



JOSH BERSON PHOTO

## 8 days on the line

### What happened?

A special strike supplement explores the highs, the lows and the aftermath of a health care protest that mobilized an entire province into action.



**THE WAY FORWARD** PAGE 7

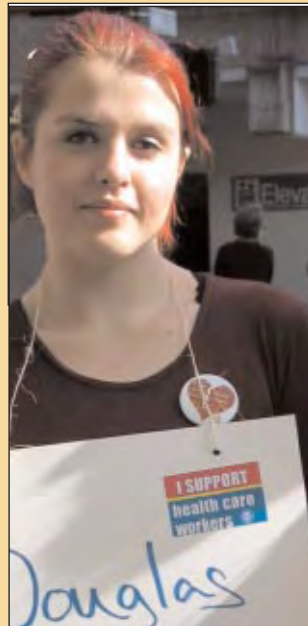
**OUR FIGHT FOR JUSTICE** PAGE 8

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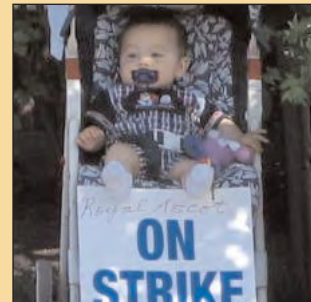
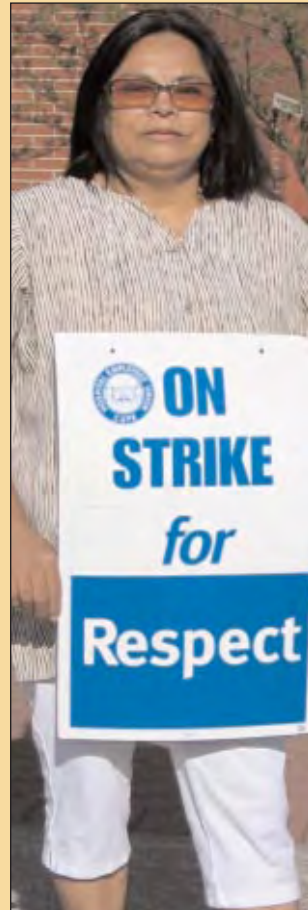


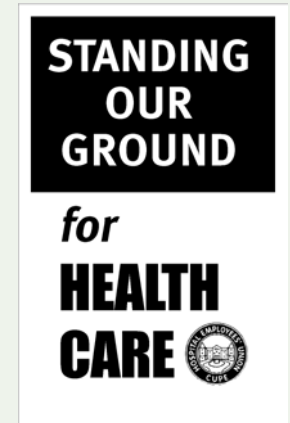
# GUARDIAN

SUMMER 2004



**Respect.  
Quality Care.  
Decent Jobs.**





## Gov't bottom-line mentality overrules common sense

It has been stated that the HEU negotiating team was just itching for a fight to overthrow the provincial Liberals.

Action was taken for many reasons. First, we were protesting the firing of cleaning and food preparation sectors and replacing them with people hired for less than \$10 an hour to work for contract companies whose goal is to make a profit.

In a recent article by Norma Greenaway from *CanWest News Service*, it was pointed out that minimum-wage earners stay at poverty level after welfare, and that Canadians earning \$10 an hour are in a tenuous position.

HEU was not exaggerating when it told members of the history of those contract companies in other countries and provinces. We were trying to prevent this government, and its health authorities, from making the same mistake by taking this route to resolve its deficit budgets. Unfortunately, the bottom-line mentality of this provincial government has over-ruled common sense, and society as a whole will suffer.

The second issue for most of us who were on the picket lines was to publicly express outrage at the unfairness of reducing all the wages within HEU by one flat rate, including the professionals.

Under the new government-imposed contract, LPNs have had a 15-per-cent wage rollback. Similarly, other sectors within HEU, such as the biomedical engineering technologists and trades professionals, have suffered the same

decrease. Negotiating sector by sector could have made a difference.

The public needs to know that registered nurses earn well over \$30 an hour. The other nurses who care for the public, the licensed practical nurses, are underpaid at \$20 an hour. And this after LPNs have undergone compulsory upgrading to expand our scope of responsibilities for direct patient care.

**CAROLYN HERBERT**  
*Licensed Practical Nurse*

## Thanks for coming through

Just want to say thank you for coming through for us. I know not everyone will be happy with the end result, but it is THE BEST we could have gotten at this time. I am proud to be a member of this GREAT UNION. It is people like us, our union, that makes this great province of ours even better. Thank you to one and all for your time, effort and dedication.

**DONALD C. ROBERT**  
*Prince George*

## What the heck were you thinking?

What the heck were you thinking!?! And what the heck happened!?! We were 43,000 HEU members "strong and united" and "willing and ready" to fight for our rights and what we believed to be unjust, as well as every union brother and sister in this province backing us (100 per cent) and huge public support.

People are fed up with Campbell and we had our chance! You (Chris Allnut, Fred Muzin, Jim Sinclair) let us all down, all the unions. You sold all of us out, big time. We deserved the Monday, province-wide walkout to be able to "voice our anger" (for all the people of BC) towards this government.

You "shut us down" there, too. As if the latter wasn't enough, and then not being able to send our message from all unions of BC united "loud and clear". You robbed us blind. We never saw it coming! We all thought we were

on the same page ... Not!

I was a proud HEU member up until you dropped the bomb on us and made us look like a bunch of fools! Shame on you, shame on all of you!

Shame on Campbell and his merry "yes" cabinet! Are the Provincial Executive, as well as provincial offices, taking a 15-per-cent cut? Good-bye and hopefully good riddance to the lot of you! Thanks for nothing.

**MARJ PAULSON**  
*Armstrong*

## Good work on arbitration issue

I must thank the Provincial Executive of HEU for taking the initiative to take the 11-per-cent wage rollback on our behalf, rather than allowing this deceitful Liberal government and an arbitrator to hack away at our benefits.

I quite understand why Colin Hansen and Graham Bruce were awestruck that we took the wage rollback at 11 per cent. I am sure they were just waiting in the wings for a chance to open up our ripped-up contract and demolish things that actually cost them more per year for each HEU employee than what they will gain with the 11 per cent that we are giving up.

Good thinking on our behalf, as benefits go up in price each year and we would never have gotten any of them back and people would have been more out of pocket by losing a percentage of them than they will be with the 11-per-cent loss in wages. I am sure that there are HEU members out there who are angry about this, but once they understand all that could have been lost, then they will be thanking you also.

**MURIEL CARLSON**  
*NRGH*

## Take a 15-per-cent decrease

I see you have elected that all the decrease will come off our wages.

I trust you will take the union dues down to zero for your members from at least \$9 up, since you have done much worse than zero for us. That would at least bring

wages for some back to early or mid-1990s level. My wage would still be back in the 1980s, though.

I trust also that you will be taking at least a 15-per-cent decrease in wages yourselves, if for no better reason than to prove you are not quite like Gordon Campbell.

**PEGGI ILLMAN**  
*Canadian Blood Services*

## We need our benefits

Wages are not everything. Our benefits provide a long-term safety net for all of us which we have worked extremely hard over decades to achieve. Arbitration could wipe that all out in a single stroke.

Since we, like all other sectors of the population, are aging, our benefits, in particular long-term disability and sick time, are of increasing importance.

LTD in particular is an expensive benefit that the employer would like nothing better than to dispense with altogether, or at the very least water down. If the arbitration option were pursued, how would our LTD benefits be protected?

The government has a record of broken promises and of making up the rules as they go along. Why would one suppose they would behave any differently if the arbitration option were sought?

**JOHN BROWN**  
*VIHA Information Systems*

## VCC thanks local leaders

Although many of us are disappointed with the outcome of the recent labour dispute with the BC government we, as HEU members at Vancouver Cancer Centre, would like to express our grand appreciation to our local HEU representatives Shelley Skipper, Myrle Peters and Maureen McLellan.

It has been a very challenging time recently and you really stepped up to the plate!

Your tireless efforts, and the long hard days you put into your commitment to our union may normally go unseen, but this time you

were literally front and centre. It was a great opportunity for most of us – who are normally unaware of the countless hours you put in for the betterment of us at VCC – to see just how very hard you work and how much you helped us!

We have been through so much recently and have each experienced our grief in different ways. Some of us felt fear, sadness, anger and despair, all at different levels and different times. But one thing remained constant, our respect and trust for the three of you.

During the recent job action you remained calm, cool and collected as you guided us through this troubling time. And you did it with strength, courage and kind hearts. You are very special leaders and you make us proud to be HEU members!

**DEBBIE LAWRANCE**  
*VCC Nursing*

## Time to expose the lies

In reference to the concessions health employers and the BC government are taking from health care workers, I would like to suggest you start to really fight the government by systematically exposing its lies. One lie which is causing the unions and the public so much grief is that the annual tax cuts introduced in 2001 would be revenue neutral.

The truth is that the annual \$2.3-billion tax cut caused a budget deficit, and the determination of the government to balance the budget means that part of that tax cut is being made up by 'savings' in the delivery of health care. The rich get the tax cuts and the workers pay for it through cuts in wages and job loss.

The fact is that tax cuts reduce government revenues which require cutbacks in government services and programs. It is this simple but direct relationship between tax cuts and cutbacks that has been hidden from the public's mind due to the government's control over the compliant mass media.

**GERRY MASUDA**  
*Vancouver Island*





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## Privatization isn't working

**W**hile the Campbell Liberals continue to ignore early warning signs about deteriorating health and safety standards in BC hospitals and long-term care homes, reports confirming the serious risks involved with privatized health care services are steadily leaking into the public domain.

At Children's and Women's Health Centre, where Compass Group has taken over housekeeping and food services, a Workers' Compensation Board report cites numerous infractions of the *Workers' Compensation Act* and the *Occupational Health and Safety Regulations*.

The March 10 document takes issue with the ongoing absence of a joint health and safety committee for Compass workers, a notable lack of regular workplace inspections, and inadequate incident investigations to properly identify unsafe acts and conditions.

In fact, the WCB has deemed the hospital to be the "prime contractor"

– making it clear that the Provincial Health Services Authority cannot duck its responsibility for the health and safety of all hospital workers, including Compass employees.

At MSA General Hospital in Abbotsford, where Sodexho has taken over the housekeeping services, news reports have exposed a litany of problems including safety hazards, poor cleanliness standards and inadequate training for contract employees.

"Tales of blood smears in labour rooms that should be spotless, litter left behind beds in the emergency ward, and inexperienced workers entering infectious isolation rooms

**"It's like a sweatshop in there. It's not humanly possible to do your list of job duties in a seven-hour shift."**



JANICE MURPHY PHOTO

**May 13: Licensed Practical Nurses Day** As part of National Nursing Week, LPNs in Vancouver sponsored a public information session that drew interest and support from several passersby who were unaware of the important role LPNs play in hospitals and other care facilities. LPNs now perform a wide range of nursing duties including administering medications, assessing and caring for patients, supporting IV therapy, and monitoring vital signs.

are seeping from MSA Hospital," reported a mid-March article in the *Abbotsford Times*.

Christine Tremblay, a former MSA housekeeper hired by Sodexho, who says she quit because of declining standards of cleanliness, told the *Times*, "It's like a sweatshop in there. It's not humanly possible to do your list of job duties in a seven-hour shift and clean properly."

Within a few weeks, the paper reported that another whistleblower was speaking up about the lack of

training and safety precautions for housekeepers at the MSA hospital.

Kris Eriksen, a Sodexho employee, told the *Times* he had not been given proper training for his housekeeping job and was greatly distressed when a biohazard garbage bag he was handling burst open, spreading blood over his shirt, shoes and some fresh scratches on his arm.

Upon reporting the incident to his supervisor, he was told there was no protocol to follow. After expressing fears about picking up infections from the blood via the fresh scratches on his arm, he was told to go to a clinic if the scratches flared up.

According to the paper, Eriksen then washed his hands with Virox, a strong disinfectant that burned his skin. And when he insisted on filing an incident report, he said he was told not to go to the Fraser Health Authority's occupational and health committee.

HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt says these reports and others that are emerging in the press confirm what the union has been saying all along. "Privatization isn't working. This government's obsession with contracting out health care services is generating huge, unnecessary risks for workers and patients in our health care system."

**PATTY GIBSON**  
HEU COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

## Charter challenge takes another step forward

A bid by the province's health unions to have Bill 29 struck down by the courts recently took another critical step – this time at the BC Court of Appeal.

On the morning of May 3, while most union members were busy dealing with the immediate aftermath of week-long job actions, a three-judge panel was hearing arguments about why Campbell's contract-breaking legislation violated two key sections of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

The appeal challenges a decision last fall by BC Supreme Court Madame Justice Nicole Garson, which had dismissed the unions' case against the controversial law.

