when the overwhelming majority of our members are women.

Taking a hard look at the state of affairs meant we went out and asked HEU members what they wanted to see their union do to protect them and deal with the government's plans to contract out thousands of jobs. "Do you want us to talk to government?" we asked. The answer we got was "yes."

Protests and other actions by health care workers in the early months of this year backed up that message from the grassroots – they wanted their leadership to negotiate to save jobs and stem the government's privatization tide.

And the February 28 – March 1 conference in Richmond where hundreds of HEU activists told us exactly what their membership wanted and what they were willing to do for it was the message we carried to the negotiations with government and employer representatives.

Two things were clear right from the start of negotiations: we would be negotiating concessions and that there would be no agreement without approval from the union membership. The last say would go to you. And it did.

The tentative framework agreement was bound to be controversial in this union. Concessions are not part of HEU's culture – we have always been fighters and scrappers. Fighting not only for ourselves, but as defenders of public health care. That is the way we look at ourselves.

So when the vote was held, 57 per cent could not see themselves taking concessions. Now it's time to move on, to carry on with the fight to ensure that members emerge from this battle with their jobs and livelihoods intact – in every way we can.

voice.mail

A cleaner's story

For 25 years I have lived the humble life of a cleaner; committed to excellence and dedication to Vancouver General Hospital. I have often been vocal in protesting against injustice and discrimination in the workplace, as well as fostering equality, trust and hope for everyone in the health care system.

The lack of respect for certain classifications within our hospital has resulted in low morale among many of our members.

I have maintained my personal integrity through what I refer to as my second job, the job of the spirit. The sharing of compassion and understanding between the patients and staff I serve has always given me a strong sense of meaning and purpose in my daily work.

However, the past year has turned my joy and my beliefs

into a sad uncertainty. In December 2002, I was told my job was up for sale. I cannot express the pain and disbelief this has caused myself and my family.

I am truly thankful for my job, but despite popular opinion I do not believe \$18 an hour is substantial after 25 years of labour. Certainly \$9.50 an hour is not only insulting, but impossible to raise a family on.

I have always taught my children the importance of honesty, loyalty, and integrity; that hard work and dedication speak louder than any title or social standing.

Bill 29 not only stripped away our contract rights, it attacked our very identity. I am not an overpaid cleaning lady pushing a broom. I am a dedicated employee, a team player, a loving mother and a compassionate human being.

DEANNA GRAHAM
Vancouver General Hospital

LPN comes to HEU's defense

As a 33-year HEU member, I am appalled at the lack of support some licensed practical nurses have for their union. I began my career at \$7.00 per hour, a dollar less than my male counterpart in the same position. Over the years HEU has worked to achieve the pay and benefits we currently earn and equality between genders.

Hospital support staff such as housekeeping, dietary, maintenance and many more are also members of our union and have done their duty on picket lines, negotiations and supported LPNs throughout the years. It is time for us to help them keep their jobs as well.

In our region there has been a dramatic increase in the use of LPNs who are now trained to provide full scope service in several areas formerly reserved for RNs. Instead of complaining that HEU does nothing for its members, it would be constructive if those LPNs were more involved in their union. As a 10-year veteran as chair of the South Okanagan local, as well as a former Provincial Executive member, I can honestly say we have come a long way from when I began in this profession.

It is our responsibility to support the people who

provide warm, safe meals, keep our hospitals clean and disease-free and provide building maintenance and keep our equipment running.

Criticism without involvement is the coward's way. If you didn't vote on the last HEU rollback referendum, you don't have any right to criticize. Get involved in your local and provincially, and then change what you feel needs changing within. Together we all make a difference.

SHIRLEY BARDECK, LPN
South Okanagan Local

At Jackman, jobs disappeared, too

I have once again been reading the *Guardian* in hope that maybe this time Jackman Manor would have been mentioned, as we too faced job losses due to Bill 29.

I have read about several facilities where support workers' jobs were being contracted out. Not a word was mentioned about Jackman Manor. Yet we suffered just the same.

Anyway, it is too late now for us. Now you (union executive from head office) are busy trying to save jobs with your proposal to cut wages, forgo raises and extend contracts.

In the wake of Bill 29 last January, I attended meetings where we were told that Campbell was out to crush the union. Not only ours but all trade unions.

Maybe last year would have been a good time to start the process of wage reduction or get all trade unions out and involved with a province-wide strike. I bet you a few days with everything shut down and Campbell might have been willing to negotiate something, and I might actually still have a job.

HANNE REID, FORMER COOK
Jackman Manor Local

Can't negotiate changes to law

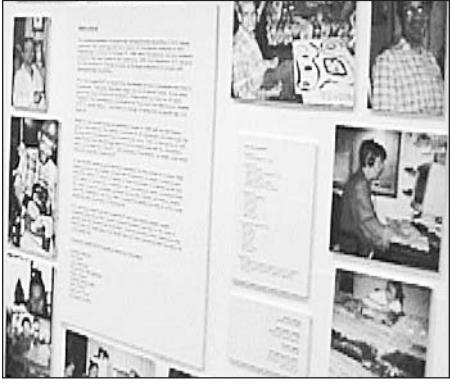
The HEU layoffs were inevitable even if the now-dead deal had passed. The government, HEABC and the unions in the facilities subsector, in a stunning disregard for legislative intent, signed agreements in which "the number of FTE's reduced, as a direct result of contracting out of services or programs ... shall be limited to 3,500 FTEs."

But Bill 29 expressly prohibits any such agreements that limit contracting out.

A collective agreement that conflicts or is inconsistent with this provision is void. In short, the now-dead deal that was put to the HEU membership for ratification was void. The HEU layoffs are inevitable due to Bill 29 unless the Liberal government first retracts its draconian legislation.

JIM KELLY
Richmond Local
(RADAT-Community Subsector)





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Plans to contract out jobs, surgery roundly criticized

Health authority forced to listen to health care workers

At the first Vancouver Coastal Health Authority meeting since the B.C. Supreme Court ordered health authorities to cease making decisions behind closed doors, more than a hundred health care workers showed up to have their say about the privatization of surgical procedures and contracting out of thousands of health care jobs.

The recent admission from the VCHA that it planned to contract out as many as 3,200 day surgeries performed at Richmond General Hospital enraged the public audience, and although it was not on the agenda, they put it there.

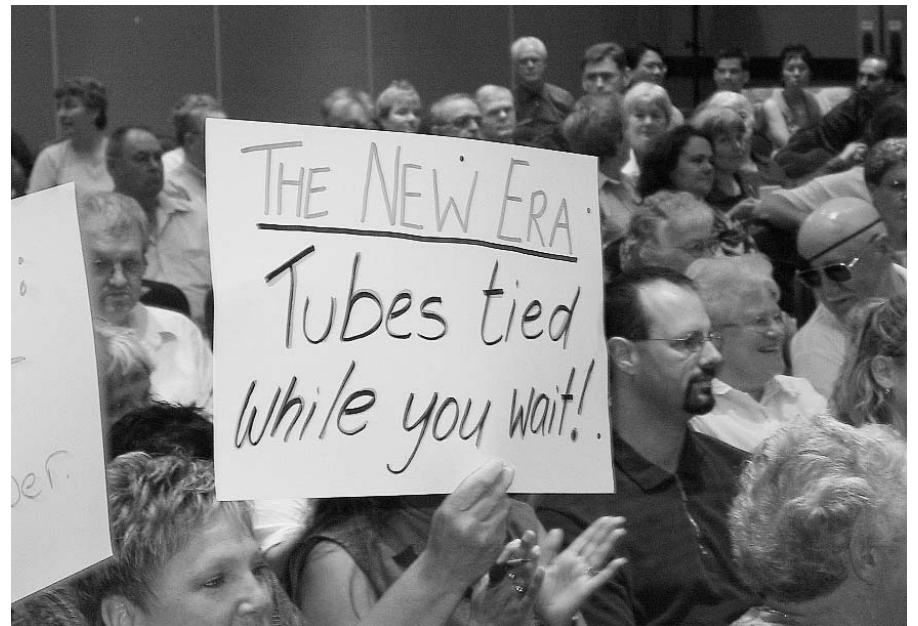
The B.C. Health Coalition called the VCHA's plans to privatize surgeries unacceptable.

"That this health authority hatches its plans to privatize mastectomies, foot amputations and tubal ligations behind closed doors is an outrage,"

said Terrie Hendrickson, the group's coordinator. "It's a public health care system. Give the public a voice on the future of health care delivery in this region."

The public's voice was loud and clear at the June 18 meeting. Ida Goodreau, CEO of the VCHA, refused to back down on plans to contract out the RGH surgeries, although she said it still was far from a reality.

Slowing down the implementation of the plan should be the failure of the Northmount Eye Surgical Centre in



MIKE OLD PHOTO

The public told the Vancouver Richmond Health Authority to drop its plans to contract out surgeries like tubal ligations to private clinics.

North Vancouver, long touted by the VCHA and the provincial government as an example of how contracts with private clinics can reduce surgery waitlists in a cost effective manner without violating the *Canada Health Act*.

