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The Liberal record

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GUARDIAN



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Over the past four years the Campbell



Liberals have **ripped** up our contracts, **imposed** wage rollbacks, **fired**

8000 health care workers,



closed hospitals, cut long-term care beds,



and put health care at **risk**.



On May 17th

Make **your** vote count!

An exclusive interview with NDP leader Carole James PAGE 8



HEU welcomes Judy Darcy

On March 21, Judy Darcy walked through the doors of the Provincial Office and into her new role as HEU's secretary-business manager.

Darcy says that she's looking forward to working with a "courageous membership and a talented staff" at this critical juncture in the union's history.

"In the face of relentless attacks on their rights and on the services they provide, HEU members have led the fight to defend public health care and advocate for their patients, residents and clients," says Darcy.

"I'm thrilled to be part of such a proud tradition of social unionism and to have the opportunity to work with committed women and men who've consistently stood up for health care and decent jobs in their communities."

Darcy – who led the Canadian Union of Public Employees as both its national president and national secretary-treasurer for 14 years – is a recognized and respected champion of workers' rights and public services

In February, when the Provincial Executive announced the appointment, HEU president Fred Muzin noted that Darcy is "a progressive and dynamic leader whose commitment to social justice and experience at the helm of Canada's largest union is a perfect fit for HEU."

At that time, financial secretary Mary LaPlante said, "We're very excited that she's agreed to put her formidable skills to work for our members."



THE FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS for HEU's new secretary-business manager, Judy Darcy, was to meet with members of the provincial Task Force to begin reviewing the union's structure. The Task Force was mandated by last October's biennial convention and will bring recommendations forward to the next convention in 2006. See page 4.

Labour's voice & vote matters

By the time this *Guardian* issue reaches readers, electioneering will be at a fevered pitch. And if past practice is any indication, the Campbell Liberals will continue to use the "big labour" label to discount the views of half a million BC union members.

But that line is not resonating with the public, according to a Stratcom poll conducted for HEU and other public sector unions earlier this year.

It showed that 64 per cent of British Columbians believe that unions should speak out during elections about the issues facing voters.

And more than 77 per cent of British Columbians believe that because of its expertise, HEU should be speaking out in this election about how health care is funded and delivered.

The January poll of 501 adult British Columbians is accurate to within 4.3 per cent, 19 times out of 20.

BC Federation of Labour president Jim

Sinclair isn't surprised.

"It was the work of union members, over many decades, that created the eight-hour day, public pension plans, safer workplaces and even ensured our right to vote," he says.

"Union members have actively engaged in politics for as long as there has been a labour movement in BC. We understand that a better province isn't just about workplaces and pay cheques. It's also about services and standards that improve the lives of our families and communities.

"This government has shown it isn't interested in our concerns so more than ever before, we need to turn up the volume."

HEU members have taken that message to heart and local activists around the province have been participating in the BC Federation of Labour's "Count Me In" campaign and other activities designed to raise health care issues in the community and mobilizing the labour vote for May 17 (see page 7).

And there's no question that the labour vote makes a big difference.

In the two closest election races in the 2001 election – both of them in Victoria – there were about 20 times more HEU members in these ridings than the number of votes by which the Liberals were elected.

And in the next six tightest Liberal wins, the number of HEU members living the riding represented between 34 and 72 per cent of the margin of victory.

More than 77% of British Columbians believe that HEU should be speaking out in this election about how health care is funded and delivered.

If the polls are any indication, there will be many close races on May 17. And a strong turnout of HEU members and other union households could make the difference between a balanced approach to government – or another four years of cuts, closures and privatization.



JUDY DARCY

Forging leadership across the union

I can't tell you how excited I am to be here at the HEU. And how proud I am to represent a membership that continues to do so much for so many – patients, residents, clients and workers throughout the province.

In the face of a government that's wreaked havoc on all British Columbians, it is the members of this union who have drawn a line and continue to expose Gordon Campbell's reckless agenda for all to see.

I am inspired by your courage and your determination to do the best job possible, often under impossible circumstances.

As I take on the position of your secretary-business manager, I'm inspired by your courage and your determination to do the best job possible, often under impossible circumstances.

I am honoured to wear the mantle of leadership that comes with the job. But I also know I am a leader among many, many leaders. HEU members show their leadership every day. Whether

it's through the respectful way they deliver care, or how they confront the problems that surface in our hospitals, care facilities and social service agencies.

It's expressed by member actions on the job and in the community. It's there in every meeting of your provincial executive. It's demonstrated whenever a grievance goes forward to protect

members' rights. And it's shown by new members who fought to join HEU and who are now bargaining first contracts with Sodexo and Aramark.