In appealing that ruling, union lawyers Joseph Arvay Q.C. and Cathie Parker argued Bill 29 violated the Charter's freedom of association protections. They also argued that by targeting employees who were predominately female, and whose work had been

consistently undervalued as "women's work," Bill 29 also violated union members' constitutional right to equal treatment. A decision on the appeal is not expected for several months.

Meanwhile, in a related legal case involving the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Public and Private Employees, BC health unions attained intervenor status to support that union's Supreme Court of Canada challenge regarding the Newfoundland government's *Public Sector Restraint Act*.

In that situation, government had reneged on pay equity agreements with health care workers on the grounds that the new legislation overrode existing financial agreements.

The results of both cases will have important implications for health care workers' rights and the responsibilities of governments to honour freely negotiated agreements.



## COFFEE BREAK

All stories guaranteed factual.

### Hundreds cast vote for corpse

A candidate in April's legislative elections in Indonesia won nearly 800 votes despite having died

three months earlier, poll officials said.

"It's a bit ridiculous," said Andi Mappinawang, an election committee member in south Sulawesi province where the

mix-up occurred. "Maybe the voters didn't know that he had died."

But there's a simple explanation to this story: Mappinawang said that Mirdin Kasim had died in February, shortly after the deadline for printing ballot papers had passed, and that it was impossible to inform all the people in the region of his death.

Kasim was one of 33 candidates contesting the south Sulawesi seat on April 5 in the regional representatives council, a newly created body that sits in Jakarta.

Associated Press

### Know thy body, know thyself

Did you know that you now have 96 fewer bones in your body than when you were born?

It's true, according to *The People's Almanac 2*, compiled by David Wallechinsky and Irving Wallace.

When you were born, you had 300 bones. Now you have 206, if you are an adult.

The rest of the bones have not disappeared – they have merely fused together.

In other findings from *The People's Almanac*:

- The female egg cell is the largest cell in the human body. It is about 175,000 times heavier than the smallest cell, the male sperm cell.
- There are 96,000 km of blood vessels in the average adult body.
- The average person has about 100,000 scalp hairs.
- The soles of your feet contain more sweat glands and more pressure-sensitive nerve endings per square inch than any other part of your body.
- Like fingerprints, every person has a unique tongue print.

Healthz4.com



# IHA scraps laundry privatization plans

Following a tenacious fightback by HEU members in the Kootenays and the Okanagan, the Interior Health Authority has opted to build a regional stand-alone laundry and keep Nelson's laundry service in-house on a trial basis for the coming year.

Although the region's consolidation plan will still displace 50 FTEs, all in-

house laundry jobs will remain with HEU members and will be located in Salmon Arm and Nelson.

HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt called it a "forward-thinking decision" that breaks the privatization mold in the Interior and challenges other health authorities to do the same.

As part of IHA's consolidation plan, a new laundry facility will be built in Salmon Arm that will provide services for most of the region's hospitals and long-term care homes. The Nelson plant will remain in operation to provide services throughout the Kootenays, and will be re-assessed in a year's time.

## IWA 'partnership agreements' invalid

Two recent Labour Relations Board decisions have dealt a severe blow to the "sweet-heart deals" struck between private contract companies and the International Wood and Allied Workers of Canada (Local 1-3567).

A May 20 ruling, which declared the "partnership agreement" between Aramark Corporation and the IWA local to be null and void, upholds the right of contracted workers to choose the union they wish to represent them, clearing the way for HEU to continue its organizing efforts in newly privatized health care facilities.

At issue are seven bargaining units in locations where Aramark provides housekeeping services. Although a majority of workers had signed with HEU, and votes were held, the company and the IWA used their "partnership agreement" to try and block HEU's applications for certification. At press time, Aramark was still waiting for its additional objections to HEU's certification applications to be heard.

On June 3, the LRB ruled that the Sodexo-IWA partnership at MSA General Hospital in Abbotsford was also invalid.

In both cases, the private contractors had pre-selected the IWA as the employees' bargaining agent before anyone was hired. In neither case had

the company been able to prove that a reasonable ratification process had taken place or that a majority of workers had freely chosen the IWA as their exclusive bargaining agent.

### CLC sanctions IWA

Since late March, the IWA has been under sanctions from the Canadian Labour Congress for its refusal to stop signing "voluntary agreements" with the three major corporations taking over BC's health care support services.

While under sanctions the IWA is denied all CLC services and is barred from voting at CLC committees, federations of labour and labour councils.

HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt says the sanctions are an important step in efforts to restore decent wages and working conditions for BC's health care workers.

### HEU wins ballot counts

By press time, HEU had scored three resounding victories when ballot counts were held for Sodexo workers at MSA Hospital, Eagle Ridge Hospital and Mission General.

The votes were 34-1, 24-0 and 14-0, respectively, for HEU. To date, contract health care workers at more than 30 facilities in Vancouver Coastal, Fraser Health and Vancouver Island health authorities have applied to be represented by HEU.

### BCTF's support staff leave IWA to form new union

The 145-member support staff at the B.C. Teachers' Federation have voted to leave the International Wood and Allied Workers, Local 1-3567, and form their own independent union – the Teachers' Federation Employees' Union.

The workers say they were determined to leave the IWA local because of its "unprincipled actions" in collaborating with health care privatization.

"We're proud that we've taken a strong stand for democratic unionism," said Bev Humphries, president of the new union.

"TFEU will work diligently to represent all members fairly, in accordance with the collective agreement."

The IWA Local 1-3567 has come under increasing criticism – inside and outside the labour movement – for partnering with the private, multi-national corporations currently taking over B.C.'s publicly-funded health care support services.

Those "partnership agreements", signed before workers had been hired into the newly privatized jobs, slashed health care workers' wages in half while eliminating most benefits.

## <<newsbites>>

### Still no news on OHSAH funding

Despite having shared a prestigious national award for occupational health and safety research, B.C.'s health care unions and employers are still no closer to announcing new funding for the innovative new Occupational Health and Safety Agency for Healthcare (OHSAH).

Earlier this year, the two parties were co-recipients of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) 'Excellence in Research' award for Knowledge Translation.

But at the facilities subsector bargaining table in late March, the Health

Employers Association of B.C. refused to consider a union proposal that would provide early, renewed funding to continue OHSAH's work for the prevention of on-the-job injuries to health care workers.

"CIHR's recognition affirms the value of the agency's work that has saved money and reduced the injury rate of health care workers while improving care to residents and patients," said HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt on March 22.

"Basically, money for OHSAH is a 'no brainer'."

HEU and its union partners in the Facilities Bargaining Association raised the funding issue again in a

June 2 meeting with health employers.

But HEABC replied that it would deal with OHSAH funding in its negotiations with the Nurses Bargaining Association.

### A set-back for women, a blow for democracy

On April 1, the Campbell Liberals cut \$1.7 million in annual core funding from the province's 37 women's centres, sending another message to women in BC that their issues and concerns are not important to this government.

Now, in an effort to maintain services to thousands of women – and



Signing the incorporation papers for a new health care co-op are Brenda Hadden, Karen Purdey, Melanie Conn (DEVCO), Michelle Kelly, Laura Rath and Vonnie Bradley.

PATTY GIBSON PHOTO

## HEU sisters break new ground with care co-op

**F**ive former HEU care aides have found a unique way to maximize their contribution to their community despite having lost their jobs to contracting out: they've joined forces to form one of BC's first caregiver co-operatives.

The five – Vonnie Bradley, Michelle Kelly, Karen Purdey, Brenda Hadden and Laura Rath – were among the 76 front-line health workers laid off last year when Pleasantview Care Home in Mission turned their jobs over to a private company. Now, with HEU assistance and funding from the federal Cooperative Development Initiative, the five women have established their own community health care service known as the Care Connection Health Services Co-operative.

"You're devastated when you lose your job, and we were devastated, too," recalls Kelly. "Actually, that's how the co-op got going. We started a support group because we were miserable and felt sorry for ourselves."

But the grief soon gave way to determination. "We still had skills to provide care to people, we had experience and it was something we enjoyed doing," she says, adding that the first obstacle in their way was the fear no one would hire them after they'd lost their jobs; that it would be difficult to find full-time work.

Their desire to form their own co-op

received a big boost when they were able to secure federal funding through a three-year pilot project by HEU to study the relationship between trade unions and co-operatives. In addition, a federal self-employment program helped them develop a business plan and conduct market research and surveys as well as providing ongoing mentoring and business training.

"We're just employees, we've never been managers. So we had to do some skill upgrading – we had to learn," says Kelly. That's where co-op developer Melanie Conn of DEVCO came in. The

five care aides appreciated Conn's support in helping them navigate through the complicated process of incorporation, with its different rules and structures for different types of co-ops.

In the end, Care Connections chose a co-management structure whereby each member of the co-op is a member of the board. Rather than rotating responsibilities, each member is assigned a position for office, personnel, finance, marketing and care delivery coordination.

"We were really active union members, so it's been a real transition,"

laughs Kelly. "When you're in a co-op, you have to wear two hats – the employer hat and the employee hat."

Care Connections opened its Mission office and officially incorporated under the *BC Co-operative Act* on May 3. The co-op began operations on June 1 and will ultimately provide a full range of personal care, companionship, homemaking and respite care services. For now, the emphasis is on homemaking. "HEU has been very supportive of us," says Kelly, "and it's been really appreciated."

DANIEL GAWTHROP • HEU COMMUNICATIONS

## Pay equity brings thousands up to target rate

**A two-year pay equity adjustment plan worth more than \$34 million will bring 170 benchmarks up to their top step pay equity target rate.**

**In all, more than 34,000 members receive pay equity adjustments and nearly 60 per cent of these achieve their pay equity targets by 2005.**

**The plan signed off by health care unions and the Health Employers Association of BC on June 7 distributes annual pay equity adjustments worth one per cent of the sector's payroll retroactive to April 1, 2004 and again on April 1, 2005.**

Health employers had put the suspension of pay equity on the table during contract talks this past spring, but the Campbell Liberals left these ongoing adjustments untouched when they imposed a contract on 43,000 health care workers in April.

"Make no mistake – Bill 37 stole a decade of pay equity gains from working women and men in health care," says Hospital Employees' Union secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt.

"But it's our members' fight for fair

wages in a sector dominated by women that ensured pay equity was not removed from the contract by the Campbell Liberals."

The largest adjustment will go to licensed practical nurses who will receive a monthly wage adjustment of \$193 retroactive to April 1, reducing the impact of last month's legislated 11-per-cent roll back to 6.4 per cent.

You can review the pay equity adjustments on the web at [www.heu.org](http://www.heu.org) linked to the June 8 newsletter on the subject.

their families – living in poverty or in violent relationships, many centres have reduced staff and operating hours.

Some have already closed and without restored funding, most centres will shut down before the end of the year.

Five women from the BC Coalition of Women's Centres took their case to Ida Chong, minister of state for women's and seniors' services, in March and were arrested and jailed for their efforts. Despite the fact that charges were never laid, the BC Liberals – in another mean-spirited attempt to punish those who exercise their democratic right to speak out – banned the five advocates from the

legislature for life. The BCCWC and their supporters are fighting to overturn the ban while continuing their work to reinstate funding for women's centres and further women's equality in BC.

### Hospital patients bring own nurses

Budget cuts and a nursing shortage in Montreal-area hospitals are prompting more and more hospitalized patients to hire their own bedside staff.

The Quebec nurses' union admits the problem is growing because its members can only provide the minimum care in hospitals with the time

they have. And private health-care agencies say they are reaping the benefits with more business. While private nurses once provided mostly home care, they're expanding to do more work in hospitals.

One woman spent \$1,500 for a nurse's aide from a private agency to care for her 85-year-old mother during five days.

Hospitals say the problem is because they don't have the resources to handle the volume of patients.

"We're stretched to the limit," said Mona Kravitz, assistant executive director (nursing) at the Jewish General. "But when it's indicated med-

ically – when we feel the person requires constant supervision – we will make that decision and hire someone."

*Montreal Gazette*

### A global spotlight shines on women's health

On May 28, the Women's Working Group of the BC Health Coalition – of which the Hospital Employees' Union is a member – celebrated the 17th annual International Day of Action for Women's Health with activities focusing on reproductive rights.

The health coalition staffed an information table at the Vancouver

*continued on page 6*

# Uncle Sam wants you ... in his data base

## HEU appeals to privacy commissioner on medical transcription outsourcing risks

In the wake of a BCGEU campaign to stop the BC Liberals from contracting out administration of the Medical Services Plan and Pharmacare to an American global giant, another US bid – this time for hospital medical records – is raising new concerns about the dreaded USA *Patriot Act*.

Vancouver Coastal Health Authority's plan to turn over medical transcripts to a US firm, as the government is doing with MSP and Pharmacare, renews fears that Canadians' personal lives could fall under the microscope of the US Federal Bureau of Investigation.