Goodreau should examine the record of the private clinic after her claim the health authority would not "give procedures to the private sector unless we were confident that there would be a significant advantage in terms of cost savings."

The bailiffs seized the clinic in early June and some patients have alleged queue-jumping practices. The BCHA called for an audit that would take a

look at those claims and include an analysis of the contract's real costs including those related to supplies, administrative support and legal advice supplied by the health authority and its impact on Lion's Gate Hospital's cataract surgery wait lists, as well as individual surgeons involved. An audit should investigate why the VCHA did not renew the contract when it expired this spring.

One item the VCHA did have on the agenda was the contracting out of thousands of health care support jobs. More than 2,000 health care workers in dietary, cleaning and laundry in the Lower Mainland received layoff notices almost immediately after union members in the facilities subsector rejected a framework agreement that would have seen a cap on layoffs in exchange for concessions aimed at saving the government \$500 million by their forgoing of wage and pay equity increases.

Ida Goodreau, CEO of VCHA, seemed to dismiss out of hand workers' comments at the meeting, and she didn't want to listen to the "workers' concerns."

In spite of the Supreme Court ruling, it was only after the angry crowd forced board chairman Keith Purchase to take questions and comments from the audience, that they were able to criticize the board for laying off workers and privatizing surgeries.

Make hospital security contract details public

The Fraser Health Authority has awarded a five-year, \$16.6 million contract to Toronto-based multinational Intercon Security Ltd., meaning the jobs of 130 unionized security staff at nine hospitals will probably be contracted out by fall.

"There is a significant potential risk to patients and health care workers with contracting out hospital security, and the public deserves to know the specifics of the deal and how this company will be held to account," says HEU spokesperson Zorica Bosancic.

"It's not good enough for the health authority to issue assurances that all will be well," adds Bosancic. "What staffing levels and wages will be provided? What service levels have been agreed to, and at what cost? How many of the new privatized guards will be

trained to deal with the unique protection needs of a hospital environment?"

Bosancic also noted that while the entire unionized security service is being laid off, 70 per cent of hospital security managers will keep their jobs.

An arm's length relationship with a private security contractor cannot shield the FHA from liability for failure to protect patients and health care workers.

Intercon Security has no background in health care in B.C., but the company is no stranger to the B.C. Employment Standards Branch. In 2001, an Employment Standards Tribunal fined the company \$500 for its failure to keep proper employee records. The tribunal also referenced a four-page appendix with "dozens of complaint investigations and variance requests" in its reasons for levying the penalty.



COFFEE BREAK

All stories guaranteed factual.
Sources this issue: all from the Internet

Broken window

Susie went running into the house, yelling, "Mommy, mommy! Johnny broke the window!"

"Oh, no!" her mother exclaimed. "How did he do that?"

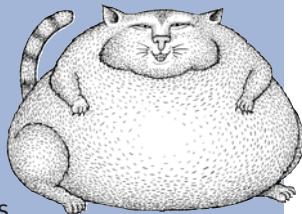
"Well," explained Susie, "I threw a rock at him, but he moved out of the way."

MDs' strike message unclear

News Flash: All physicians contracted to Kaiser Healthcare have gone out on strike. Kaiser officials say that they will have a statement for the press as soon as they can get a pharmacist out there to read the physicians' picket signs.

You know you are owned by a cat when ...

- You wait to go to the bathroom because your cat is curled up on your lap.
- The most comfortable furniture in the house is for your cat.
- Your cat gets fed before the rest of your family.
- Your cat ignores you when you call him, but when he meows you come running.
- You run out of the cheap tuna but don't want to use the good stuff because it's for your cat.
- You spend more on cat shampoo, combs, brushes, etc; then you would ever think of spending on yourself.



You're a Vancouverite if ...

- You make well over \$100,000 and you still can't find a nice place to live.
- You think anyone who drives a car to work is decadent.
- Old friends you haven't talked to in years suddenly call. "Do you have a spare bedroom for a weekend?"
- You are thinking of taking an adult education class, but you can't decide between Yoga, Channeling or Building Your Web Site class.

SARS: Taiwan sounds warning

The official responsible for Taiwan's efforts to control the spread of SARS has issued a stark warning about the dangers of contracting out hospital staff.

According to the *Taipei Times*, the head of Taiwan's Centre for Disease Control says contracting out of hospital laundry, cleaning and nursing aide services contributed to the devastating outbreak of SARS in that country.

CDC director Su Ih-jen told the *Times*, "These workers were not the hospitals' formal employees. The hos-

pitals, therefore, could not efficiently manage these workers."

Su also told the *Times* he's recommending hospitals take direct control of all contracted out work to control the country's infection rates.

HEU spokesperson Zorica Bosancic urged B.C. health authorities to consider the warning of their Taiwanese counterparts before rolling the dice on public safety.

"B.C.'s success in controlling SARS is due in part to the efficient operation of the health care team – includ-

ing the critical services provided by hospital cleaners, laundry workers and security officers," said Bosancic.



For more SARS information, click on the SARS logo on the top bar of HEU's website: <www.heu.org>. It will also link you to CUPE's SARS information page.

Layoffs in acute care underway

Three B.C. health authorities wasted little time in sending more than 3,000 hospital dietary, cleaning and housekeeping workers to the unemployment

lines and selling off a huge chunk of hospital support services after union members rejected the framework agreement reached between their unions, health employers and the provincial government.

Calling the announcements made by the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, Provincial Health Authority and the Vancouver Island Health Authority a serious blow to B.C.'s hard-hit public health care system, HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt said cutbacks and closures that have occurred over the last 18 months are already taking a toll on the province's ability to deliver quality health care.

"Laying off thousands of dedicated

front-line workers so private corporations can make a profit doesn't make sense for patients, health care workers or the economy," he said.

In late May the PHSA awarded housekeeping and food services contracts for Children and Women's Health Centre, Sunny Hill Health Centre for Women and the Vancouver site of the B.C. Cancer Agency to two subsidiaries of the British outsourcing giant, the Compass Group. As many as 500 regular and casual workers – mostly women – will be out of work by fall.

The next week 1,500 dietary, cleaning and security staff who work for the VCHA learned that their jobs, too, are going to an outside contractor. And 50 laundry workers at Lions Gate

Hospital are losing their jobs to American-owned K-Bro Linen Systems.

VIHA announced that over 1,000 Vancouver Island dietary and housekeeping workers will lose their jobs.

"Private contractors will pay between \$9 and \$10 an hour, and those poverty level wages won't attract and retain the skilled and experienced workers we need, but will lead to high staff turnover," said Allnutt.

CONTRACTING OUT

Private contractors will pay between \$9 and \$10 an hour

Seniors' care is hit hard

Many health workers in long-term care are losing their jobs as government privatizes support services while closing beds, moving seniors to other facilities, sending them home or assigning them to assisted living.

Here are the numbers of bed closures and related job losses in long-term care that have occurred or are expected in the near future:

- in the Fraser Health Region 463 long-term care beds with about 450 jobs lost;
- on Vancouver Island 496 beds closed with 207 jobs gone;
- 221 Lower Mainland beds will go, 335 jobs with them.

Interior seniors and workers will take the biggest hit: 254 beds have closed with more than 1,000 slated to go and a potential of hundreds losing jobs.

If there is a bright side it is this: people who work in health care are joining with others in their communities to fight the closures.

B.C. liquor stays public, for now

The privatization of liquor sales and distribution were well on the way to being a done deal when Victoria slammed on the brakes.

George Heyman, president of the B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union, which represents liquor store and distribution centre workers, said this was good news. But, he warned, the privatization plan is only on hold.

The government appointed solicitor general Rich Coleman to stick handle the hot potato after Rick Thorpe, minister for competition, science and enterprise, couldn't contain the

outcry from a growing number of communities concerned about how an unrestrained proliferation of private liquor stores would affect residents and neighbourhoods.

"At least 65 local governments, as well as addiction and treatment experts and groups like Mothers Against Drunk Driving, have requested a moratorium and public input on the government's plans," said Heyman. "Other governments that have reviewed the facts on this issue – including Mike Harris in Ontario and Bill Vander Zalm in B.C. – have found privatizing liquor sales is not the way to go."

In Alberta, privatization of the liquor retail industry a decade ago has

proven to be a fiasco. "Overwhelmingly, the evidence points to liquor privatization having resulted in significantly more costs than benefits to both the people and the government of Alberta," said Calgary economist Greg Flanagan in *Sobering result: the Alberta liquor retailing industry ten years after privatization*, a report he penned for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

And Heyman added that in the last five years, the Liquor Distribution Branch has contributed \$3.1 billion in net profits plus \$1.5 billion in sales and excise taxes towards public services like health care, environmental protection and services to children in crisis.



MIKE OLD PHOTO

In a show of solidarity, Burnaby City Council issued a permit for a rally at Willingdon Park Hospital to protest the first contracting out of direct patient care in B.C.

Personal care contracted out

Now British Columbians have another reason not to trust Gordon Campbell's word. In a "provocative and unnecessary" move contradicting government claims that legislation-breaking health contracts won't lead to privatization of direct patient care, the Fraser Health Authority announced it plans to lay off more than 100 direct care providers in two long-term care facilities and contract out their work.