Leadership comes in many forms. Our task now is to build on the leadership that's there – at every level – to ensure genuine renewal and victories yet to come.

My most immediate task will be visiting members in the regions to talk union and talk election. They are closely tied together. Through our political action work in the election period, we are creating networks of members, activists and allies in communities across BC – networks that will continue to stand long after the ballots are cast.

Whatever the outcome on May 17, our political action work now will help rebuild the strength of members on the ground and equip our membership to take on whatever future challenges come our way.

Our upcoming occupation-based conferences, summer school, wage policy conference and structural review will provide important internal places for members to come forward with their ideas, prepare for bargaining, and reshape their union.

Through open discussion and a willingness to move forward together, HEU will be well prepared for future negotiations and to do what this union does best – defend the rights of its members and quality, accessible health care for all British Columbians.

voice.mail

Introducing BCANDS

My traditional name is Lugaganowals. I belong to the Gitksan Nation along the Skeena River in Northern BC under the House of Gwiniwtxw and I am a member of the Wolf Clan.

I am presently the chairperson of HEU's First Nations Standing Committee. I am a licensed practical nurse but am currently on long-term disability.

Last October I was elected as a director and secretary to the Board of the BC Aboriginal Networking Disability Society (BCANDS), which promotes the betterment of Aboriginal persons with disabilities through playing a responsive role and advocating for the creation of an environment in BC where Aboriginal people with disabilities are treated with respect, dignity and as equals.

We have a responsibility to

be involved in educating communities about people with disabilities, to maintain a resource centre, to develop prevention programs and to support people to get the most out of life while living with a disability.

BCANDS has increased its membership this year by 1,700 members, bringing the total membership to 4,500. Stats Canada reports that 30 per cent of Aboriginal people have one form of disability or another, which is twice as high as the national rate and that the 15 to 34 age group rate is three times the national average.

We are working to establish relationships with as many First Nations and non-First Nations organizations as possible and to ensure there is accountability back to people with disabilities when funds are being spent on their issues. We are creating a process in which Aboriginal people with disabilities make decisions about their own issues and we advocate for an environment in which our people with disabilities are employed on an equal basis. Presently, the BC First Nations Summit has entered into a protocol agreement with BCANDS. General members are a) Aboriginal persons with a disability over the

age of 16, or b) guardians or parents of Aboriginal persons with a disability, or c) people who work with disabled aboriginal people. Associate members are any persons or organizations subscribing to the purpose of BCANDS who apply for membership. Membership benefits include the newsletter Voices and Visions. Currently there are no membership or newsletter fees, but donations are gratefully accepted.

For more information you can go to our website at www.bcands.bc.ca, write me at lugaganowals25@hotmail.com or contact our CEO, Robert Harry at Robert@bcands.bc.ca

TRUDY SPILLER

Time to promote renewable energy

I was very pleased that the Guardian covered Uruguay's landmark declaration of water as a human right and that HEU has urged members to support such a declaration for Canada. This is trade unionism at its best.

I am disappointed, though, that members are not also being asked to support the transition to renewable energy sources, such as wind energy. I can find nothing on the website about sustainable energy and, correct me if I am wrong, but there hasn't been any recent coverage of this subject in the Guardian either.

The BC Liberals are ignoring the health risks associated with coal and gas-fired plants. As we are a union of health care workers, I believe it is incumbent upon HEU to take this next step in our ongoing commitment to help protect the health of all British Columbians.

In addition, I hope that HEU will consider becoming a member of KyotoSmart – see www.kyotosmart.net/main.htm – which has the support of the Canadian Labour Congress. I would also like to see HEU follow the example of the CEP (Communication, Energy and Paperworkers Union) and endorse the objectives outlined in that union's recent letter to the Prime Minister. (See campaigns, Kyoto, on their website at www.cep.ca).

Thank you.

FREYA KEDDIE
Medical Transcriptionist
Royal Jubilee Hospital

Union must work with its members

We're wondering at this moment, what the union is doing for us, the working members of HEU. Often we feel alone and without protection and we don't want our union to abandon us in order to satisfy bureaucratic appetite.