On June 3, HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt wrote a letter to BC Privacy Commissioner David Loukidelis asking him to include the VCHA plan in a review of public services being outsourced to US-linked service providers.

The request came a week after

Loukidelis announced his intention to examine the implications of the *Patriot Act* in privatization initiatives that give American companies access to sensitive private information about British Columbians.



The VCHA has shortlisted two US companies to provide a web-based interface for medical transcription services that would put confidential patient records on a US-based server. The two finalists are Dictaphone, a Connecticut-based firm that provides extensive IT services for the US Army, and Illinois-based MedRemote.

Critics say the switch toward privatized, US-controlled IT services runs a high risk of conflict with the *Patriot Act*, an anti-terrorism bill signed after September 11, 2001.

The American Civil Liberties Union says that the FBI, citing the *Patriot Act*, can gain secret access to the private medical records of Canadians held by US firms.



FRED MUZIN

## Wanted: a culture of protest

The events leading up to the HEU Provincial Executive's agonizing decision on the night of May 2 to stand down our protest lines provided some important lessons about coalition-building in this province.

In the wake of the vicious Bill 37, a general strike appeared inevitable. Many would say it was long overdue: that for the past three years, Gordon Campbell's Liberal government had done everything in its power to return BC politics to the adversarial climate of the early 1980s. The BC Liberals had severely eroded the democratic rights of citizens to have meaningful input into the policy initiatives affecting their lives.

But a general strike, which involves the mass withdrawal of private and public services, union and non-union alike, is the culmination of a lengthy mobilization process. This includes lobbying, rallies, occupations, demonstrations, et cetera – a process that requires broadly agreed-upon objectives.

In the BC of 2004, a sustained general strike would encompass a wide range of issues: welfare cuts and benefit reassessments, child labour, women's centre closures, increasing homelessness, child care subsidy cuts, the referendum on Aboriginal rights, tuition fee increases, the tossing out of seniors from long-term care homes, pharmaceutical delisting and cost increases, the privatization and sell-off of public services such as BC Rail, huge tax giveaways to the rich, and many more. These transgressions would have to be part of an agreed-upon agenda before a general strike were called.

The HEU dispute arose out of a collective bargaining impasse. By legislating Bill 37, the government not only demanded, but exacted extreme economic concessions from those in health care least able to pay. They left intact the unfettered right of health employers to fire workers, primarily women, for no cause.

The Memorandum of Understanding finalized late on May 2 did not achieve our bargaining goals. What it did do was significantly impede implementation of the most draconian aspects of the Campbell government's mean-spirited attack on HEU members.

What would have happened without an MOU? May 3 would no doubt have seen a huge, invigorating groundswell of widespread resistance. But without a strong foundation for broader action, HEU members and their supporters would have become sacrificial lambs in the government's effort to regain control. Under those conditions, we could not responsibly ask people to walk off and stay off their jobs, and face severe repercussions.

Until we as a civil society develop a culture that welcomes broad-based input, and where trade unionists support each other and accept our democratic responsibility to withdraw our labour when elected officials refuse to be held accountable, we will not be successful in either commencing or successfully resolving a general strike. But by their example, HEU members and the solidarity they inspired have opened British Columbia to the possibilities.

**A general strike  
appeared inevitable.  
Many would say it  
was long overdue.**

## CEOs enjoy handsome pay hikes

With members still reeling from 15-per-cent wage cuts, HEU learned in early May that senior health authority executives had enjoyed pay raises of up to 18 per cent over the past two years.

Among the pay hikes, two Chief Operating Officers at the Fraser Health Authority (Fraser North and Fraser East) boosted their salaries from \$160,000 to \$190,000 a year – an increase of 18 per cent.

At the Provincial Health Authority, the director of Mental Health Services also saw her salary jump 18 per cent

while the Northern Health Authority's Chief Operating Officer got a 17-per-cent raise.

Other executive raises included a 32 per cent hike for VIHA's Deputy Chief Medical Officer and an 18-per-cent hike for VIHA's Medical Director (Central Vancouver Island).

In response, HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt said the government's double standard on wages would only drive more skilled and experienced workers out of the BC health care system.

## <<newsbites>>

continued from page 5

Public Library throughout the day and then hosted an interactive forum for women in the evening.

BCHC co-chair Caryn Duncan said that Canada's public health care system is lauded around the world. But due to recent and significant health policy shifts and service delivery changes in British Columbia, there is great concern that women in this province are not receiving quality and appropriate care.

"As hospitals close or are downgraded and health services are reduced, de-listed and privatized, women's access to health care is restricted and

many will have to travel even further than they do now to have a baby or terminate a pregnancy.

"The negative impact of government's health care cuts and restructuring on women's lives has been immediate and unless corrected, will continue to be felt for years to come," Duncan said.

The International Day of Action for Women's Health is sponsored by the Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights (WGNRR), which declared this year's theme "Health Sector Reforms: Hazardous to Women's Health." The BC Health Coalition's activities make Canada

one of more than 14 countries – including Bangladesh, Brazil, Haiti, India, Japan, Netherlands, Nigeria and Serbia – celebrating the day.

### Pinochet can be sued

An appeals court in Chile has ruled former dictator Augusto Pinochet can be sued for a bloody wave of repression in the 1970s and '80s, after a TV interview in which he appeared clear-headed raised questions about Supreme Court rulings that he is unfit for trial.

The 14-9 vote by the Santiago Court of Appeals on May 28 startled lawyers on both sides of the case, as

well as victims' families. Prosecution lawyer Juan Subercasseaux called the ruling "a miracle."

The decision, which lifts the immunity Pinochet enjoyed as a former president, could pave the way for him to face human rights charges. His lawyer said he will appeal the decision to the Supreme Court, which has repeatedly said Pinochet, 88, cannot stand trial because of poor mental and physical health.

A report by the civilian government that succeeded Pinochet said 3,197 people died or disappeared during his bloody rule as president from 1973 to 1990. *Associated Press*



# Liberals served notice

If HEU's actions this spring demonstrated anything, it's that there are limits to government power – even for the arrogant and bullheaded crew in Victoria.

HEU members have experienced the worst of a government that lies, tears up contracts, fires workers, rolls back wages and disrupts lives – and with no regard for the consequences of their actions.

But for eight days, you held this government to account. By standing up to relentless intimidation and disrespect, you sparked debate and action that will continue into the provincial election.

And despite their bravado, your actions forced them to concede on a law that allowed for unbridled contracting out, knocking them off their privatization agenda.

That doesn't make the pain any easier. Bill 37 means hardship for HEU families. Thousands of jobs were saved, but hundreds could still be lost. And by stealing wages from workers, the Campbell Liberals are creating a retention and

recruitment crisis.

But they overplayed their hand and showed themselves for the bullies they are.

Within hours of passing Bill 37, the government was forced to "reinterpret" the legislation as they scrambled to deal with rising outrage from every quarter.

Public support for HEU members took hard work and local leadership. Our lines were strong. You built bridges in your community. And when approached by the media,

individual HEU members delivered effective and powerful messages on the evening news.

The Campbell Liberals had set out to expand privatization and further attack HEU. The May 2 decision of the Provincial Executive to stand down was based on our determination to limit the damage caused by Bill 37 to the greatest

## Public support for HEU members took hard work and local leadership



CHRIS ALLNUTT

extent possible in an environment where collective bargaining had been outlawed.

I know this was a controversial decision.

We all wanted Monday to happen. Having met with many of you since then, I know the debate around the decision is a healthy one that will help build a stronger union.

To that end, your Provincial Executive is drafting a political action strategy to guide the union into the next provincial election. This strategy will build on alliances forged during the job action and keep government accountability squarely in the public eye.

This past spring, thanks to you, government learned the limits of its own power in the face of public outrage. Next spring we can pull the plug on a government that's abused its power far too many times.

# 8 days on the line

For eight days, tens of thousands of health care workers and their supporters woke British Columbia up to the crisis facing public health care, demonstrating that solidarity in our communities is a force to be reckoned with.







It takes great courage to stand for what you believe in. *Catherine Louli, Ottawa.* >>Everyone in our office is with you. *Linda Sperling, Vancouver.* >>My wife and I are me home". *Randy Connors, St. John's Newfoundland.* >>I beep at every picketline with my thumbs way up! *Patricia Kae, Parksville.* >>Finally, people with the courage to st the #S%\* does the government think they are doing? Everything they are selling belongs to us – the people. *Cathey Barton, Quesnel.* >>Our family fully supports your speak for me in ordering HEU members back to work. Don't believe it. *Nadine, Vancouver.* >>I am a stay at-home-mother. I have always worked in the private sector. I wa trying to take away everything else. *Kathy, Kimberley.* >>I'm an ex- and now retired TWU member. I'm close to getting on a protest line with y'all, even with my sore hip *Winnipeg.* >>Stood on the line for three hours yesterday and again this morning. Will be there again and again. *Mike Saunders, Ambulance Paramedic.* >>I thank you fo health and social services. *Jeff Begley, Quebec.* >>Bravo to the HEU. Taking a stand against the Liberal dictatorship is not an easy thing to do. *Marilyn Hannah, Comox.* >> *Andrew, Victoria.* >>I am so grateful to you all for the compassionate and essential work you do. *Olwyn Irving, Abbotsford.* >>I and many members of my local have been

**PUBLIC BARRED**

HEU members were barred from the Legislature on the night Bill 37 was introduced and passed into law. During debate, MLA Elayne Brenzinger spoke for Laura Ferguson, a 17-year health care worker from Victoria General Hospital. "Faced with what this government is trying to do, Laura tried to come down ... to simply hear this debate. She was not even carrying a picket, yet she was told she could not ... watch debate over a bill that is to have dire implications for her life."

**CARPENTERS PAY THE PRICE**

A group of non-union carpenters was fired on the first full day of the HEU strike for refusing to cross the picket line at Nanaimo Regional General Hospital. The nine workers for Byrd Construction, which has a large contract at NRGH, joined HEU members on the line at 7 am on Monday, April 26. An hour later, they were told they'd be fired if they didn't report to work. The carpenters refused to cross the line.

**KRUEGER PRAYS FOR HEU**

Kamloops-North Thompson MLA Kevin Krueger used morning prayers in the Legislature April 29 to give partisan thanks for Bill 37 and beseech HEU members to make the "right" choices.

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STILL STANDING, STILL PROUD

Our fight for justice

It was a protest that brought BC to the brink. It put HEU members and their three-year fight for health care and decent jobs at the centre of an unprecedented public debate. And it became a focus of mounting public anger over a series of government attacks on workers and communities.

It all came to a head on Sunday, May 2 when HEU and the BC Federation of Labour signed a memorandum that brought the escalating actions to an abrupt – some say premature – conclusion.

When asked about the outpouring of anger and confusion that followed, HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt says, "It was a decision that no one on our side of the table wanted to make. Our hearts and minds were on the lines with our members.

"Every one of us shared the tremendous anticipation about a massive walkout on Monday against the unjust actions of this government and especially the mean-spirited nature of Bill 37."

For members, who had experienced overwhelming support on their protest lines and at rallies across the province, it was a decision that was hard to digest.

Day by day, the lines had grown stronger. Support was arriving from

every quarter imaginable. And it came in every form. Firefighters held barbecues for striking workers, patients and residents came out of facilities to join protest lines and talk show hosts skewered government actions on air.

The ink was not yet dry on Bill 37 – a hastily passed law imposing wage rollbacks on striking health care workers – when 20,000 CUPE members bolstered HEU's escalating protest by shutting down municipal, school and library services in many parts of the province.

Those numbers rapidly increased as other public and private sector union members walked off the job in solidarity – shutting down power generation plants, pulp mills and transportation services.

By Saturday, BC communities were hosting some of the biggest May Day rallies seen in decades while the BC Federation of Labour finalized a job action plan to help HEU members achieve their goals.

By Sunday, all eyes were focused on



May 3 when it was expected that more than 70,000 CUPE workers would walk off the job.

"Our members' anger and confusion at losing that moment was absolutely justified," says Allnutt.

"HEU members had been fighting Campbell's privatization agenda tooth and nail for three years. They'd seen thousands of their long-time co-workers tossed onto the streets, and

What happened?

**MARCH 07 > HEU AND ITS UNION PARTNERS**

call for a strike vote after health employers refuse to back away from their demands for pay cuts of up to 16 per cent, no pay equity, vacation rollbacks, cuts to sick time, a gutted LTD plan and offloading of hundreds of dollars a month in benefit costs. They also refuse to move on the key issue of contracting out and won't put layoffs on hold during bargaining.

**MARCH 10 > THE VANCOUVER COASTAL HEALTH**

Authority announces it will fire 1,300 food services staff and award a 10-year, \$300-million contract to the French corporation Sodexo.