This spring, Willingdon Park Hospital in Burnaby – a privately-operated but publicly-funded care home – issued pink slips to 55 care aides who bathe, groom, dress and feed the 95 seniors who reside there. Their last day of work is June 27. Late last year, the facility contracted out the work of 18 laundry, housekeeping and dietary staff.

That's why the Willingdon Park care aides began a fightback campaign the day they received their layoff notices. They went with a delegation of 20 supporters to Burnaby municipal council in mid-June and presented them with a 10,000-name petition protesting the facility's decision to privatize their work.

"We ask that you support us as we fight for our seniors and for decently

paid, community-supporting jobs," said Sarjit Dhillon, who has worked at the hospital for 23 years.

Barb Bardua, who's been a care aide at Willingdon Park for 17 years, said she worries that a private company won't deliver consistent care, and that the direct working relationship care aides now have with the nursing team will be ruptured "because care aides from the private company will be directed by their agency."

Raj Atwal, the HEU local chair, who has worked for 16 years at the facility, appealed to council to consider what

it will mean for residents to lose the familiar, trusted relationships they have with their caregivers.

Soon after the announcement of the Willingdon care aides' layoff notices, Lakeshore Care Centre in Coquitlam informed 59 care aides, activity aides and licensed practical nurses – many of them with more than 20 years at the facility – that their final day of work will be on July 28, and their jobs will go to a private contractor.

"The long-serving care staff at these two facilities are like family to the seniors they look after," says HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt. "Now these residents' most personal care requirements will be performed by an outside agency that could send in a different employee every day.

"Throwing these workers out on the street may fatten this employers' bottom line, but it will also disrupt the lives of these seniors – and quite unnecessarily," says Allnutt.

The union says it has evidence B.C.'s health employers are actively planning to use the provisions of last year's Bill 29 to expand the practice of contracting out other members of the nursing team, including LPNs and RNs.

"It's becoming increasingly clear that no part of the health care system is safe from this government's privatization plans – including direct patient care," says Allnutt.

IHA laundry stays home

The Interior Health Authority's decision not to privatize laundry services is sound public policy, says HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt. The IHA will consolidate laundry operations throughout its service area and has ruled out contracting out of the service to a private company.

The first step in consolidation will be to close the laundry service at

Nicola Valley Hospital in Merritt and send their linens to be cleaned at Royal Inland Hospital in Kamloops.

Allnutt called the IHA's decision "a victory of common sense over blind ideology" and said the union will work with the authority to strengthen the delivery of laundry services.

But closing the Merritt facility's laundry means job loss for two HEU members, and Allnutt said their union will ensure their collective agreement rights are protected.

"The IHA is to be congratulated for

keeping hospital laundry services public, but their plans will eventually affect many of our members' jobs," says Allnutt. "We encourage the IHA to fully consult with HEU to minimize this impact. But I am very encouraged that at least one health employer recognizes the value of providing high quality, publicly delivered services," he added. "Especially when others are shipping their laundry out-of-province or engaging low-wage contractors to clean operating rooms and special care nurseries."



The fox in the chicken coop

The decision to hire the controversial consulting firm Accenture to conduct an administrative, cost-cutting review of Ontario's Workplace Safety and Insurance Board is the first step towards privatizing and outsourcing services, says the union representing WSIB workers.

"Wherever Accenture goes, privatization and outsourcing follow," says Paul Simourd, CUPE 1750 executive committee member.

Accenture signed a contract with WSIB to review all aspects of administrative services provided by the board.

The contract – valued at \$500,000 – is to aggressively explore opportunities for greater reliance on external suppliers.

"Asking a private consultant to find opportunities for contracting out services is like setting a fox loose in the hen house," said Simourd. "No good can possibly come from this."

The union is demanding assurances from the provincial government that there will be no privatization of the services offered by the WSIB.

B.C. Hydro recently signed a deal with the controversial company to handle its core customer, financial and technological operations.

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No closure for St. Mary's

HEU welcomed an agreement this spring that gives Saint Mary's Hospital in New Westminster a significant lifeline, but cautioned that the new business plan could erode the hospital's public health care services over the longer term.

Referring to the community-wide campaign aimed at stopping the hospital's closure, HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt called the agreement "a tremendous victory for the community and the 300 health care workers whose combined efforts over many months saved one of New West's most valued health care resources."

"On the surface it appears this agreement, in the short-term, will protect services and jobs," he said. "However, without long-term core funding, the future of Saint Mary's as a viable, acute care facility could still be at risk."

Under the terms of the three-year "purchaser-provider agreement" between the Fraser Health Authority and Saint Mary's, the hospital will raise funds by contracting in services from such third party players as the Workers' Compensation Board and the Insurance Corporation of B.C. as well as other health regions, provinces and potentially other countries.

Benefits mutual for LPNs, union

Licensed practical nurses often relied on their union sisters and brothers

Licensed practical nurses are an important and integral part of HEU, one to which the union has dedicated considerable resources and energy. And without the contributions made over the years by LPNs, the culture and flavour, not to mention the history, would be quite distinct from its current reality.

Part of that reality is that this is a time of insecurity and fear for B.C.'s health care workers.

Recognizing that HEU is a particular target of the government, some LPNs feel they would be safer if they were to leave their union. And the recent ratification vote around the framework agreement that asked

union members to make concessions so that layoffs of support workers would be minimized made a number of LPNs very angry – and vocal.

South Okanagan LPN Shirley Bardeck is appalled. "Hospital support staff have done their duty on picket lines, negotiations, and they have supported LPNs through the years.

It's time for us to support them now," she says.

In the 1970s, HEU fought for and won pay for LPNs equal to orderlies' wages,

part of the union's initial foray into the pay equity struggle.

In the next decade, LPNs were sent reeling with a new model of nursing that advocated the use of registered nurses to the exclusion of licensed practical nurses in some areas where

their scopes of practice overlap.

This change in philosophy heralded massive layoffs for LPNs, and many of them went into other jobs with little opportunity to use their skills.

In 1991 the Seaton Royal Commission – the blueprint for health reform in the province – recognized that LPNs in B.C. were highly underutilized, with Canada's lowest LPN to RN ratio.

However, the period immediately following the report's release – most of the 1990s – was not marked by an increase in LPN utilization. On the contrary, it decreased while the number of RNs increased dramatically.

All of these events and circumstances combined to form a group of activist LPNs, working within their union and professional college. The latter part of that decade was marked by their lobbying efforts, promoting greater utilization of LPNs as well as their right to work to their full scope of practice.

"They focused attention on bad practices like the inconsistencies in LPN utilization in acute care," says



DEBRA ROONEY GRAPHIC

HEU assistant secretary-business manager Zorica Bosancic. "In some hospitals LPNs were using their full scope of practice or close to it, in others not. Often it even varied from floor to floor in the same facility."

In a booklet published in 1998 entitled *In the family of nursing*, HEU pointed out that there were many areas where the utilization of LPNs could be expanded, for instance in long-term care and home care.

That same year, employers and health care workers agreed in collective bargaining to form a joint committee to examine the current and future role of LPNs and care aides. The result was a study published in 2000 entitled *The role of utilization of LPNs and Care Aides in B.C.*

"The HEU representatives who sat on that joint committee took a lead role throughout the project," says Bosancic.

BCGEU was also on the committee whose report served as an advocacy tool for better LPN utilization in B.C.

A recent study prepared for HEU by research consultant Barbara Greenlaw found that now more LPNs are at work in the province. They are practicing their nursing skills in a broadening arena of public health care and using more of their full scope of practice.

• For the 2000 and 2003 reports, go to HEU's website <www.heu.org>. Follow the links: publications, special reports, special reports, LPN Utilization Study and LPN/Care Aide Study.

LPNs in B.C. were highly underutilized

Community talks bear fruit

HEU community subsector members won big after talks between the multi-union Community Subsector Health Association and the HEABC resulted in their enrollment in the Municipal Pension Plan (MPP), completion of the job evaluation plan and long-term disability benefits for workers whose disability predates the current plan.

The three per cent comparability and standardization monies for 2002 and 2003 totaling about \$16.5

million will fund the three initiatives.

Effective January 1, 2004 all eligible workers will belong to MPP.

Implementation of the job evaluation plan was to start after arbitrator Stephen Kelleher resolved outstanding evaluations.

And for the first time, all community subsector workers will have a standardized plan and process for dealing with job descriptions and classifications.

A fund of \$2,000,000 is earmarked for anticipated wage increases. To deal with all classification disputes, Kelleher will chair an intensive

resolution process to be completed by July 1, 2003.

Implementation of the new wage rate is effective on the first pay period after July 31, 2003 or earlier if agreement is reached with no one suffering a reduction in wages.