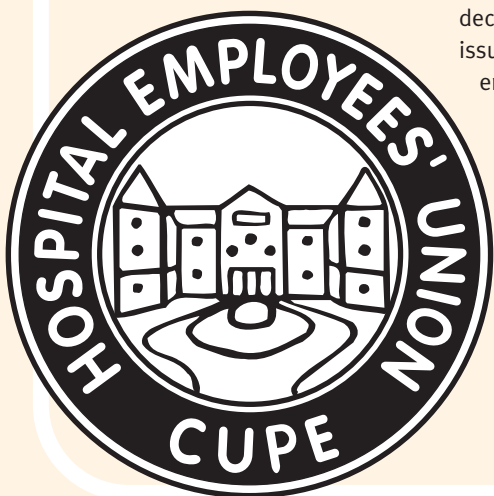
Confronted with the arrogant attitude and intimidating

tactics of our bosses, we ask ourselves what the union can do in light of these abuses of power by our supervisors who everyday demand more from us. For our bosses, we are only working for mass production and we must struggle day by day with the threat that they could fire us at any moment.

We think that the union is the key to the struggle of the workers in attaining fair wages and better working conditions. We also agree that the union gather the most noble aspirations and dreams of those who long to build a more humane society, with better working environments, free of abusive exploitation.

We think the union should work more closely with its workers which is absolutely necessary to unite us in our common goals and aspirations. The union officials should spend more time educating members about their rights, and be present where problems arrive at the labour site. Is it not the primary purpose of the union to teach the workers to unite and struggle towards a common goal, and in so doing raise the consciousness of the workers to achieve a better future?

LUCIANO SANCHEZ
Covell Garden





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New study condemns seniors’ care crisis

BC’s Liberal government not only failed in its promise to create 5,000 long-term care beds, but a new report shows its funding cuts have resulted in fewer services for higher costs.

And it accuses the government of causing “undue suffering for some of the most frail and vulnerable members of our society, their families and communities.”

Continuing Care Renewal or Retreat?, a study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, says British Columbians now have less access to acute care, long-term care and home health services – all of which are costing taxpayers and seniors more money.

And with the exception of New Brunswick, it says British Columbia now has the lowest number of long-term care beds in Canada for seniors 75 years and over.

The Campbell Liberals claim they have created 171 new long-term care beds, but the study shows BC has lost a total of 2,529 beds in the last four years.

“The provincial government is

throwing around a bunch of numbers about beds, but has yet to provide any detailed accounting of what facilities have actually closed or opened,” says one of the report’s authors Marcy Cohen.

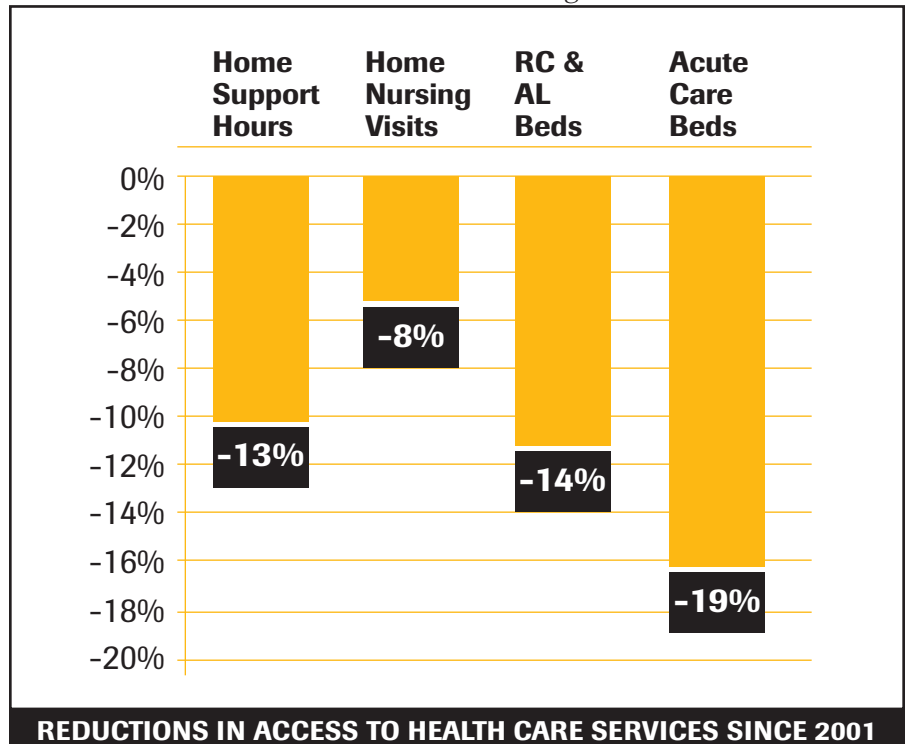
“As far as we can tell, they are counting replacement and refurbished beds as new beds, as well as seniors’ housing where care is not provided,” she says. “It’s astounding that the government is cutting funding and reducing beds while the population is getting older and relying on these services.”