**MARCH 19 > THE LABOUR RELATIONS BOARD**

(LRB) rejects a union request to set interim essential services levels.

**MARCH 29 > UNION MEMBERS** deliver an 89-per-cent strike mandate based on a record turnout.

**MARCH 31 > TALKS WITH HEABC RESUME**

for the first time since March 4.

**APRIL 2 > TALKS STALL** over HEABC's unwillingness

to make any major moves on employment security or its concessions package, which now consists of an across-the-board, 13.5-per-cent wage cut (plus a longer work week) with no pay equity, a gutted benefits package, cuts to sick pay and vacation.

More than 2,500 pink slips have already been issued since talks began in January.

**APRIL 8 > HEU FILES AN UNFAIR LABOUR**

practices complaint at the LRB after local activists receive threatening letters as part of a centrally coordinated HEABC campaign of intimidation.

**APRIL 12 > HEU DEMANDS DISCLOSURE**

of privatization documents and corporate contracts

after HEABC claims that it cannot put layoffs and contracting out on hold during negotiations.

**APRIL 15 > THE LRB APPOINTS MEDIATOR**

Stephen Rinfret to meet with both sides on request from HEABC. HEU presses for an early meeting.

**APRIL 16 > HEALTH EMPLOYERS** won't move on any key issues during mediation meetings.

**APRIL 19 > A MUSTEL GROUP/HEU POLL** shows seven of 10 British Columbians believe contract rollbacks for health care workers will further erode quality care and result in fewer services to the public.

**APRIL 20 > RINFRET BOOKS** out of mediation.

**APRIL 22 > THE LRB SETS** interim essential services levels. Hours later, HEU and its bargaining partners issue 72-hour strike notice.

members of the BCFMWU. We will be standing beside you on your lines and holding up signs proudly. *Joe & Susan Painter, Aldergrove.* >>Stay out “till the cows come and up to this arrogant, dishonest government. *Greg, Prince George.* >>Your fight is the struggle of working people across the land. *Ken Golden, Mississauga.* >>What job action! General Strike! *Anna Maharajh, Errington.* >>Don't let the S.O.B.'s get you down. *Ed Whelan, CUPE 1615, Newfoundland.* >>The health minister claims to walked the picket line today at my hospital. Stay strong! *Tania McMartin, Comox.* >>Do whatever you can. Please!! First they take away our hospital and now they are os and old guy bladder. *Jim McLeod, Burnaby.* >>There is a time in everyone's life when they get to participate in an activity that truly redefines the future. *Brian,* or standing up for what you believe in and setting a good example for my child. *Teresa, Quesnel.* >>The American dream is a Canadian nightmare when it comes to As parents of a school-aged child we are experiencing some minor inconvenience today. So what! It is a small act of solidarity, while others make far larger sacrifices. n walking your picket line and delivering goodies. *CW Petersen, Alert Bay.* >>Your fight is about more than health care. It's a fight for our lives. *Margaret, Metsala*

# and fairness goes on

they'd been constantly devalued and dismissed by government.”

Allnutt explains the rationale behind the decision this way: “The union's Provincial Executive had three important responsibilities. The first was to limit the damage of Bill 37 on our members to the greatest extent possible.

“The second was to respect our union allies who were facing considerable sanctions in going to the wall for us. We could not ask them to do this for what we knew would be a worse outcome for HEU members after Monday.”

“And our third responsibility,” says Allnutt, “was not to erode the broad public support we'd achieved by engaging in an action that would produce no gains for our members or any additional protection against health care privatization.”

The May 2 memorandum addressed the most damaging provisions of a contract imposed on health care workers by the Campbell Liberals in Bill 37 the previous week.

It limited privatization by capping contracting out at 600 full-time equivalent positions over two years. Bill 37 contained no limits on privatization whatsoever.

It provided a \$25-million severance fund for workers affected by privatiza-

tion, where Bill 37 contained no such fund. It neutralized the one-month payroll clawback in the legislation.

And it ensured that no individual union member would be fined or disciplined for taking part in what a Supreme Court judge had determined to be an illegal job action just a few hours earlier.

“It wasn't until after 10 p.m. on Sunday night that the Provincial Executive reluctantly decided to stand down protest lines,” recalls Allnutt, although rumours of an imminent agreement began circulating at protest lines earlier in the day. And it was well after eleven before Allnutt and BC Federation of Labour president Jim Sinclair announced the news to the press, who'd been hunkered down at the Federation's offices for most of the day.

Allnutt acknowledges that the late-

ness of the announcement contributed to members' shock and frustration, but remains convinced that the union leadership needed the extra time to push for additional concessions from government.

“As the late night newscast drew closer, we were still making significant changes to the language in the memorandum,” says Allnutt.

“In the end, did it give us everything we were fighting for? No. Far from it. But it was the best we could achieve from a government that's bent on destroying public health care and stripping workers of their hard-won rights and benefits.”

On a final note Allnutt says, “We didn't negotiate Bill 37 and we couldn't repeal it. But what we can do is repeal this government in May 2005.”

**MIKE OLD, PATTY GIBSON**  
HEU COMMUNICATIONS



“We didn't negotiate Bill 37 and we couldn't repeal it. But what we can do is repeal this government in May 2005.”

tion is hopeless. By supper, just four days into a legal strike, Bruce introduces legislation that imposes a contract on 43,000 health care workers.

Health unions tell Doney that in exchange for a freeze on contracting out, and a new employer package that includes employment security, they're prepared to change the nature of the job action and bargain hard, based on a new set of union proposals.

**APRIL 28 > DAY 4:** Wednesday, the HEU Provincial Bargaining Committee rejects the last position put forward by HEABC and government – a 14-per-cent wage rollback and some form of employment security that turns out to be a cap on contracting out of 5,000 FTEs.

Doney meets with health employers and flies back to Victoria to brief the provincial cabinet. In the early afternoon Bruce tells reporters that the situa-

Bill 37, the *Health Sector (Facilities Subsector) Collective Agreement Act*, includes a longer work week resulting in a four-per-cent wage cut, additional across-the-board pay cuts of 11 per cent retroactive to April 1 and no cap on contracting out.

HEU members from Victoria are barred from entering the legislature to hear the debate on Bill 37 which lasts into the early morning hours.

**APRIL 29 > DAY 5:** Thursday, NDP MLAs Joy MacPhail and Jenny Kwan, with independent Liberal MLAs Paul Nettleton and Elayne Brenzinger, put in a marathon shift in the legislature opposing Bill 37

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500 CUPE-BC convention delegates vote unanimously to reaffirm the union's support for HEU. The resolution also calls on delegates to mobilize CUPE members to take any action necessary to assist HEU.

**APRIL 25 > DAY 1: OF JOB ACTION** Sunday, at noon, 43,000 health care workers begin legal strike action. Pickets go up at facilities across the province. Picket line rallies are held outside health care facilities across the province.

**APRIL 26 > DAY 2:** Monday, HEU picket lines are bolstered by other trade unions and community members.

**APRIL 27 > DAY 3:** Tuesday, Labour minister Graham Bruce dispatches his deputy Lee Doney on a 24-hour “fact-finding mission” to determine if a negotiated settlement is possible.



It is a pleasure to stand up for people who are standing up for themselves. Stop the Liberals. *Tom Baker, Hamilton.* >>I'm on a waiting list for surgery and fully support Canada, and BC in such a mess. These governments have got to go. *Edith Pedden, Nanaimo.* >>Mr. Campbell would be wise to consider this protest a people's referendum. *Foreman, Qualicum.* >>We have been told to stand down by our union, but we must still remember our fight against the Liberal agenda. *Marilyn Winters, Kamloops.* >>I'm back on their privatization agenda and you saved jobs. *Irene Lanzinger, Burnaby.* >>The government appears to be the victor. The labour movement appears to have rolled back and continue the fight against this shameful government. *Lindsay, Vancouver.* >>If the liberals would drop their pay by 15 per cent I might not feel so cheated. *Brenda I.* >>Please British Columbians, get out there, learn how to vote. What did you think was going to happen here? *Karen, Vancouver.* >>My wife and I have been HEU members and have to remain united. *Deb Merluk, Campbell River.* >>Thank you for standing up for decency and fairness. You are heroes, one and all. *Mary McDermott, Vancouver.* >>Do it. *David J. Mitten, Prince Rupert.* >>I just want to thank everyone for their bravery in this unbalanced fight for each and every British Columbian. *Ray Shaw, Comox.* >>Do it.

IN BRIEF

Bill 37

- >> Orders striking union members back to work
- >> Imposes two-year contract expiring March 31, 2006
- >> Extends work week to 37.5 hours resulting in a four-per-cent cut in hourly wage
- >> Imposes an 11 per cent wage rollback retroactive to April 1 with an option for unions to choose arbitration of benefit reductions to offset a compensation reduction of 10 per cent
- >> Revises Bill 29 bumping language (since discarded and replaced by mutual agreement)
- >> Makes casualization of workforce easier through changed job posting language in Art. 16.01(c)
- >> Exempts ongoing pay equity adjustments from wage rollbacks
- >> Contains no cap on contracting out and no severance provisions

Memorandum

- >> Limits the damage in Bill 37
- >> Caps contracting out at 600 FTE's over the two-year contract
- >> Moves effective date of 11-per-cent rollback from April 1 to May 1
- >> Provides additional \$25 million in severance for laid off workers
- >> No sanctions against individual workers, unions or union officers as a result of the response to Bill 37
- >> Appoints Vince Ready to arbitrate any disputes arising out of the memorandum

# Cleaning up after Bill 37

## Union moves quickly to deal with aftermath of poorly drafted, ill-conceived legislation

**W**ithin hours of rousing the Lieutenant-Governor for an early morning signing of the *Health Sector (Facilities Subsector) Collective Agreement Act* – Bill 37, cabinet ministers were scrambling to explain how it would work, leading some political pundits to conclude that the Campbell government was making it up as they went along.

“The seriousness of Bill 37’s many shortcomings became even more clear as we grappled with poorly written language that betrays a frightening lack of understanding about how health care is delivered on the front lines,” says Hospital Employees’ Union secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt.

“It’s going to take effort on our part to sort out the mess they’ve made.” For example, the new bumping language contained in Bill 37 was judged unworkable by both health employers and health unions and replaced with mutually agreed on language which came into effect on June 1, improving on the earlier Bill 29 changes.

More problematic is Bill 37’s extension of the work week to 37.5 hours.

The union is questioning the July 29 implementation date citing contradictory language in the legislation.

The Health Employers Association of BC is also telling its members that instead of lengthening hours of service to patients and residents by extending full- and part-time shifts by 1.5 hours, they can turn full-time workers into part-time workers at 36 hours a week and pocket the savings.

“That option will cause maximum disruption to workers without any benefit to the public,” says Allnutt. “It’s an issue we’ll take to an arbitrator.”

Other issues that remain unresolved and have been forwarded to a third party under the arbitration provisions of the collective agreement include funding for the Occupational Health and Safety Agency for Healthcare; continued supplementary benefits for pre-1998 LTD claimants; and issues related to Bill 37’s impact on local agreements

reached over the past year.

And a key issue for the union – also referred to arbitration – is recruitment and retention measures for high demand occupations.

Under a provision of Bill 37 allowing for contract changes through mutual agreement, HEU has asked that a list of these occupations be exempted from the May 1 wage rollback.

That list includes LPNs, the patient care technical family (ECG and cardio techs), IT jobs in computer and data processing, trades, maintenance supervisors, biomedical electronics technologists, power engineers, MW5 classifications and above as well as all classifications in the miscellaneous job family (e.g. media services techs).

“Patients and residents will suffer if employers continue to deny the looming crisis in attracting and retaining these critical members of the health care team,” says Allnutt.



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but government forces the Bill through at about 6 am.

Members hold the lines at their worksites and HEU’s Provincial Executive meets to assess the situation. Later in the morning, the union calls on its members to maintain and respect protest lines.

The PE also sets no-contracting-out language as the top priority in work with the BC Federation of Labour and its affiliates to resolve the crisis.

HEU’s protest lines grow stronger as outraged members of the public and other trade unionists join their ranks. The BC Federation of Labour officers meet to discuss the possibility of escalating job action in support of HEU.

Health employers ask the LRB to find health care unions in violation of Bill 37 and order workers back on the job. A hearing begins that afternoon.

**APRIL 30 > DAY 6:** Friday, after an all-night hearing, the LRB issues a back-to-work order to the health unions. HEABC immediately files the decision at the BC Supreme Court making it an order of that court.

HEU asks its members to continue to maintain and respect picket lines.

Nearly 20,000 CUPE members walk off-the-job to join HEU lines. The school systems in Greater Victoria, Saanich and Sooke are closed. Municipal, school board, library and other CUPE workers walk out.