A huge victory for workers in this sector is increased long-term disability benefits. Before March 31, 2001, the LTD plan provided no benefits to disabled workers after two years, but effective April 1, 2003, a fund of \$700,000 will provide rehabilitation or supplementary income benefits to these workers.

continued from page 5

Slaves to chocolate

Many people who love chocolate would be shocked to learn that 43 per cent of the world's supply of cocoa beans is produced in the Ivory Coast, sometimes by child slaves.

In 2000, a report by the U.S. State Department concluded that in recent years about 15,000 children aged nine to 12 had been sold and forced to work on cotton, coffee and cocoa plantations in the west African country.

These children are usually sold by their destitute parents and then

forced to work 12-hour days, often for nothing more than substandard food and shelter.

Transgressions like falling while carrying loads that may weigh more than they do are punished by beatings.

Aly Diabate, a 14-year-old former cocoa slave in the Ivory Coast told reporters, "The beatings were a part of my life. Any time they loaded you with bags of cocoa and you fell while carrying them, nobody helped you. Instead, they beat you and beat you until you picked it up again."

Though part of his job was to pick cocoa pods – about 400 are needed to produce a pound of chocolate –



Diabate had never tasted chocolate in his life.

But never fear, fair trade chocolate is here. Cocoa Camino is produced at organic cocoa and sugar cooperatives in the Dominican Republic and Paraguay. La Siembra co-op guarantees fair prices to the women and men producers and ensure no forced child labour.

For information on where to buy Cocoa Camino in your community, visit their website at <www.lasiembra.com>.

For more information on the Ivory Coast, see <www.globalexchange.org>.

Agricultural workers' piece rate reduced

The men and women who pick the province's fruit every summer are paid by the bin, and the piece rate has just shrunk by five per cent, thanks to the B.C. Liberals, just before the summer picking season begins.

To add insult to injury, fruit producers are now exempt from paying overtime and premium pay rates to their workers, many of whom travel from afar to work in the orchards and vineyards of the Okanagan every summer.

Court says open doors are law

The province's secretive health authorities will now have to meet in public and only move behind closed doors in "limited circumstances" as a result of a B.C. Supreme Court ruling handed down this spring on an HEU-launched legal challenge.

Justice M.D. Macaulay determined that by meeting behind closed doors, the health authorities were in violation of provincial law that says board meetings must be open to the public unless there are legitimate reasons to close them.

In his written decision, Justice Macaulay sharply rebuked health authorities for their claim they were right to exclude the public, saying their justifications show "a cynical favouring of the interest of the bureaucracy over that of the public."

HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt called it an important victory for the public interest. "This ruling will force health authorities and the provincial government to be more open, transparent and accountable for their actions," he said.

Allnutt said HEU launched the legal challenge because too many key decisions about health care cuts, closures and privatization were being made behind closed doors.

Justice Macaulay ruled against the union's assertion that the Provincial Health Services Authority was improperly established and illegal, but he also dismissed health authority claims that HEU lacked proper legal standing to argue its case, saying the union has standing because it "serves the public in my view, by performing a watchdog function."

But at a board meeting a few days

after the ruling, the Northern Health Authority seemed to defy the court's decision by closing its doors to the public for most of the meeting.

Kathy Jessome, director of HEU's northern office was outraged. "They have ignored the court's ruling and our legal council will certainly be taking a look at it," she said.

MEANWHILE, health care workers are also fighting back against their employers' aggressive attempts to muzzle them from publicly speaking out against cutbacks and privatization.

An arbitrator recognized the rights of union officials to criticize employers publicly

when defending members' interests and quality public health care. HEU filed a grievance when a local executive member at Rosewood Manor received a five-day suspension after the *Richmond News* published his letter criticizing his employer for staff cuts, lack of information on contracting out and deteriorating staff morale.

HEU said he was acting in his capacity as a union official and entitled to immunity, and arbitrator Christopher Sullivan agreed.

In Williams Lake the union has filed grievances on behalf of three members who received reprimands for participating in the public debate over the awarding of a contract to build and operate a new private, for-profit seniors facility to replace Cariboo Lodge and Deni House.

"The B.C. Supreme Court has recognized that the debate about changes in the delivery of health care is a public one. Now it's time for health authorities to tell employers that their workers have a right to express their opinion," said Allnutt.

Justice Macaulay sharply rebuked health authorities



FRED MUZIN

It's time for democracy – real democracy

In the month since 57 per cent of HEU members rejected the proposed framework agreement, the B.C. Liberal government and many health care employers have been on a firing frenzy.

The Coastal Health Authority is contracting out 1,500 jobs in food services, laundry, housekeeping, security and is preying on the Tilbury laundry.

The Provincial Services Health Authority is axing 500 members at Children's & Women's, Sunny Hill and the B.C. Cancer Agency. The Vancouver Island Health Authority has targeted 1,000 jobs for privatization on southern Vancouver Island.

The Salvation Army's Sunset Lodge in Esquimalt is eliminating more than 60 direct patient care jobs, Willingdon Park Hospital in Burnaby is pink-slipping another 60 members, while Lakeshore Care Centre in Coquitlam is releasing 50 more. The Fraser Health Authority is displacing 114 security guards.

And the list goes on.

As a result of Bill 29, which shattered our collective agreement, our members wake up every day and go to work in fear that they will be the next one to be canned without cause, despite years of commitment to caring and public Medicare. The impact on patient/resident care is either ignored or marginalized by sophisticated public relations spins.

The government is determined to dismantle civil society – whether through selling off the Coquihalla, giving away B.C. Hydro and B.C. Rail, ravaging our forests, corporatizing education or ridding us of our ferries and liquor stores.

In their own "Shock and Awe" campaign, Gordon Campbell and complicit employers have declared war on the citizens of this province and are advancing their agenda with a speed and ferocity never before experienced. The more pain and suffering they can inflict, the prouder they become of their abuse of power.

What value do we place on democracy?

As a society and as individuals, we will only preserve democracy if we are prepared to accept our responsibilities and take risks to oppose unjust laws and fight back. The cuts have nothing to do with saving money, and they are not based on any objective evidence, but result from a government that spouts and implements the ideology promoted by the Fraser Institute.

The politicians do not own this province. It belongs to the people. That's why we must continue to work closely with our broad based coalition partners and be ready for a long hot summer.

The government is determined to dismantle civil society



DOUGLAS

The new regulations are part of the package the government made to the agricultural employment standards in late spring.

Cruel irony

The government of Nova Scotia has told Reverend Jerry Harrop he must use his life savings to pay for his health care in a residential care facility.

This is a cruel irony for the man who was pastor to Tommy Douglas, the father of Canadian Medicare.

Nova Scotia assesses seniors who go into residential care and then denies them financial assistance to

pay their health care costs until they have emptied out their personal coffers.

"They'll be taking \$6,000 a month from him until it's all gone," said Harrop's daughter, Cathy. "I think it's very, very unfair that somebody who saved money all his life is faced with not having a dime just because he's helpless," she said.

Nova Scotia NDP leader Darrell Dexter, who led a charge to force the province to soften its stance on seniors, said, "Here is a person who was closely associated with the man who was credited with bringing Medicare to this country, losing everything that he worked for over his lifetime to pay for health care."

The NDP's campaign was partially successful.

The government is now allowing seniors to keep family farms and a number of other assets, and the premier has promised to stop charging seniors in residential care, but that won't happen until 2007.

Tommy Douglas would be appalled.

In a masterpiece of doublespeak, the government hailed the new regulations as "a variety of measures to put more money in the pockets of B.C. workers, improve their working conditions and give them opportunities to prosper in a thriving private-sector economy."

But Charan Gill, spokesperson for the Canadian Farmworkers' Union, described them as tantamount to slave labour.

"The majority of affected farmworkers are immigrants and persons of colour," said Gill.

"With this, the B.C. Liberals are promoting slave labour and the exploitation of workers."

In the last two years

- More than **800 acute care beds** and up to **12 emergency rooms** have been closed.
- Over **73,699 people** were on surgery **waiting lists** in February, **19.8 per cent more** than in June 2001.

- **2,400 long-term care beds** have been closed or will be closed.
- **Pharmacare** changes shift **\$90 million in extra drug costs** per year onto B.C. families.
- **Medical Service Plan premiums** went up **50 per cent** a year ago, but coverage of services like eye exams, physiotherapy and chiropractic care have been cut back or eliminated.

Health care where you live need it. That's the "New Era" promise made by the B.C. Liberals. It's a broken promise.

CONDITION

Two years later in communities across B.C., citizens are scrambling to access health care from a system that's been overloaded, underfunded and privatized.

Hospitals closed, waitlists grow

The provincial government has closed hospitals and shut emergency rooms in communities from Sparwood to Summerland and Vancouver to Kimberley.

MARGI BLAMEY PHOTO



And that's put more pressure on overburdened hospitals in regional centres, making it difficult for British Columbians to access health care services at all, much less where they live and when they need it.

A barometer of the increased suffering is an alarming 20 per cent jump in the number of those waiting for surgery compared to just after the 2001 election.

And those numbers are sure to rise as hospital beds are filled with those who can't

find a long-term care bed or who have had their access to other health programs cut off.