Plants, mills and other public and private services are also affected by solidarity walk-outs.

HEU and other union leaders hold a two-hour meeting with Bruce but fail to find an immediate resolution to the escalating dispute.

**MAY 1 > DAY 7:** Saturday, BC communities see some of the biggest May Day rallies that have been held in decades as union members mobilize to fight the government’s heavy-handed attack on health care workers.

The *Vancouver Sun* publishes the BC Federation of Labour job action plan calling for escalating walk outs to support health workers.

HEU, together with the sub-committee of BCFL officers, meets with government representatives. No progress is made.

A BC Supreme Court judge orders a rare Sunday hearing to decide whether HEU is in contempt of court for failing to order its members back to work.

**MAY 2 > DAY 8:** Sunday, BC Supreme Court Justice Robert Bauman hears evidence to determine if HEU is in contempt of court.

HEU members. *Claire Kujundzic, Wells.* >>Thank you for standing up to the bullies in Victoria. *Sigrid Franklyn, Fort St. John.* >>In my 80 years I have never seen  
 um. *Lois Szliske, North Vancouver.* >>I have just had a phone call telling me that we are to go back to work. What is this all about? I am extremely upset. *Naomi*  
 t is a black day for unions. *Megan Reid, Terrace.* >>The deal reached last night wasn't the deal any of us wanted. Remember, though, that you drove the government  
 led over. Who blinked and why? *Stan Carter, Vancouver.* >>This travesty ended with HEU having the full support of the citizens of this province. Now, pull together  
*Norfolk, Hagensborg.* >>I walked with you and supported you as you supported us, BCFWU, and I am just as letdown as you all. *N. Schedel, North Vancouver.*  
 rs for 15 years. We feel that we have been sold out. *Peter Strother, Vernon.* >>One minute I feel proud and the next I am crying for what we lost. But I know that we  
 Start again and insist your workers have a voice. We all need you to save BC. You almost did it this time. *Sonia, Delta.* >>If only we had stayed out for one more day.  
 not let this break your spirit, be proud. In May 2005 we will all stand together and say to the Liberals, you're fired! *Sue, Kelowna.*



## HEU rejects arbitration to protect hard-won benefits

Under the arbitration provision of Bill 37, health unions could have traded the 11-per-cent wage rollback for a combined wage and benefit cut of 10 per cent.

The HEU Provincial Executive rejected that option in order to protect benefits built up over decades – and after the labour minister refused to extend the arbitration deadline to allow members to vote on the issue.

But would taking a gamble on arbitration mean a better deal for members?

After all, Gordon Campbell famously pronounced after the passage of Bill 37: “If a worker in the HEU

would give up one of their nine weeks vacation and decided to go to a 40-hour week, there would be no hit on their pay cheque.”

The Premier should have read his own legislation.

If HEU had opted for arbitration under Bill 37, the arbitrator – not the union or its members – would distribute a 10-per-cent compensation cut among the following items:

- Wages and overtime
- Shift, weekend and trades qualification premiums
- On-call differentials
- Statutory holidays and vacations
- Leaves under Articles 29-36, includ-

ing sick leave, WCB, injury-on-duty leave

- LTD, dental and extended health plans

The arbitrator's decision would have been final and not subject to appeal.

And on top of it, Campbell's math doesn't add up. Even if health employers took away a week of vacation on top of the 40-hour work week, it would not equal Bill 37's compensation cuts.

And besides, how many HEU members have nine weeks' vacation?

But there's no question that government and health employers were deeply disappointed when the union rejected the arbitration of benefits. And a quick review of the benefit concessions health employers had on the bargaining table shows what benefits they'd target:

- \$2,000 to \$3,000 annually in worker-paid costs for extended health benefits
- increased benefit deductibles
- sick leave accumulation cut by a third
- sick leave pay cut by 25 per cent
- no 40-per-cent cashout of sick leave-credits on retirement or severance pay and benefit cuts to injured workers
- 100 per cent of benefit costs downloaded to LTD claimants
- premium coverage slashed for part-time workers

In an arbitration, neither union members nor the union can determine the outcome.

But you can be sure that health employers and government would be working hard to attack the benefits that you and your family depend on.

## MacPhail, Kwan launch all-night assault on Bill 37

With most HEU members on picket lines or providing essential services at facilities throughout the province, two lone New Democrat MLAs spent the entire night of April 28-29 defending their rights from a vicious legislative assault by the BC Liberals.

Bill 37, which the government rammed through the legislature in a single sitting, did not go uncontested as Opposition leader Joy MacPhail and Vancouver-Mt Pleasant MLA Jenny Kwan launched a relentless attack on the bill that kept debate going for nearly 12 hours.

MacPhail and Kwan were joined in opposition by independent Liberal MLAs Elayne Brenzinger and Paul Nettleton, who also opposed the bill.

Earlier in the day, MacPhail introduced a private member's bill, *The Health Care Services Continuation Act*, which proposed a moratorium on further privatization so that health care workers and employers could get meaningful negotiations back on track. But the government countered with a standing order that authorized Cabinet to push through all three readings of the bill without adjourning the House.

Kwan debunked the cost-savings myth of privatization. “The argument that private business is more efficient usually translates into reductions in front-line staff, the use of inferior products and supplies, and low quality standards,” she said.

HEU's Provincial Executive and the BCFL working group continue discussions with government officials in an effort to resolve the dispute.

Justice Bauman rules HEU in contempt of court and says penalties for continuing to defy the court's order could include “potentially onerous fines and jail for individuals.” He postpones any decision on penalties to May 3.

At 10:30 pm HEU's Provincial Executive makes a decision to ask members to stand down, in light of a memorandum that limits the damage from Bill 37. The memorandum caps contracting out, provides \$25 million in new severance funds for workers displaced from contracting out, changes the effective date of the 11-per-cent wage rollback from April 1 to May 1 and provides that members returning to work won't face any recriminations or discipline for defying the back-to-work order.

The agreement is announced publicly at the BC Federation of Labour offices at about 11:15 p.m.

**MAY 3 > MOST HEU MEMBERS** report for work. Some protest lines stay up – chiefly in Victoria and Quesnel. A group of members set up lines at the HEU Provincial Office in Burnaby shutting down operations for the day.

Premier Campbell denies that his government has any responsibility for the eight-day job action.

HEU's PE schedules two weeks of meetings across BC to discuss the memorandum with members.

**MAY 4 > WITH THE JOB ACTION OVER**, Justice Bauman agrees to postpone a penalty hearing on HEU's contempt charge until May 17.

**MAY 5 > HEU ASKS BRUCE** for an extension to the date by which the health unions can request arbitration so that members can vote on this option.

A BCTV on Global/Mustel Group poll taken after job action ended shows that just 30 per cent backed the government in the health care dispute while 57 per cent backed HEU's position. And 47 per cent said their view of the premier had deteriorated as a result of his role in the dispute.

**MAY 7 > BRUCE REJECTS HEU'S REQUEST** to extend the deadline by which to opt for arbitration.

**MAY 10 > HEU'S PROVINCIAL** Bargaining Committee meets with HEABC and government officials to push for renewed funding for the Occupational Health and Safety Agency for Health Care; extension of the monthly supplementary benefit for pre-1998 LTD claimants; and measures to deal with a looming retention and recruitment crisis for professional/technical and trades members.

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Mused the *Province's* Michael Smyth: "Maybe Krueger should remind the premier about the Ten Commandments – like that little one about not bearing false witness."

**SALTSPRING SOLIDARITY**

Despite HEU members' being ordered back to work on May 3, a widespread community protest forced the BC Ferries to cancel several sailings from Long Harbour. Throughout the day, concerned citizens and union members protested Bill 37's back-to-work order and the imposed settlement.

**LIBERAL MLA GETS PINK SLIP**

Health care workers have given Peace River South MLA Blair Lekstrom his layoff notice. On May 17, a year to the day before British Columbians pass judgment on the provincial Liberals, local HEU members visited Lekstrom's office to give the Liberal MLA a year's notice of his impending "layoff". They plan to send him monthly reminders until March 17, 2005, when they will give him his 60-day pink slip.

**QUESNEL'S 'GENERAL STRIKE'**

While most HEU members were taking down protest lines, Quesnel woke up on May 3 to another day of mass protest. "Pickets went up at schools, the liquor store, unionized grocery outlets and mills as the community experienced what can only be described as a miniature general strike," reported the *Cariboo Observer*.

# Premier's performance panned by polls and pundits

Premier Gordon Campbell holds his government blameless for the eight-day labour action that threatened to escalate into a province-wide shutdown over Bill 37.

That's what he told reporters on May 3, the day after his government was forced to sign a memorandum with health unions that modified back-to-work legislation passed the week before.

But a different verdict was reached in the court of public opinion where both polls and pundits panned the premier's performance.

In a Mustel Group poll conducted the same night the premier made his comments, only 30 per cent of British Columbians backed the government's position in the dispute while 57 per cent backed HEU.

And 47 per cent said their opinion of the premier had deteriorated as a result of his role in the dispute. That's bad news for a premier whose disapproval ratings were already topping 60 per cent.

And the government's poor reviews during the job action continued long after it ended as reflected in the following excerpts from editorials and political columns from BC newspapers.

"... Premier Gordon Campbell and his ministers are making it up as they go along."

*Les Leyne, Victoria Times-Colonist columnist, on government's efforts to recast Bill 37 to deal with rising public outrage, May 1*

"Either they made a serious miscalculation or it's sheer political stupidity."

*U Vic political scientist Norman Ruff, quoted, Vancouver Sun, May 1*

"Job action that affects vulnerable people is always difficult for the public to support. However, there are times when unions have few other options."

*Editorial, Kamloops Daily News, April 28*

"Now that's what I call chutzpah – the kind of chutzpah that defeats governments."

*Editorial, Cranbrook Daily Townsman, May 21 commenting on the mean-spirited provisions of Bill 37.*



A recent sign of the times on the Sunshine Coast.

"How did this happen? One answer is that Liberal MLAs seem to have turned off their minds during debate on the back-to-work bill. In hours of detailed examination, there was exactly one question from a Liberal backbencher. Not one Liberal asked about retroactivity or any other element of the deal."

*Syndicated columnist Paul Willcocks*

"Well, we'd just like to point out the Liberals' own contract with the people of BC runs out next May. The way things look right now, that contract may not be renewed."

*Editorial, Burns Lake District News, May 12*

"In a small community like Williams Lake, the HEU workers aren't the faceless 'unskilled, over paid workers' the provincial government wants us to believe they are. Most of us know the HEU workers are good, decent, caring and hard-working citizens. They are our friends, our relatives, our neighbours."

*Diana French, columnist, Williams Lake Tribune, May 4*

After three years, they ought to show more signs of learning on the job. Instead you wonder if this clumsy, desperate amateurism is the best they can muster."

*Vaughn Palmer, Vancouver Sun columnist, May 4*

"The health workers' strike is a labour dispute that would not have happened under a competent provincial government."

*Barbara Yaffe, Vancouver Sun columnist, April 28*

continued from page 11

The bargaining committee also explores ways to give members a voice on the arbitration option but receives no assurance from HEABC that their wishes will be respected.

**MAY 12 > HEU'S PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE**

rejects arbitration, saying that it won't roll the dice on members' hard-won benefits.

Eager to win some of the benefit concessions it had on the bargaining table, HEABC makes a last-ditch attempt to convince HEU to take the arbitration option by offering a vote, but within the arbitration provisions of Bill 37. And the labour minister attacks the union and Allnutt for its decision in a government news release.

**MAY 17 > JUSTICE BOWMAN HEARS EVIDENCE** in the penalty phase of HEU's contempt of court

hearing and reserves judgment to June 11.

**MAY 27 > HEU NEGOTIATES AN ALTERNATIVE**

to the flawed bumping language contained in Bill 37's regulations that gives members more options than the contract changes imposed by Bill 29.

**MAY 31 > HEU ACCUSES GOVERNMENT** of undermining its own nursing strategy by freezing wages and benefits levels for RNs and RPNs while imposing wage rollbacks on LPNs.

**JUNE 1 > HEU URGES HEABC** to extend hours to all full- and part-time workers rather than use Bill



37's longer work-week provision to turn full-time jobs into part-time jobs.

**JUNE 7 > 2004-2005 PAY EQUITY** adjustments survive Bill 37

and benefit 34,000 HEU members.

**JUNE 9 > HEABC REJECTS ANY RETENTION** and recruitment adjustments. HEU refers this and other key issues to collective agreement arbitration.

**JUNE 11 > BC SUPREME COURT FINES HEU** \$150,000 for civil contempt of court. It is the largest fine levied against a trade union in BC history.