Seniors pay for broken promises

The B.C. Liberals promised 5,000 new non-profit long-term care beds. But the "New Era" reality for many frail seniors is the loss of their homes as government closes 2,400 long-term and extended care beds.

New qualification rules mean only those with the most complex care needs compete for a shrinking number of beds. As many as 8,000 frail seniors and people with disabilities have been disqualified altogether.

Seniors who make the cut are forced to move hundreds of miles from home, if that's where the next vacancy is located.

Plans to provide cheaper assisted living and supportive housing units – basically apartment units without 24-hour care – won't fill the care gap, say critics. And the government has only provided 230 of these units so far. Meanwhile, home support hours are being slashed for all but the most infirm, endangering the health and independence of many seniors.

"At a time in their lives when the frail elderly need stability and certainty, they're victimized by government policies that are causing uncertainty and fear," says Joyce Jones of the Seniors Network B.C. "You can't move seniors around like baggage."

That uncertainty and fear has been fueled by recent changes to

Pharmacare – changes that shift \$90 million a year in drug costs onto B.C. families. And it's seniors that bear the brunt of this change as the B.C. Liberals have removed their universal access to the program.

Profiting from health care

While families are paying the costs of the Liberals' health care agenda, corporations are cashing in on the changes.

The B.C. Liberals passed laws that ripped up health care workers' collective agreements, clearing the way for the privatization of a range of critical services.

Thousands of skilled, experienced workers – mostly women – could lose their jobs to private contractors who in turn will slash wages by as much as half, and cut corners to boost profits.

The B.C. Liberals are even prepared to commit taxpayers to pay for private ownership of a new hospital in Abbotsford for up to 30 years even though it would be more cost effective for government to undertake the project itself.

Over the last two years, the B.C. Liberals have brought in a "New Era" of service cuts, hospital closures and privatization. Can public health care survive until the next election?

- *This material originally ran in the B.C. Federation of Labour publication, Are you better off than you were two years ago?*



...e, when you
"Era" election
... Liberals.



by Mike Old

HEALTHCARE CRITICAL

BETTER IDEAS

- Provide adequate numbers of long-term care beds, more home support hours and universal access to Pharmacare.
- Consult patients, health care workers and the public on changes to health care.
- Keep critical health care infrastructure like hospitals in public hands. It's more cost effective and more accountable than risky private financing schemes.
- Freeze all health care privatization initiatives pending a thorough review of the real costs.
- Implement and fully fund Romanow Commission recommendations.

Home support hours are being slashed for all but the most infirm.



GORDON LAFLEUR PHOTO

and did you know?

EDUCATION

K-12 under B.C.'s "New Era"

- With a \$210 million funding shortfall last year, \$90 million more will be cut next fall.
- There were 2,000 fewer teachers last year; next fall there will be 1,000 less.

- Public school closures totalled 44 last year; 45 to close next fall.
- Still larger classes and even less support for students' needs are on the way.

Post-secondary education under B.C.'s "New Era"

- Tuition was almost doubled.
- The first-year student grant is gone.

HUMAN RIGHTS

- Over 83 per cent of health care jobs lost were women's, and one-third of all jobs lost were by immigrants and people of colour.
- Sixty legal aid offices have closed over the last two years. Poverty and family law cases are no longer entitled to legal aid, except where violence is involved.
- Since taking office in June 2001, the B.C. Liberals have closed 24 courthouses across the province.
- Despite an election promise to improve the justice system for victims of crime, the B.C. Liberals have eliminated the Crown Victim Services Program.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

- The Campbell Liberals have turned their back on protecting workers' health and safety – they have directed the WCB to cut regulations by one-third, a move that will kill and injure more workers.
- They have eliminated 500 front-line workers who helped ensure workers' safety.
- Compensation benefits, critical for injured workers and surviving families, have been cut by \$100 million annually.
- Pressure from employers has led the B.C. Liberals to rebate over \$700 million in WCB assessments. Those rebates are being financed by lower benefits and fewer services for injured workers.

CROWN CORPORATIONS

- Crown corporations like B.C. Hydro, B.C. Rail and the Liquor Distribution Branch are major contributors to the provincial treasury – from 1997 to 2001 crown corporations added over \$7 billion to B.C.'s treasury, yet the B.C. Liberals are moving to sell them off.
- Public ownership creates competitive advantages for B.C.'s economy – B.C. Hydro, for example, has the third lowest electricity rates in North America, a fact that draws business investment to the province.
- B.C. Rail earned \$76 million in 2002 and will earn close to \$200 million over the next three years.

Make it right, not worse

Canadian labour rights groups leafleted the La Senza lingerie store this spring to inform customers of working conditions at the Gina Form bra factory in Thailand that was making the store's underwear.

The Thai National Human Rights Commission earlier declared the factory in violation of basic human rights for arbitrary dismissals and intimidation. La Senza responded to the campaign by dropping the Thai supplier.

The Maquila Solidarity Network says this is no solution, preferring the public to ask corporations to pressure suppliers to smarten up; not to leave workers with no jobs at all.

Brave women of Rio Bravo win fight

Hundreds of women fired from their jobs at the Kentucky-owned Duro Bag plant in Rio Bravo, Mexico have won a total of \$185,000 in severance and back wages. The workers lost their jobs after a failed attempt to create an independent union.

Despite rulings by the local labour board and the federal labour tribunal that called on the company to rehire the workers or pay full severance, the company resisted until pressure started to grow from international solidarity.

This included a call for solidarity from HEU members in the last issue of the *Guardian*.

Congratulations to the brave women of Rio Bravo and to workers who showed what solidarity really means.



Doctors led way to victory

People of the small Central American country of El Salvador have won a huge victory – the culmination of a nine-month strike by doctors and other health care workers to defend the public health care system against privatization.

The agreement that ended the strike allows for the gradual re-incorporation of all striking workers into the public health care system – a key demand of the strikers.

The signing came after weeks of tense negotiations between government representatives and doctors' and workers' union leaders, mediated by a team of legislative representatives and witnessed by several church and university officials.

Now President Francisco Flores must name a national committee to work towards health care reform, including representatives from government, health care workers' and doctors' unions, private business, universities and civil society.

Doctors Armando Lucha Cornejo and Luz Estrella Rodríguez de Zúniga visited B.C. recently to talk about their country's valiant fight to implement a far-reaching law that made the privatization of health care illegal and established the state's obligation to provide accessible quality health care to every Salvadoran near their home, regardless of their ability to pay.

The legislation made subcontracting, selling off of services or facilities or transfer of any health care support



Protestors marched through the streets of San Salvador dressed in white to show solidarity with striking doctors and other health workers.

service to private companies illegal.

That was a tremendous victory, but the president of the country, Flores, threatened to use his veto power to override the legislation.

The doctors went on strike to stop the veto – suspending elective surgeries in 12 hospitals.

"The objectives of the strike, were to stop privatization and to start health care reform," said Lucha

Cornejo. "It's truly a struggle of conviction."

Flores stated he would not veto, but neither did he proclaim the law.

The strike continued, gathering strength. Other health care workers joined the doctors.

Rodríguez de Zúniga said the doctors took the leadership in the fight against health care privatization, because the less powerful are still very

fearful after their long civil war of the 1980's.

When the legislature passed another decree protecting the strikers from reprisals, Flores said he would veto.

Hundreds of thousands of El Salvadorans took to the streets in support of the strikers. The mediator, appointed after a doctors' hunger strike, made little initial progress. The strikers and their supporters said the mediator only put forward the government's positions of punishing, dividing and destroying the unions.

"The government tried to separate us from other health workers. We told them we're all together in this fight," says Lucha Cornejo.

That strong solidarity was exemplified by the *marchas blancas* – where everyone dressed in white instead of the colours of their political parties – and it appears that solidarity won the day.

It's truly a struggle of conviction

You can't privatize surgery in private

The Vancouver Coastal Health Authority continues to move forward on its plans to privatize thousands of surgical procedures, ignoring conclusive evidence that shows for-profit clinics are more dangerous for patients, costs more and actually increases waiting lists.

This is a public health care system – it is time to give the public a voice on the future of health care delivery in this region. It's unacceptable that this health authority is not only ignoring the evidence, but that it is hatching its plans to privatize mastectomies, foot amputations and tubal ligations behind closed doors.

Privatizing surgical services has never been on the agenda of a public meeting of this health authority's board and neither do these plans appear in its redesign strategy. It's outrageous that a government that promised to be the most open and accountable in the country has been working secretly to sell off public health care services. Health services minister

Colin Hansen needs to call a halt to these privatization plans and let the public have their say, before any further moves are made that would erode the public delivery of critical health services.

Women activists are especially alarmed the well-being of female patients will be at risk if surgeries like breast mastectomies and vaginal hysterectomies are transferred away from acute care facilities to stand-alone private clinics. Serious complications can develop during these operations, and patients need to access to the full range of emergency and surgical services in acute care hospitals.

This scheme is unprecedented in Canada and has staggering implications for public health care. There are also major concerns about violations of the *Canada Health Act*. Government is putting its privatization ideology ahead of the needs of patients and the well-being of our public health care system, and it's time to put the public back in.

TERRIE HENDRICKSON • COORDINATOR, BC HEALTH COALITION



This scheme is unprecedented in Canada

Cruise ships are all about image

Below decks the fantasy fizzles

Cruise ships make billions of dollars from selling a dream to holiday-seekers, but the fantasy is also what attracts many to sign on to work the cruise liners. According to a joint report produced late last year by War on Want and the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) entitled *Sweatships – what it's really like to work on board cruise ships*, that's exactly what it is – a fantasy.

The reality of life below decks can mean excessive hours, fatigue and low wages, with some ships holding back wages to ensure workers won't jump ship when they reach port. According to the report this may be because companies are held responsible if employees enter another country without the proper documentation, but it often results in workers staying in abusive or unacceptable working conditions.

To top it off, it's not uncommon for workers, many of whom come from the developing world, to have paid agencies a considerable amount of money to find them a job, often putting themselves or their families into debt. Some cruise lines (notably Royal Caribbean which sails out of Vancouver) have pledged not to use these agencies when recruiting employees.

Celia Mather, the author of the document, says life on a cruise ship mirrors the inequities of life on land. She found that the hierarchy of a ship goes

from the top decks down and is largely based on gender, nationality and skin colour.

Top decks are reserved for the officers, clientele and workers who are mostly white and from industrialized countries. Those who perform the menial jobs in the bars, cabins, engine-room and galleys below are largely from Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America and Central and Eastern Europe.

The ITF says almost one-third of the 114,500 maritime and hotel-catering staff on cruise ships around the world are covered by union agreements.

On those that are not, the ITF found serious abuse of human rights

The ITF found serious abuse of human rights below decks



Crew members on cruise ships, like this one recently docked at Vancouver's Canada Place, often come from the developing world.

below decks – in total contrast to the luxury enjoyed above.

Jim Given, who runs the ITF's Cruise Ship Campaign out of Port Canaveral, Florida, says that on ships with an agreement, complaints usually involve excessive hours or unfair dismissal. "These workers do not get fired for having a grievance, and the companies tend to know their responsibilities towards the workforce, even if they don't always carry them out.

"On vessels where there is no union agreement, by contrast, the levels of exploitation and humiliation are far

greater and crew morale far lower. The issues here are more likely to concern fundamental human rights."

The wide-ranging report covers many aspects of workers' life on board a cruise ship, including their emotional well-being, health and safety and women's issues.

The ITF asks those planning to take a cruise to ask their tour operators to favour cruise companies that have union agreements on board.

• To see the report, visit the website: www.waronwant.org/?lid=2377.

Suffer little children, say Liberals

While people around the world are fighting to improve the plight of children by working to ban child labour, British Columbia's Liberal government seems to be going in the opposite direction, and actually undoing protections for B.C. children.

During its spring sitting, Victoria passed a law that strikes down restrictions and controls on the use of children in the B.C. workforce.

"It's unbelievable that this government is turning back the clock on the most fundamental of human rights,

the right of children to be protected from the exploitation of work," said B.C. Federation of Labour president Jim Sinclair. "Let's be clear, it's not 12-year-olds that are demanding the right to work. It's Fraser Institute policy directors and their friends in the Liberal government."

Under the new rules, children of 12 to 16 can start collecting a pay cheque with only a note from their parents. Previously, the same children needed a note from their parents, permission from their school

and final government approval.

Under the new system, the government will not know where children are working or who is employing them, making regulation and enforcement of working standards for these youngsters difficult.

HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt called the new law a disgrace. "Allowing children to work with only a permission slip from their parents puts children of low-income families particularly at risk," he said.



Without a union, I have no recourse. I'm on my own.

Don't know what you've got till it's gone

Last fall, HEU members at Valleyhaven Guest Home in Chilliwack voted to decertify. I was one of them, and this is my story.

I am a care aide and began working at Valleyhaven in January 2000. I was very pleased when my casual shifts grew to 20 hours a week. I enjoyed my job, my co-workers and our residents.

But the world changed on January 28, 2002 when the government passed Bill 29. While most of the outcry against the legislation focused on the privatization of hospital support services, the reality was that the new law enabled long-term care facility operators to contract out their staff, too.

At Valleyhaven, a seniors' residential care facility, it didn't take long for the facility's operator, ex-Socred cabinet minister John Jansen, to contract out the housekeeping, laundry, dietary and recreation workers, and then care aides. That's when talk of decertification from HEU began

in earnest, and on October 23, 2002, we voted to leave HEU. After that, every care aide was laid off so we could re-apply for our jobs. Things were fine for me after I was rehired, but two months into my "new" job, I was called to a meeting with the director of care on my day off. Thinking nothing of it, I arrived within the hour.

To make a long story short, I was fired without notice. Apparently, there was a lot of negativity in the building and I was the cause of most of it.

As I sat there with my jaw on the floor and tears on my cheeks, I managed to say, "I don't understand" and "Where is my warning, what are you talking about?"

The nightmare continued for weeks and months. The bottom line – there is nothing I can do to get my job back.

Without a union, I have no recourse. I'm on my own.

If you decertify, this could be your story. I am sorry to have made the decision to leave HEU.

JO SPENST • COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER

Art and activism

HEU members from Victoria locals joined CUPE activists and community coalition partners for several days this spring discovering how they can be creative while developing their activist skills and getting their message out in an attention-grabbing way.

At the HEU-sponsored workshop, the first step for the participants was to define their theme – how Campbell's cuts hurt women.

They decided on a 10-minute street performance for Victoria's Walk for Global Justice.

A two-week break gave them time to gather the material they would need to construct the props for their

performance. Then they built the multi-faced "may pole" topped by women's faces and streaming with ribbons representing all the life-affirming supports stripped away by the Liberal government since they have been in power. They wrote their script and rehearsed.



Their performance during the late April march was the culmination of an affinity-building exercise that the unions and community groups hope will prove to be invaluable – now and in the future – as was last year's workshop in Vancouver.

In late June organizers are expecting even more people from HEU, CUPE, BCGEU and community coalition activist groups to participate in Nelson.

Workshop participants performed in front of the legislature at Victoria's Walk for Global Peace.

OHSAH coming to your facility

Do you want to make your workplace safer and healthier? Are you interested in learning how other health care facilities have reduced staff injuries and improved working conditions?

The Occupational Health and Safety Agency for Healthcare in B.C. (OHSAH), a bi-partite health and safety organization that works with health care facilities across the province, is coming to your facility to talk about innovative best practices and programs in health care.

Topics that will be covered include, among others, safe patient handling and ceiling lifts, joint committee training, online resources, SARS edu-

cation and training and laboratory, kitchen and laundry ergonomics.

Ask your joint occupational health and safety committee if a presentation date has been booked at your site.

Representatives from OHSAH will be visiting facilities throughout the province over the next six months. Additional details can also be found on the OHSAH website <www.ohsah.bc.ca>.

Minding our Manor

It's been a little more than one year after the community of Revelstoke rallied to fight the closure of long-term care facility Moberly Manor.

The Interior Health Authority said they were

BALANCING IT ALL

DALE FULLER

When **LINDA SHERWOOD** moved to the Okanagan in the late 1970s, unions were not on her agenda

SHE'S UNION AND SHE'S PROUD

ANYONE ACTIVE in the labour movement in the South Okanagan knows who Linda Sherwood is, but it wasn't always that way. After growing up in North Vancouver, she worked as a waitress, pumped gas and at other jobs around the Lower Mainland, but nothing permanent, and definitely not unionized.

She expected life to be different after she moved with her family to Summerland, but she could never have imagined what was in store.

After asking about jobs in the area, a friend suggested she might think about working in an old folks' home.

"That intrigued me, but I really had no idea what it would be like," she says. "There were some care aide courses coming up that I could enroll in, but I just wasn't sure."

She volunteered at Parkdale Place, one of two nursing homes in the area, to see if she liked it.

"I decided to go for it and enrolled in the course at Okanagan College," she says. "When I finished the course, I was hired as a casual. Within a few months I had a full-time, permanent job and have been there ever since."

"Of course, being a volunteer and a worker are two different balls of wax."

One difference was that she was now a union member for the first time in her life. Because Parkdale was a municipal facility at the time, the union she belonged to was CUPE 1136.

Still, she was a long way from being the union activist she was to become.

She opened that door after being off sick for a couple of days. "When management denied me my

sick leave pay, I said, 'That's not right' and went to my steward and told her to fix it," she says. The steward said there was nothing she could do.

Sherwood said, "That's not right. I talked to them into granting one day of sick leave."

But still, she thought it wasn't right.

She went to her union's local meeting and got up and raised a stink. "Unfortunately – or fortunately – it just so happened that they were holding local elections that night," she chuckles.

Because the steward resigned, saying "I can't take the pressure," the position was open.

"And guess who was elected?" says Sherwood. "I insisted I did not know anything about unions. They told me they would send me to school."

And send her to school they did. "I went every year from 1982 to 1990 to the CUPE schools in Naramata and Harrison Lake," she says.