**MIKE OLD** • HEU DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

This edition of the *Guardian* kicks off a feature series on seniors' care issues in BC

## Barbara's story: On the shift with an extended care aide

Barbara (not her real name), a part-time care aide at Queen's Park Care Centre, works a 4.5-hour shift with one 15-minute coffee break. After the first hour, which she spends feeding the dozen residents under her care, she has three hours and 15 minutes to deal with the individual needs of each resident. That's no more than 15 minutes per person – not including the quarter of an hour that she needs later in the shift to deliver and feed snacks to between five and eight diabetics.

Some residents require twice the allotted 15 minutes for their total care needs: from bathing, brushing their teeth and using the toilet to getting into bed. Even the simple act of helping someone to the toilet can add several minutes – especially if the resident slips, vomits or passes out. Incontinence adds even more time.

"So that sweet little man or lady who doesn't complain, or who may be staying in bed, loses," says Barbara, "because they get the quickest two-to-five-minute work-over you've ever seen to compensate for those other situations.

"If you have any kind of conscience, it's very hard to do that to people – to ask them to wait, to rush over them when you have no time to talk, or to cut them off because you're rushing."

The effect, she says, is to create a kind of quasi-military institution in which timekeeping is strictly regimented and care becomes impersonal. "When residents feel that their needs aren't being met, they begin to develop institutional behaviour," she says. "They start ringing bells incessantly, just to have someone come into their room."

Barbara lists the following concerns about low staff-to-resident ratios:

- **Lack of quality time with residents.** Not so long ago, care aides had the time to make toast and tea for residents and sit down with them. Now, says Barbara, "they don't even provide bread any more – there's just no time to do any of that stuff."
- **On-call housekeeping.** "If we had a spill or a problem in a room, we could just get a housekeeper, because they were part of our team. But now we have to call a number downtown, and then they page the housekeeping staff, who then go to wherever the spill is. We're not allowed to talk to them directly."
- **Privatization.** "The worst fear is that they will privatize the aides as well, so that we'll be called in to do an assignment and then leave – thereby increasing the sense of disconnectedness for the residents."
- **The revolving door syndrome.** "When management does the questionnaire of what the family would like to see improved, time and again it's consistency of care. If they're contracting out and they drop the wage, they're going to have a lot of turnover and turmoil. If you start paying 12 bucks an hour, who's going to stay for 20 years?"

Barbara would like to see an increase in the staff-to-resident ratio. Even one-to-ten would be a huge improvement, she says, adding that the small increase in staff would give her "more time to do visual checks, like looking for sores and rashes, and more time to apply better skin care. It's a whole different philosophy of working."

## PART ONE: THE CRISIS IN CARE HOME STAFF LEVELS

# Giving them the time of day



*A society's quality and durability can best be measured by the respect and care given its elderly citizens*

19th-century historian  
Arnold Toynbee

CUPE SASKATCHEWAN PHOTO

**A**t a long-term care facility in the Lower Mainland, a 90-year-old resident bursts into tears when a care aide enters her room. "She told me people barely come in to check whether she's alive or dead," the care aide recalls later. "She just lies in her bed, unattended, because there's no time for us to deal with anybody. So it's her 15 minutes that are robbed." Those "15 minutes" are the total amount of time that care aides at this place are allowed for each resident they attend to. This facility, which has 300 elderly residents, has a staff ratio during the afternoon shift of one care aide for every 12 or 13 residents.

"In child care, there's a universal staffing standard – we don't have that in extended care," says the HEU member, who has worked in the system for 13 years.

Reducing care levels to 15 minutes, she concludes, is an abuse of the elderly.

### Losing our legacy

Low staffing levels are just one symptom of a dramatic decline in the quality of senior's care that has become hauntingly familiar. Remember the mid-1970s?

"One facility had a single registered nurse on-call in case of emergencies, but she had warned staff that anyone calling her when she was off shift would be dismissed," writes Patricia G. Webb, describing the long-term care climate in 1974 in HEU's golden anniversary commemorative book, *The Heart of Health Care* (1994).

"One personal care home had a single nurse's aide, recently promoted from the cleaning staff, to safeguard 60 residents on the night shift. A nurse aide who refused to work a second rotation of six straight days without a day off was fired on the spot."

The fact that such conditions were a distant memory by the mid-1990s can be attributed to the hard work of HEU members. In 1974, union activists were at the front lines of progressive change for long-term care, as organizing campaigns focused more on improved conditions for nursing home residents than on better wages.

As a result of their tireless organizing and bargaining efforts, HEU activists succeeded in standardizing the workforce, reducing workload and improving staff-to-resident ratios.

So what happened?

### Back to the future

Since the 2001 provincial election, many of the gains HEU members achieved in long-term care have been wiped out by a neoconservative government that has placed budget-cutting priorities over every other concern – including quality health care delivery.

Three years after the Gordon Campbell Liberals came to power, long-term care workers and the seniors they attend to have paid the price of a mean-spirited, ideological agenda that has closed 15 nursing homes and seen 4,000-5,000 front-line workers lose their jobs due to a combination of closures and contracting out. This despite demographic studies showing that the number of BC citizens aged 75 or older is expected to increase by up to 68 per cent over the next two decades.

As long-term health care facilities have been closed or converted to assisted living, and services sold off to private foreign corporations, seniors have been forced to pack their bags on short notice. Elderly spouses have been separated. Other needy seniors have been left without care. Meanwhile,

*continued on page 14*

## New McGann bursary

In recognition of the lifetime work of Dennis McGann – a respected trade union and progressive communications specialist – a bursary of \$1,000 will be awarded to a student enrolled in communication studies at a public Canadian post-secondary institution.

The bursary is sponsored by the Canadian Union of Public Employees, CUPE BC Division, NOW Communications Group Inc, the Columbia Foundation and the Canadian Association of Labour Media.

McGann was a writer, designer, editor and a crafter of messages who dedicated his life to the labour movement and to the NDP until his death in 2001.

For more information about the Dennis McGann bursary, contact the Columbia Institute: 604-408-2500, fax 604-408-2525, or [www.columbianinstitute.ca](http://www.columbianinstitute.ca) Deadline for applications is August 1.

CALM

## Seeking a 'sweat-free' Olympics

This year's Olympic games in Athens may be a showcase for fairness and achievement, but not when it comes to sportswear. That's why a new campaign launched by Global Unions, Oxfam and the Clean Clothes network, is calling for sportswear companies to get in line with international labour standards and accept their responsibility to respect their workers' rights and pay them a living wage.

The Play Fair campaign says giant sportswear brands are violating the rights of millions of workers to fill shops with the latest and cheapest sports shoes, clothes and accessories in time for the Olympics. Go to [www.fairolympics.org](http://www.fairolympics.org) for more

# Nfld law nets ILO complaint

CUPE PHOTO



Newfoundland public employees held anti-Bill 18 rally in St. John's on April 20.

The National Union of Public and General Employees has filed a formal complaint against the Newfoundland government with the International Labour Organization in Geneva, Switzerland.

The complaint alleges that Premier Danny Williams and his Tory government violated international labour standards endorsed by the Canadian government in its handling of the recent strike by public sector workers in the province.

James Clancy, president of the 337,000-member union, says the ruthless manner in which legislation was used to force 20,000 striking employees to accept the government's demands wiped out any pretense of genuine collective bargaining in the province.

In a letter to ILO director general Juan Somavai, Clancy asked the United Nations agency to find the province in violation of UN obligations that Canada has pledged to uphold.

"Bill 18 was introduced by the government to end a 27-day strike of some 20,000 public service employees which began on April 1," Clancy noted.

"It is, however, much more than back-to-work legislation. It is a coercive tool that the government of Newfoundland and Labrador used to legislate a four-year contract containing wage freezes and contract language concessions on its public sector employees.

"It also contained the harshest penalties of any back-to-work legislation introduced in federal and provincial legislatures in the history of Canada," Clancy wrote.

"As is shown in this Statement of Evidence, Bill 18 terminates the collective bargaining rights of public employees for at least a four-year period. The National Union is of the view that this legislation is in violation of the constitution of the ILO and its core conventions: *Convention No. 87-Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize* and *No. 98 – Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining*."

Clancy made the complaint on behalf of NUPGE and its provincial component, the Newfoundland and

Labrador Association of Public and Private Employees and NAPE president Leo Puddister.

Puddister, whose union represented more than 16,000 of the union members involved in the strike, is optimistic the ILO will rule that the complaint is valid.

"It is NAPE's belief that the government of Newfoundland and Labrador has set labour relations in this province back many years by its failure to bargain in good faith," Puddister said.

"We hope the International Labour Organization will make it clear to this employer that no provincial government has the right to impose concessions or to intimidate unions and their members.

## The crisis in care home staff levels

continued from page 13

wages at nursing homes under private contracts have been driven down by as much as 50 per cent, resulting in a high turnover of less trained, inexperienced workers and a corresponding decline in cleanliness, food quality and hygiene.

Today's nursing home LPNs, care aides and other support staff are run off their feet, risking their own health and those of residents as they rush to meet quotas imposed by management. Staffing levels were already dropping before the 2001 election, but the Campbell Liberals failed to read the warning signs and have made the situation worse. Welcome back to the pre-union days of long-term care in BC.

### A ticking time bomb

The slash-and-burn approach to long-term care funding couldn't have come at a worse time. Due to changes in service delivery resulting from health care reform in the mid-1990s, the profile of the average nursing home resident has altered dramatically.

The shift toward more home support, earlier discharge and shorter stay policies in acute care hospitals, and negligible construction of new long-term

care facilities have resulted in significant offloading of patients into the existing long-term care sector. And those seniors entering nursing homes have tended to be older and frailer on average (aged 85 and up), with more complex care needs. They have also tended to be more likely to suffer from dementia.

And yet, despite the rise in resident acuity and care needs, the staff funding formula has remained at its original 1979 levels. And even those levels cannot be funded to 100 per cent without going over budget because the formula does not cover full staffing costs.

Since all residents in long-term care now require more attention than the average 1990 resident, the result for staff has been a massive increase in workload. A higher staff-to-resident ratio would, of course, increase the number of direct care hours per resident.

### Hope on the horizon?

During the summer of 2000, the U.S. Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) presented an 800-page report to Congress that recommended minimum staffing ratios for nursing homes. Drawing from its earlier comprehensive report on nursing homes,

which concluded that there was a direct link between poor care and inadequate staffing, the HCFA "identified a range of serious problems, including malnutrition, dehydration, pressure sores, abuse and neglect."

The new report, in its recommendations on care aide staffing hours, concluded that the minimum level of care required daily for each resident in order to avoid serious harm is two hours; and the minimum level of care required to meet current requirements and improve outcomes for each resident is 2.9 hours.

That's longer than most front-line health workers in BC were allowed in 2001 with each nursing home resident per day. And it's much longer than the Lower Mainland care aide has now.

The year after HCFA's report to Congress, HEU's research department applied the report's findings to staffing levels at long-term care facilities across BC.

"The results pointed very clearly to the need for action on staffing levels by government and employers to protect residents' health and safety in BC's long-term care sector," says HEU researcher Marcy Cohen.

Just before the last election, in the 2001 collective agreement, HEU got 300 additional care aide positions

# Colombian unionist calls for day of protest

A prominent Colombian trade unionist and human rights lawyer is calling on Canadian labour leaders to organize “a simultaneous day of protest against privatization.”

The call came in mid-May from Maria Eva Villate, of a Colombian public service union affiliated to the United Federation of State, Public Service and Community Workers and Professionals (FUTEC) and Public Service International.

She and other Colombian trade unionists toured Canada to draw attention to the negative impacts of privatization, globalization and the increasing criminalization of social protest. “We need to stop the government from killing trade union leaders,” she said. “We need to stop them from putting trade unionists in jail.”

The day will be harder to organize in Colombia where 60 per cent of the people live in poverty and illiteracy is high, she said. “But we need to strengthen our unions at the base by working with each other and with other social partners.”

In observing the current push to privatize in British Columbia, Villate said the effects of such policies are similar to what occurs in her country. There are layoffs, firings, worsening conditions at work, weaker unions, reduced public service and overwork.

However, the way it's done is different. “Yes, they use regressive legislation as they do in BC,” she said. “But in Colombia they persecute trade unionists for speaking out against privatization. Paramilitary squads violently attack trade unionists.”

In health care, the Colombian government has turned citizens against

health workers and stripped the once public system, leaving it open for privatizing by transnational corporations.

“The government began to undermine the public system that was in place before 1993,” she said. “They set up a list of illnesses that could be treated by private companies. They made sure the most ruinous diseases could

not be treated privately.

“In this way,” she added, “the public system was manipulated to fail. Then they forced public health care facilities to charge for services, another blow designed to turn the people against public health care.”

Health care workers themselves had a modest system before privatizing began, but this too has been attacked. The Colombian media has also played into the government's hand by focusing on patients dissatisfied with the care.