The CUPE union members at Parkdale Place became members of HEU when the NDP government passed Bill 48, meaning that the seniors' residence was now under provincial jurisdiction with one master agreement for all health care workers in the facilities subsector. Sherwood and her union sisters and brothers had to choose another union, and chose HEU.

Although she has grown to appreciate HEU, the switch was difficult for Sherwood and she has remained fiercely loyal to CUPE. She still belongs to and has been president of the Okanagan Mainline District Council of CUPE for 13 years.

"Our membership in HEU is positive, because we make it that way," she says, noting that the main difficulty was adapting to another union's structure. Now she considers it fortunate to be able to benefit

from membership in both HEU and CUPE.

Sherwood has led her local in many fights in the last few years, not the least of which is fighting back against the imminent closure of Parkdale Place – now called Kelly Care Centre – and Summerland Lodge.

She's very grateful to have had sister Jean Duhamel, chair of the Summerland local, at her side in the fightback.

"Actually, I would say she has been instrumental in getting me off my butt," says Sherwood.

The two also worked very hard on an LPN retention campaign that ultimately fell victim to the planned closures, but the two made the nursing team issue front and centre in the local newspapers.

Sherwood is optimistic about her future. She says she has been able to earn a decent living because she belongs to a union. She's proud of her work in the movement "to help to raise the bar for those not fortunate enough to belong to a union," perhaps remembering her own days before unions were even on her radar scope.

HEATHER ARNOLD PHOTO



Parkdale Place local chair Linda Sherwood, left, joins Carolae Donaghue in early June to protest the selling off of the Coquihalla Highway.



HEU members from Revelstoke's Moberly Manor dressed Grandma Moberly in new finery to celebrate the first anniversary of their fight to keep the facility open.

closing, giving residents just 30 days to pack and find somewhere else to live.

After the strong public outcry and mobilization, the IHA backed down, extending the closure time frame to between six to 12 months.

At the one year mark, HEU members threw a "pink slip party" for staff and residents.

"It was a good morale booster," says HEU chair Marla Manson. "We just wanted to celebrate that we're still here one year later."

Three towns fight for seniors

Health care workers in three interior towns have joined with others to fight health authorities' plans to close residential care facilities that seniors in their communities depend upon.

HEU members from Ponderosa Lodge, Overlander, Royal Inland Hospital, Thrupp Manor and Pinegrove in Kamloops stepped up their fight against the closure of Ponderosa soon after the Interior Health Authority's announcement that it had awarded a contract to Retirement Concepts Services Ltd. to build a new 89-bed public/private facility to "replace" the 192-bed facility. Now they meet every Tuesday

night, welcoming family members of Ponderosa residents to join in to keep the public facility open and running.

The community of Salmon Arm is just as committed to keeping Pioneer Lodge. Health care workers from several HEU locals and the B.C. Nurses' Union are part of the Salmon Arm People's Coalition, trying to prevent the closure of the facility that is home to 75 seniors. Protests have been ongoing since late last year.

And health care workers in Williams Lake are integral to the Williams Lake Health Care Coalition's efforts to keep

Cariboo Lodge and Deni House open, organizing protests and well-attended meetings.



LECKIE

Leckie is Scottish MP

Many HEU members will remember the visit of fiery Scottish trade-unionist Carolyn

Leckie at the beginning of this year. She was in B.C. to talk about how her union, UNISON, was instrumental in exposing and booting French multinational Sodexho out of Glasgow hospitals.

Her recent election to the Scottish Parliament is good news for all those fighting against the dragon of

continued on page 14

>> factfile

GET THE MESSAGE, GORDO?

<www.labourstart.org>, the international labour website, has taken up B.C.'s public sector workers' fight against the B.C. Liberal government. Labourstart launched a web campaign to alert activists worldwide that Gordon Campbell's government has violated the basic covenants set by the International Labour Organization and to call activists around the globe to send e-mails protesting the government's actions. In the website's first 24 hours, the premier received close to 1,000 e-mails condemning his government's passage of anti-labour legislation.

ISN'T THAT A CRIME?

DiagnostiCare, an Alberta-based company that says it owns 120 private clinics in Ontario, last year demanded that three small towns in eastern Ontario provide subsidies to increase the clinics' profit margin to 23 per cent, or the clinics would close. According to the Canadian Association of Radiologists, they got \$12 million from the Ontario government and closed the clinics anyway.



CUT TO THE HEART

Cut to the Heart is a half-hour television broadcast produced by the B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union about the B.C. Liberals' devastating cuts to public services. It broadcast on June 7, but is available as a webcast at <www.bcgeu.ca>.

ON THE JOB

MARGI BLAMEY

MIKE BRITTON loves preparing home-cooked food for the residents in care at Heritage Village

COOKING GOOD

MIKE BRITTON TALKS proudly about his profession and says that after 10 years as a cook and food service worker at Heritage Village, the extended care facility attached to Chilliwack General Hospital, he's satisfied with his decision to leave the hospitality industry to work in health care.

At that time, one of Heritage's best features was the food – everything was prepared and cooked onsite. Today, much of it still is, despite increasing pressures to outsource food services.

"We produce good food," says Britton. "We still make our own soups and gravies. We roast turkeys. And we bake."

Britton says that's an integral part of the residents' comfort and care. He stresses that nutrition is always paramount, but so is taste and appearance – especially with the minced and puréed textures that are required for some residents for every meal.

"Eyes make a judgment regarding taste," Britton says. "Residents, family members and care aides – the people who assist the residents with their meals – judge the food by presentation."

The bottom line is if residents won't eat the food, their health deteriorates.

Preparing and serving recipes and menus onsite using whole, fresh foods, Britton says that nutrition is better, taste and appearance superior and costs are no higher than those of the frozen, pre-packaged, pre-portioned products that often come with a private contract.

"And whole foods cooked from fresh, natural ingredients are more enjoyable. I'll put freshly made



MARGI BLAMEY PHOTO

Shop steward Mike Britton sings about Campbell's Hawaii experience at Chilliwack Citizens' Coalition rally.

food up against outsourced food any day," he adds.

Another thing that suffers when food services are contracted out is the quality and variation of recipes and menus. It's clear to Britton that this is not a priority for private contractors.

"When you're living in an extended care facility, you don't want to have the same thing week after week," he says. "Food is comfort."

Britton, a qualified chef with provincial journeyman papers and hotel experience, is dedicated to his job at Heritage Village and doesn't regret leaving the restaurant trade. "Thirteen years ago, when my wife and I began a family, I was working as a chef in a fine restaurant but earning little. I decided to go with a good union job with better pay and working conditions, vacation and health benefits," he says.

And what about the B.C. Liberal government's claim that health care workers are overcompensated?

"What are they saying?" asks Britton. "That we shouldn't be able to afford families? Is the private sector going to create jobs like this? That's simple – no."

continued from page 13

privatization, and HEU president Fred Muzin congratulated her on behalf of all HEU members. "You are truly a dragon-slayer – first Sodexo, and now your political opponents," he wrote.

Keep the Coq public

The Okanagan "heartland" is rising up against the B.C. Liberals' sell-off of what is an essential lifeline between their towns, cities and villages.

The Coquihalla Highway is a major public asset that generates \$42 million a year, with maintenance costs of \$19 million a year.

When Bill Bennett's Social Credit government

built the highway 20 years ago, tolls were put on to recuperate construction costs, with promises the tolls would come off "down the road."

But instead, the B.C. Liberals are selling at bargain basement prices a 55-year lease to maintain, operate — and pocket the tolls to a private company.

To the folks that depend on the Coq, that means the tolls will never come off, and will in fact go up.

People are afraid, too, that a private operator will seek cheaper, less safe ways to maintain the highway.

Two June protests attracted people from a wide range of backgrounds:



Barb Burke of the South Okanagan Boundary Labour Council (and Penticton local HEU member) challenges Gordon Campbell to drop his Coquihalla privatization plans.

seniors and others with limited incomes, trade unionists and business people who rely on tourism dollars.

Stay tuned, they say. There will be more.

Correcting mistakes

What we're up to omitted an important piece of information in the last *Guardian* in the article about the union sisters that attended

a meeting of the Surrey Chamber of Commerce.

The missing information, says Megan Korol, is that she and other Peace Arch members were at the meeting after having been invited by Surrey Memorial local members, chair Glenda Bonson and Jodie George. Korol wanted credit to go where credit is due.

And in the *On the job* column, there were some quotes attributed to Karen Lahey she says she agrees with wholeheartedly, but she didn't actually say.

They were, rather, paraphrased from conversation, speeches or written material.

Apologies.

JULY

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

JULY 1

Canada Day, HEU offices closed

JULY 9-13

B.C. Federation of Labour Summer Institute for Women, University of Victoria

JULY 15

Deadline for submissions for resolutions for CUPE National Convention in Quebec City to HEU Provincial Office by 5:15 p.m.

AUGUST 4

B.C. Day HEU offices closed

SEPTEMBER 1

Labour Day, HEU offices closed

SEPTEMBER 8

International Literacy Day

A view from the Inside/OUT!