“It's so perverse,” Villate said. “They have designed it so the people are blaming health care workers for the deteriora-

**Workers cannot win the fight against privatization alone.**

**Being a trade unionist goes beyond the factory walls**



CoDev program director Carol Wood and Colombian trade unionist Maria Eva Villate take a break together during CUPE's week-long labour school in sunny Naramata.

tion in service and hospital closures. They have to endure the social as well as the political costs of privatization.”

“Workers cannot win the fight against privatization alone,” she said. She hopes a protest day will help build a global social network against privatization. “We need to teach our members that being a trade unionist goes beyond the walls of the office or factory.”

While in BC, Villate met with CUPE BC leaders and visited CUPE members on the job. She also spoke at CUPE's labour school in Naramata.

The tour, sponsored by CUPE, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, the Canadian Labour Congress and other unions, was organized under the title “Defending Public Services – Canadian and Colombian workers on the front line.”

• *CoDevelopment Canada (CoDev) links labour, community, women's and student groups in Canada with similar organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean. [www.codev.org](http://www.codev.org)*

**RON VERZUH** • CUPE COMMUNICATIONS REPRESENTATIVE

## UN study warns against globalization

**A United Nations study warns that globalization is polarizing the world between rich and poor, corporations and workers, and developed and developing countries.**

**The report, calling on governments to “rethink globalization” finds that opening borders to trade has not helped the global economy to grow nor has it fostered social equality.**

**Instead, countries representing 14 per cent of the world's population are dominating half the world's trade. And worldwide unemployment**

**totalling 188 million people is threatening the future of developing countries.**

**Globalization is not only widening the gap between rich and poor within developed countries like Canada, Britain and the US. It has also taken a toll on workers who badly need international labour protection to defend them from exploitation by profit-making multinationals.**

**The report concludes that actions must be taken to end forced labour, child labour and discrimination in**

**the workplace, and to protect the right to organize.**

**But the struggle against globalization has not been easy, especially under the constant assault from trade deals like NAFTA and the GATS, which give corporations special rights and tie the hands of governments. In communities where public and private partnerships are taking root, trade deals open up public services to multinationals, putting our jobs at risk and locking in P3 contracts.**

**See <[www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org)>. CALM**

based on the arguments of that study. But this was reversed by the Liberals, making the situation worse.

On May 11, Ontario's Liberal government introduced a new long-term care strategy that will spend \$191 million to increase staffing levels across the board. This includes 1,400 new front-line staff positions including care aides, dietician, activities coordinators, therapists, nurse practitioners and others.

The health ministry, promoting the strategy, cited examples of nursing homes with one RN, one RPN and four care aides for 160 residents on the night shift. Other nursing homes in Ontario used a mix of part-time nurses, care aides and other support workers, resulting in a “casualization” of the work force that often led to increasing staff turnover levels and greater opportunities for error.

“More full-time staff are required to provide consistent, resident-knowledgeable care,” a ministry report concludes. “Both the public and the industry view nursing and personal care hours (staffing) as a proxy for quality care.”

Now, try telling *that* to Gordon Campbell.

DANIEL GAWTHROP • HEU COMMUNICATIONS

## Solutions for seniors, supporters

Front-line workers at long-term care facilities share family members' frustration at the impact of low staffing levels on elderly residents. It's one reason health advocates want family councils to become mandatory in the sector, as has just occurred in Ontario.

Family councils are groups of relatives and friends of nursing home residents. Their purpose is to address residents' concerns, particularly when residents may have difficulty dealing with those issues on their own.

“We have a facilitator who can come to the group and provide resource material,” says Helen Shore, director of the Association of Advocates for Care Reform (ACR).

“Facilities have to be accountable. But if having a family council in a facility is not a requirement, then it's hard to ensure that accountability.”

ACR, which holds workshops in the Lower Mainland every other month, can be reached at 604.732.7734 (phone) or e-mail: [aacr@vcn.bc.ca](mailto:aacr@vcn.bc.ca).

The absence of a family council doesn't mean concerned relatives and friends have to suffer in silence. In each region of BC, staff members of the Community Care Facility Licensing Office are available to hear concerns or launch investigations into a specific problem at a long-term care facility. Typical complaints include neglect of residents, poor standards of cleanliness, failure to provide appropriate nutritional or food service, and the outbreak of a communicable disease.

**CCFL office phone numbers by region:**

- Vancouver Coastal Health: (604) 736-2866 in Vancouver
- Vancouver Island Health Authority: (250) 475-2235 in Victoria
- Northern Health Authority: (250) 565-2150 in Prince George
- Fraser Health Authority: (604) 870-7920 in Surrey
- Interior Health Authority: (250) 426-1633 in Kelowna



## HEU's 24th biennial convention

Throughout June, many locals are preparing for HEU's 24th biennial convention by electing delegates and adopting proposals for debate.

This year's convention is at the Richmond Inn, October 18-22. A new delegates' seminar will be held on the evening of October 17.

The biennial convention is an important opportunity for HEU members to determine union policy and direction for the next two years, as well as elect the union leadership.

Although each local selects "official" delegates, all members are welcome to attend as observers. Only credentialed delegates, however, can vote, stand for election,

and have their costs covered by the provincial union. Some locals choose to send extra members to observe the convention's proceedings.

Locals are reminded that all convention forms must be received by the Provincial Office no later than 9 am on July 20. Members wanting more information should contact their local executive or the Provincial Office.

## Union ad wins award

HEU's controversial 2002 TV ad detailing the grim effects of privatized health care services in other jurisdictions has won a prestigious award from the American Association of Political Consultants.

The 30-second spot, pro-

duced by NOW Communications, shows a series of unsanitary practices such as fecal-smear laundry, dirty scrubs dumped near food trays, and a finger found in a sandwich. The ad asks the question, "Can it happen here?" and then states, "Gordon Campbell's plans for health care have already had some disturbing results."

"Two years later the ad's message has proven prophetic," says Allnut. "Within months of health authorities privatizing support services, incidents not unlike those appearing in our ad have been reported in the media."

The ad took second prize in the international category for this year's Public Affairs "Pollie" awards. It was up

against stiff competition in a contest where the domestic categories feature some of the most powerful forces in US political advertising.

## VGH biomed techs win new benchmarks

It took more than four years of mediated union-management discussions, but an arbitrator has finally awarded new benchmarks for biomedical engineering technologists, and their supervisor category, at Vancouver General Hospital.

The new benchmarks bring a 3.25-per-cent wage increase on the previous classification's wage rates, effective April 1, 2003. Some biomed techs who filed job review requests will receive retroactive pay of

up to \$18,200.

In his initial decision on Dec. 10, 1999, Arbitrator John Kinzie had recognized that the two positions were not appropriately classified to any of the existing benchmarks for their class specification.

With Kinzie's assistance the parties continued to pursue the matter until agreement was reached.

The most significant change involves the "education, training and experience" qualifications. Although the old benchmarks still exist, the new ones will be applied where an employer requires years of experience in addition to a diploma from a recognized program in their field (two years for biomed techs and five years for supervisors).

## BALANCING IT ALL

MARGI BLAMEY

**TILLY HISCOCK** is a dedicated union activist who brings humour, enthusiasm and a strong sense of optimism into all aspects of her life – on and off the job.

## SEEKING A WAY FORWARD

"My name is Tilly Hiscock. I am a cardiology technologist with a pacemaker specialty and I have worked at Burnaby Hospital for the last 17 ½ years. For those of you unfamiliar with my discipline, my job duties include performing electrocardiograms, stress testing and assisting with pacemaker implants in the operating room and then follow-up post-op."

That's how Hiscock began her presentation to representatives of the Health Employers Association of B.C. in the early days of the latest round of facilities subsector bargaining. She and 10 other HEU workers had come to the negotiating table to illustrate the diverse nature, complexity and importance of the health services delivered on a daily basis by union members across the province.

Hiscock, a staunch trade unionist and chairperson of the HEU Burnaby local, has weathered previous rounds of bargaining but nothing like 2004's.

She praises the commitment and dedication of health care workers as they stood their ground for workers' rights and public health care and understands the disappointment, frustration and anger that followed the May 2 announcement of a memorandum of agreement that stopped the province-wide protest.

"It was like running into a brick wall," she says,

**It was like running into a brick wall ... when Monday didn't happen, people were just so angry.**

remembering how she herself felt upon hearing the news. "Everyone was so supportive [during the strike]. They were there every step of the way. When Monday didn't happen, people were just so angry."

Hiscock describes the impact of Bill 37 and its imposed 15 per cent wage rollback on her family of four. Because her husband Chris is an avionics technician with Air Canada and has just been hit with a 10 per cent wage cut, their total income has decreased by 25 per cent.

"My paycheque is \$289 lighter after the \$3-an-hour rollback," she says. Still, Hiscock is more concerned for others, especially one-income families who may find they can't make ends meet even with full-time hours. "People will wind up getting a part-time job. They'll end up working themselves into an early grave."

Unaccustomed to standing still, she's already thinking about what to do and how to move forward, not only at home but at work and in the union.

When looking for answers, Hiscock draws on her experience of two terms on HEU's technical and professional sub-committee – first established in 1996 – to address the unique issues and concerns of those classifications.

One idea discussed in past meetings of the sub-committee was to create some form of separate recognition for certain classifications within the facilities subsector or master agreement – sometimes referred to in the labour movement as 'com-



BARB LEMKY PHOTO

ponent bargaining'. Hiscock muses that in the aftermath of Bill 37 it's an idea worthy of consideration, and says with her characteristic high spirits and optimism, "Don't be afraid of it, just wade into that dark night!"

Her encouraging attitude and sense of humour come through in everything she says and does. A Newfoundlander by birth, she brings a love of curling with her from the east coast and counts camping among her greatest joys.

"I'm an avid camper," she says. "It's my salvation. No TV, no phone, no paper. It all stays at home. I don't know what's going on in the world, and I don't care!"

Beginning in April and ending in October, Hiscock, her husband and their daughter – their teenaged son usually stays home these days – head out for the great outdoors every weekend they possibly can, camping for a much longer stint in the Okanagan during the summer.

While talking about her love of the outdoors, Hiscock suddenly injects that BC's Liberal government has left its mark on the province's campsites. "Mr. Campbell's decided they can't be givin' them firewood, they can't educate the children," she says while recounting the increased reservation and daily fees, the cost of firewood, and the elimination of popular nature programs.

Returning to thoughts of relaxation, Hiscock says she's "a die-hard hockey fan."

So did she watch and cheer for the Calgary Flames as they battled for the Stanley Cup?

"I didn't watch it," Hiscock admits. "When the Canucks went golfing, so did I."

Supervisors may also now be required to be members of the Applied Science Technologists and Technicians of British Columbia.

### Local leaders develop new skills

This year's Regional Table Officer conferences have given scores of new union activists an opportunity to develop their leadership skills, discuss critical issues facing the union, and learn more about how to meet their many responsibilities.

The two-day meetings encouraged HEU's local leaders to create individual action plans and seek new ways to make the union effective in today's political climate.

Table Officer conferences



CEP 468 member Joey Hartman, who works at HEU's Provincial Office, was one of 229 Canadians selected to attend the 2004 Governor General's Canadian Leadership conference. Joey was a labour movement representative on the 15-day tour in May, which also included people from business, academic, community groups and the arts. Pictured above with South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Canada's Governor General Adrienne Clarkson, Joey call it "a once in a lifetime experience".

were held throughout the spring months in different parts of BC.

### Building solidarity

Members who attended HEU's Building Solidarity workshops in the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley last December will be meeting in a follow-up session at the end of June.

The day-long workshop will focus on lessons learned about building solidarity during HEU's job action and encourage everyone in attendance to share their ideas for future networking.

### Kudos for AIDS activism

The AccolAIDS awards banquet, honouring the achieve-

ments of British Columbians working in the field of HIV/AIDS was held on April 25 – the first day of HEU's job action. HEU president Fred Muzin, fresh from the picket line at St. Paul's Hospital, presented the \$2,500 award for Social, Political and Community Action, sponsored by the union this year.

This year's prize was awarded posthumously to Philip Haines, who helped initiate the long political struggle that led to the creation of the \$225-per-month monthly nutritional supplement benefit for PWAs and others receiving BC Benefits.

AccolAIDS supports the programs and services of the British Columbia Persons With AIDS Society.