The story behind the multi-media art exhibition *From the Inside/OUT!*, which recently completed a six-week run at the Chilliwack municipal hall, is almost as inspiring as the installation itself. At the very least, it is a testimony to the power of art to create change.

When the exhibit first opened at Vancouver's Roundhouse Community Centre in

October 1998, just two years after the final closure of B.C.'s large institutions for people with developmental disabilities, organizers had no idea it would bring about change in two of the exhibit's most controversial areas: abuse and death.

And yet, the art and recorded memories of the 28 people who had lived in Woodlands, Tranquille, and Glendale Lodge not only moved the visiting audiences, but sparked government to launch two courses of action.

The first was an investigation into abuse at Woodlands institution. The second was support to restore the Woodlands cemetery, which had become little more than a neglected field of unmarked graves following the removal of most of its 3,300 gravestones. Adding insult to injury those stones had then been used to build retaining walls, pathways and even a barbecue patio on the Woodlands grounds.

"The public was shocked by what they learned from the exhibit," said the project's coordinating artist Persimmon Blackbridge. "They felt outraged about the abuse suffered by the people who had lived in those institutions and about the disrespect shown to those who had died there."

Prior to Blackbridge's involvement, the show had been seeded by a project of the B.C. Self Advocacy Foundation, which had gathered oral histories from people with developmental disabilities who had been institutionalized. Blackbridge then assisted 19 of the original story tellers to create individual and collective artworks. The result was an impressive interplay of visual art, sound recordings, written text and photography that together comprised *From the Inside/OUT!*

"It was one of the most powerful collaborations I have been involved with," said Blackbridge, who had worked at Woodlands prior to becoming an award-winning artist. "Here were people with disabilities who had been locked away from community — some of them for as many as 35 years — sharing their memories through art and the spoken word. How could that not have an impact?"

ART EXHIBIT

From the Inside/OUT!

B.C. Self Advocacy Foundation

reviewed by Patty Gibson

In the years following its inaugural installation, *From the Inside/OUT!* has been remounted in four communities and is the subject of an award winning video documentary by the same name. And while change has moved slowly, important steps have been taken to redress some of the wrongs experienced by those who had been institutionalized. Last summer, government released the final report from the Woodlands abuse investigation, *The Need to Know*. The findings confirmed the abuse portrayed in the exhibit and instigated a series of meetings of former residents to consider options for restitution. In the meantime, government has provided some funds for counseling and has at last removed the obstacles that blocked people from gaining access to their files.

As for the desecration of the graveyard, plans for the creation of a memorial park honouring those who died in Woodlands are in their final stages.

• For more information about the exhibit or to purchase a video please contact Sue Scott at (604) 875-1119.



Since its first installation in 1998, *From the Inside/OUT!* has continued to break the silence about the impact of institutionalization on people with developmental disabilities.



Roy and Julie Eckert enjoyed the affection shown from her colleagues at her "moving on" dinner.

the HEU staff union president. It just seems her natural vocation is to make things better for people.

She will be missed by many, although she's still hanging around, finishing up all those loose ends.

Retired activist keeps on trucking

Long-time HEU activist **Raj Sandhanwalia** is not a very retiring fellow, so when his retirement became official recently, he signed on as casual at the hospital where he has worked since 1976.

As chair of the St. Pauls Hospital local, he wants to stay to help his union sisters and brothers through hard times ahead.

Sandhanwalia worked as a cleaner until February of this year when he moved to stores, and that is where he is putting in his casual shifts.

He remembers many hard times over the years, but the fight that stands out for him was when Mariott, then managing housekeeping, levelled false accusations against him, later refuted by their own supervisor.

"The upshot was that Mariott's contract was cancelled, and I kept my job," he says. An arbitrator sharply rebuked management for spying on their workers with

hidden cameras and prohibited the practice without informing workers first.

Sandhanwalia also has sat on the ethnic diversity committee since its inception.

Penticton electrician unplugs work life

Michael Stanway, an electrician at Penticton Regional Hospital and an HEU member since 1976 has retired. He is an active volunteer for the city's famous Ironman Triathlon.

Before coming to work at PRH in 1981 he was at Royal Inland Hospital for five years.

Keeping the sun at her back

Sunshine Coast nurses aide **Wilma Wicks** has retired from her job at Sechelt's Totem Lodge and plans to move to B.C.'s sunny Interior. An HEU member since 1989, she'll continue doing needlework, water-colours, playing golf and enjoying her five grandchildren.

Kayaker dies doing what he loved

An HEU member and his friend died this spring during a five-day kayaking trip along the west coast of Vancouver Island. **Blake Rawlyk**, a cleaner at Eagle Ridge Hospital, and boyhood friend Andrew Camp died of hypothermia after encountering heavy seas, gusting winds and strong currents.

Trail-blazer still blazing

Julie Eckert has been a fixture at HEU's Provincial Office for more than 16 years, starting as a receptionist who knew where everything and everyone was during over two years in that position.

While at HEU she broke some significant barriers. She was the very first HEU clerical support worker who broke the "glass ceiling" – moving into the newly-created position of classification assistant – eventually evolving into classification rep.

As HEU's classification guru, Eckert made an invaluable contribution to her union, and one that put bread and butter on the table of many an HEU member. She gained a well-deserved reputation in the labour movement for her trail-blazing work that was a major factor in HEU's pay equity victories.

Eckert mentored others and perhaps that's why she was the perfect candidate three years ago to be the human resources director – her final job at HEU.

Eckert also did a stint as

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Ethnic Diversity

One union, many colours! Working across our differences! To participate, please call and leave us your name!

PRESS 2

First Nations

First Nations members would like to hear from you! Please call if you would like to help educate our union brothers and sisters on issues that affect First Nations people.

PRESS 3

Lesbians and Gays

For support: afraid of being identified, feeling isolated, want to know your rights? Call for information on same sex benefits, fighting homophobia and discrimination.

www.pridepages.org

PRESS 4

People with disAbilities

If you are on WCB, LTD, or if invisibly or visibly disabled in the workplace, let us know how the union can better meet your needs.

www.alberni.net/PeopleWithdisAbilities

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Talk to us Toll-Free!

You can call any HEU office toll-free to deal with a problem or get information. It's fast, easy and free.

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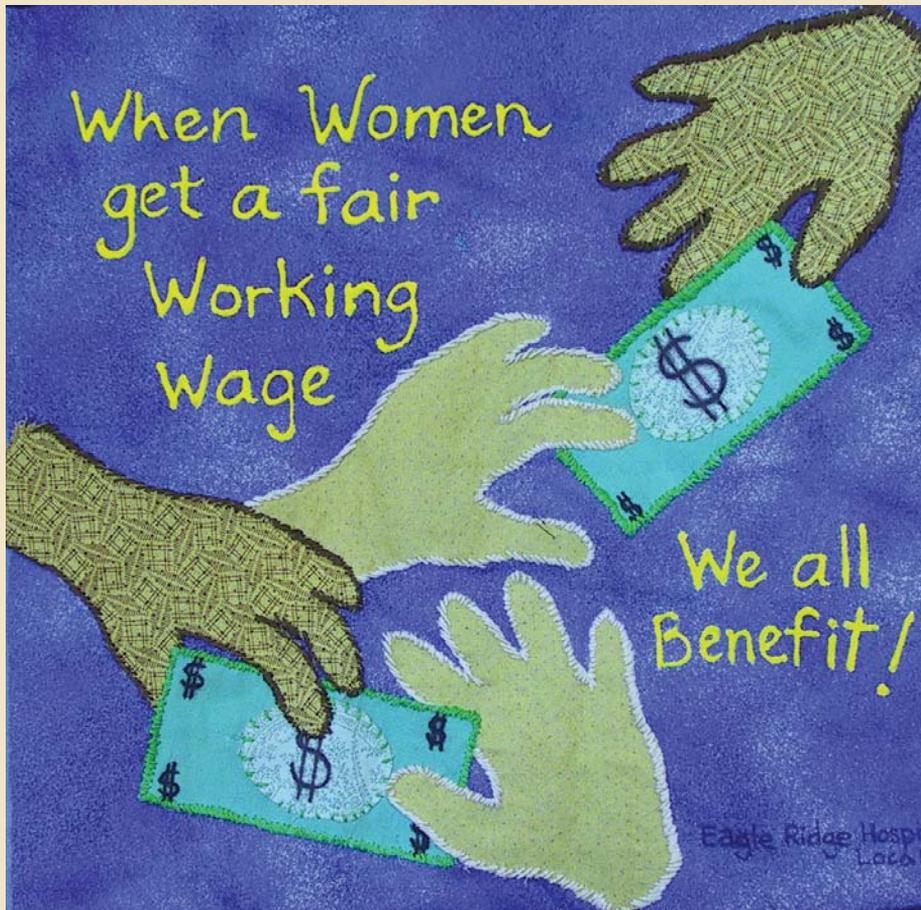
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EAGLE RIDGE HOSPITAL LOCAL

This is a square from a quilt made by HEU members and staff to express their outrage at the provincial government's cuts to health care. Locals sent their squares to HEU's Provincial Office, where the quilt was assembled and where it is kept.

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