# >> factfile

Bill 37 marks the first time the Campbell Liberals have used legislation to impose wage rollbacks

Since coming to power, the Campbell Liberals have failed to negotiate a single contract in the hospital sector. In addition to tearing up freely bargained HEU contracts, they have imposed contracts through legislation on nurses, doctors, paramedical professionals, school teachers and college instructors

Bill 37 was rammed through the legislature less than 12 hours after it was introduced, thus preventing sustained public debate on a law that destroyed years of progress on pay equity and employment security

Members of the public were barred from the legislature while Bill 37 was being discussed in the House

Premier Gordon Campbell did not participate in the final vote on a bill affecting the lives of 43,000 front-line health care workers and the patients and residents they care for

Within days of an imposed settlement that included wage rollbacks of 15 per cent for HEU members, it was revealed that senior BC health employers had received salary increases of up to 18 per cent

## COMMENTARY

BILL TIELEMAN

There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest. – Nobel Peace Prize winner Elie Wiesel

## LIBERALS BLINK IN HEU DISPUTE

Here's why the recent strike by hospital workers gained so much support after it was made "illegal" by an act of the BC legislature: because so many people have so many reasons to detest the Gordon Campbell B.C. Liberal government. The last straw was passing legislation that was seen by most British Columbians as punitive and unfair to thousands of predominantly female health care workers.

The political optics don't get much worse: a BC Liberal government, whose key members are all well-paid white men, targeting women workers, workers of colour, and lower-paid workers with retroactive, nasty legislation that would cost thousands of them their jobs and the rest a big part of their income.

With a huge majority in the legislature, Campbell might have gotten away with this heavy-handed attack on hospital workers. Patients were being inconvenienced by the dispute. The longer it went on the more difficult it would be for health care workers to hold out. Not to mention the serious legal consequences facing unions and workers for breaking the new law and the Health Employers Association of BC asking for fines of \$430,000 a day, or \$10 a day per worker off the job.

But with the BC Federation of Labour and its affiliates moving to halt Lower Mainland transit, close schools and other public services, and walk out at numerous private industrial sites on Monday, May 3, the Liberals were forced to blink. Despite bold

statements by Labour Minister Graham Bruce that the government would not negotiate so long as "illegal" picket lines were up, that's exactly what happened on May 2.

The unions were ultimately successful in limiting some of the most onerous aspects of Bill 37, particularly in winning a cap on the number of health-care workers' jobs (600) that would be privatized in the next two years and removing the retroactivity of the wage rollback.

The government's commitment to a \$25-million severance fund for displaced health care workers and its pledge not to pursue action against workers or their unions for the walkout were also critical concessions obtained by labour.

The last-minute deal is clearly not everything that hospital workers were hoping to achieve, and the 15-per-cent rollback will be very painful. But the labour movement faced down a govern-

ment that holds 74 of 79 seats in the legislature and managed to win significant concessions against all the odds.

If the same unity and energy can be harnessed in the May 17, 2005, provincial election, the days of arbitrarily imposed contracts and endless attacks on workers and others will be over.

• Bill Tieleman is a political commentator Thursdays on CBC TV's Canada Now and regularly on CBC Radio One's Early Edition. This commentary is taken from a longer article originally published in the Georgia Straight. [www.straight.com](http://www.straight.com)



TIELEMAN

# Why are Canadian workers so angry?

From BC to Newfoundland, working people in particular, those in the public sector are being asked to carry the can for other peoples' poor decision-making. Those at the top make the decisions, but those at the bottom bear the burden.

Canadians increasingly see such workers for what they are, ordinary citizens trying to hang on to a half-decent wage while struggling to deliver decent services to families and communities. Meanwhile, private-sector workers are seeing their jobs moved offshore, plants closed and their pensions threatened. Yet the share of all wage income going to senior

executives has skyrocketed.

The one per cent of Canadians making more than \$170,000 a year now earn 14 per cent of all before-tax income, compared to the nine per cent they earned in 1990. This means the other 99 per cent of Canadians, now share a five per cent smaller share of all income than we did at the beginning of the last decade.

For example, over the 10 years from 1993 to 2003, public-sector workers, on average, received wage increases less than inflation. Their purchasing power fell by one per cent. Over this same period, private-sector union wages increased by just a hair above inflation,

so that the average hourly wage for the entire workforce (adjusted for inflation) did not move at all.

To add insult to injury, income taxes for the top one per cent have been cut much more deeply than for the other 99 per cent.

But wasn't this the decade of Liberal prosperity? In production figures, yes. In people terms, no. The economic-growth numbers have been pretty good, and unemployment has fallen somewhat. But a huge share of the income gains have gone to corporations and the rich.

For many people, Canada is rapidly becoming a low-wage country. One in four

workers makes less than \$10 an hour.

After World War II, Canadian workers helped create a strong economy that provided living wages and good living standards. But for the past decade, those family-supporting wages and our social programs have been under attack.

We never agreed to this. Canadian workers are increasingly angry because their wages are being cut, their employers are usually pushing to make things worse, and it's getting harder to access the quality public and social services we count on. That's why, whether they are pulp mill workers in Prince George,

smelter workers in Chicoutimi, auto workers in Oshawa, fish-plant workers in Newfoundland or public-sector workers in health, education or social services, Canadian workers are banding together to support each other.

We're fed up. We should not have to go on strike to keep what we have earned. We want a Canada that works for everyone. We want good jobs at family-supporting wages. Someone has to put the brakes on this rapacious greed or Canadians will see a lot more of what has been happening in Canadian workplaces.

**KEN GEORGETTI**  
CLC PRESIDENT

JULY

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

**JULY 1**

Canada Day, HEU offices closed

**JULY 19-20**

HEU's Diversity Conference

**JULY 20**

9 am – deadline for HEU Convention resolutions, constitutional amendments, credentials and accommodation forms

**AUGUST 1**

Vancouver Gay Pride Parade

**AUGUST 2**

BC Day, HEU offices closed

**AUGUST 2**

Anniversary of Vancouver's first general strike (1918) over Ginger Goodwin's death

**SEPTEMBER 6**

Labour Day, HEU offices closed

**SEPTEMBER 8**

International Literacy Day

PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT NUMBER 4007486

# A strong dose of reality

**B**ack in 1982, as political protest was building against the Social Credit "Restraint" program, Vancouver Centre MLA Emery Barnes decided to forego a month's salary and live on welfare in the downtown eastside.

The activist New Democrat learned a lot during his 30 days in a rat-infested residential hotel. Apart from losing weight and getting sick on subsistence meals cooked on a hot plate, Barnes got a firsthand glimpse of the shattered lives of the inner city poor and attracted media coverage that cast the Socreds' welfare cutbacks in a much harsher light. Mission accomplished.

In *Nickel and Dimed*, Barbara Ehrenreich embarks on a similar, if more ambitious experiment in social awareness-building as she spends two years trying to make ends meet in the low-wage ghettos of America.

Ehrenreich, who writes for *Harper's*, *The New Republic* and *The Nation*, first came to prominence in the 1980s with her back-page columns in the progressive U.S. monthly *Mother Jones*. Her engaging combination of social democratic feminism and self-deprecating wit has served her well as an author, with books on war (*Blood Rites*), greed (*The Worst Years of Our Lives*) and sexism (*The Hearts of Men*) just a few of the best-selling titles under her belt.

In *Nickel and Dimed*, she immerses herself in the vicious cycle of the working poor: living in trailer parks or hotel rooms and taking on two jobs because she can't afford the rent with only one, and eating at Taco Bell or Wendy's because she doesn't have enough time to cook a proper meal.

As a wage slave, she experiences a diminishing sense of the personal identity and human rights she normally takes for granted as a middle-class, PhD-holding syndicated columnist.

In her hometown of Key West, where one potential employer ends an interview by telling her to visit a doctor the next day for a urine test ("The wages Winn-Dixie is offering – \$6 and a couple of dimes to start with – are not enough, I decide, to compensate for this indignity"), she ends up waiting tables at two restaurants that pay less

than \$3 an hour before tips. In Portland, Maine, she works as a housecleaner for \$6.65 an hour and as a nursing home dietary aide for \$7 an hour.

**BOOK REVIEW**

**Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America**

Barbara Ehrenreich  
(Owl Books 2002)  
230 pp, paperback \$18.95

reviewed by Daniel Gawthrop

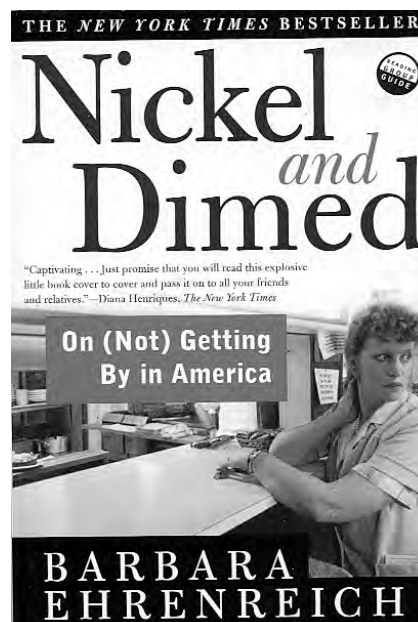
behaviours and emotions.

In Minneapolis, she discovers the boxed-in, Orwellian universe of the Wal-Mart "associate": from the pre-employment personality test where she raises red flags by not responding with "total" agreement to every one of the global giant's workplace philosophies (then frets over a drug test in which the Clariton-D she's taking for nasal congestion might be mistaken for crystal meth), to the surreal atmosphere of the workplace itself.

Ehrenreich spends most of her time picking up toys and clothing items discarded by the over-stressed mothers who comprise the bulk of Wal-Mart's customer base. Her theory? "That our job is to constantly re-create the stage setting in which women can act out. That without us, rates of child abuse would suddenly soar."

The value of this book lies in how its author bears witness to the lives and real work of the so-called invisible masses – the people who cook, clean and take care of everyone else. No reader of *Nickel and Dimed* will ever take these people for granted again. As Ehrenreich reveals, they're worth every penny they earn. And more.

A chronicle of American society first published three years ago, the book should still resonate with the BC health care worker whose job has just been privatized or whose wages have been slashed by 15 per cent.



## Millsite Lodge aide passes away

After a two-year courageous battle with cancer, HEU member **Charlotte Cail** passed away last December.



CAIL

Charlotte first joined the Millsite Lodge staff in 1987. She worked as a care aide until 2000 before taking a position as an activity aide. Charlotte loved to learn and was always taking courses, says her close friend Sylvia Griffith. "She loved to garden and cook, do crafts, and was an excellent photographer."

When Charlotte passed away at Fischer Place, two of her co-workers were at her side. Griffiths says Charlotte was greatly loved by all and will be sadly missed.

## Shirley Throop retires from Nelson office

**Shirley Throop**, long-time Secretary 111 at HEU's Nelson office, retired last fall after more than 20 years of dedicated service.

Known for her exceptional caring and responsiveness to members' needs, Shirley was considered the glue that kept the office together, as she made sure information got to and from service reps, who were usually on the road, and out to members when needed.

Fellow staff members say she was truly "the heart of the Kootenays" who never failed to take a pleasant and

cheerful approach to every situation. They say her calming influence and deep understanding of members' issues will be missed. We wish her well.

## Nanaimo member retires

After 24 years working for Nanaimo Regional General Hospital, **Carol Davies** retired at the end of March. Carol worked most of those years on the hospital's switchboard.

A strong union supporter, Carol spent many years as the "Good and Welfare" contact person for her local and worked for a short period of time in HEU's Nanaimo regional office. Carol says she is deeply saddened by the recent state of layoffs of her fellow union brothers and wishes them "strength and hope for the future."



VANDERVOORT

## Friends fête Glengarry activist

A May 22 retirement party for Juan de Fuca (Glengarry) local activist **Marilyn Mus-Rath** drew a score of friends, family and co-workers to honour her 35 years of service as a nursing assistant.

HEU president Fred Muzin was on hand to present her with a commemorative plaque and wish her well on behalf of her union sisters and brothers.

Known as a driving force

in her local and her community, Marilyn served as a chairperson and secretary-treasurer for many years. Although she retired in March, Marilyn was on hand to help her local during HEU's recent strike action and continues her involvement with the Victoria Labour Council.

## Thanks, Kristina!

Following 36 years of service at Lion's Gate Hospital and the HEU Provincial Office, **Kristina Vandervoort** has taken early retirement.

Kristina was the first staff person hired from the membership in a non-service representative capacity. Although Lion's Gate had turned down her request for leave, a trouble-shooter ultimately ruled in her favour, paving the way for many other HEU members to accept non-service positions with the union.

During her 22 years at the Provincial Office, Kristina worked as a membership clerk, payroll clerk and political action coordinator. Kristina also served on the NDP executive and as chair of the Women's Rights Committee. She has been active with many community groups and boards and is looking forward to continuing her political work and spending time with her 16-year-old son Erik.

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### 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 2**

### Ethnic Diversity



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

**PRESS 3**



### 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](http://www.alberni.net/PeopleWithDisAbilities)

**PRESS 4**



### 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](http://www.pridepages.org)

**ALL CALLS ARE CONFIDENTIAL**

## 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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• Nelson

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- ▶ Preventing public money from going to private for-profit initiatives such as P3s, contracting out and private clinics?

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