While the BC Liberals boast about improved home health services for seniors and decreased wait times for care beds, the report uses government statistics to show that the Liberals have offloaded financial responsibility to individuals and their families.

Since 2001, government has shut down long-term care facilities across

With the exception of New Brunswick, BC now has the lowest availability of long-term care beds in Canada.

From CCPA’s “Continuing Care Renewal or Retreat?”



the province, leaving seniors vulnerable – particularly those living in rural areas, with less access and fewer options to health care services.

Many are concerned, and some health authorities have admitted, that the supply and demand crisis in long-term care has burdened overflowing emergency units, doctors’ offices and the more expensive acute care units.

A recent Capital Regional District staff report confirms that “the shortage of residential care is one of the reasons preventing effective use of hospitals by acute patients” and that the shortage also “contributed to congestion in emergency departments with patients waiting to be admitted.”

In the Capital Regional District

alone the cuts to long-term care have led to increased costs of \$2-\$4 million per year to house seniors in acute care.

But pressure on emergency wards and acute care hospital beds is only part of the problem. The CCPA report points out that a surge of privately owned residential care and assisted living facilities, to fill the void left by the public health system, is forcing clients and their families to pay an estimated \$49,000 to \$67,000 a year for services.

“These rates are staggering, even for middle-income earners,” says Cohen who is also an HEU research and policy planner. “Many seniors are without care until they end up in an emergency room, in a crisis.”

Cohen says this didn’t need to happen. “With proper planning and involvement of seniors, health services could have been significantly improved without a huge cost to the system. Now it’s going to cost a lot to rebuild.”

The CCPA report is calling for an external review to develop the planning required to rebuild a non-profit care infrastructure that can take the pressure off the acute care system and meet the population’s real needs.

“There’s been a serious downward spiral under this government,” says Cohen. “The end result is that it’s costing everybody more money for less service, and it has undermined confidence in the public health system.”

BRENDA WHITEHALL

Not for profit facilities provide best care

When it comes to direct resident care, not-for-profit long-term care facilities outperform their for-profit counterparts, according to a recent study. The results are published in an article entitled, *Staffing levels in not-for-profit long-term care facilities: Does type of ownership matter?*, in the March edition of the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*.

“We found that the number of hours per resident-day provided by direct-care staff and support staff was significantly higher in the not-for-profit facilities than the for-profit facilities,” states the article.

The study examined 167 long-term care facilities in 2001. Of these, 109, or 65 per cent, were non-profit. The rest were owned either singly or as part of a

chain. All receive global funding from the province.

“There was no regulation by government or the regional health authorities as to how individual facilities allocated funding between staffing, administration or property costs,” states the article.

Facilities were divided into intermediate care, intermediate and extended care, and multilevel care. In almost every category, not-for-profit facilities out-performed their for-profit counterparts in hours devoted to residents’ care.

The research was led by Dr. Margaret McGregor of the Department of Family Practice at the University of BC and included HEU’s Marcy Cohen, along with seven others.



COFFEE BREAK

Changing times

In honour of International Women's Day and to mark how much times have changed, *Coffee Break* reprints some excerpts from a 1955 issue of *Housekeeping Monthly*:

The following are tips from *The Good Wife's Guide*, intended to help women prepare for their husbands arrival home at the end of the day.

•
"Have dinner ready ... prepare yourself. Take 15 minutes to rest so you'll be refreshed when he arrives. Touch up your makeup, put a ribbon in your hair and be fresh-looking."

•
"Clear away the clutter. Make one last trip through the main part of the house just before your husband arrives."

•
"Prepare the children. Take a few minutes to wash the children's hands and faces, comb their hair and, if necessary, change their clothes."

•
"Be a little gay and a little more interesting for him. His boring day may need a lift."

•
"Don't complain if he's late home for dinner or even if he stays out all night. Count this as minor compared to what he might have gone through that day."

•
"Arrange his pillow and offer to take off his shoes. Speak in a low, soothing and pleasant voice."

•
"Let him talk first – remember, his topics of conversation are more important than yours."

•
"Make the evening his ... try to understand his world of strain and pressure and his very real need to be at home and relax."

Task Force hits the ground running

It's a two-year, top-to-bottom review of how the union operates. And members of the Task Force to Review HEU's Structure are determined to hear from as many members as possible before finalizing its recommendations for the 2006 convention.

The Task Force – composed of both Provincial Executive members and activists selected from the general membership – spent its first meeting setting goals and hammering out an action plan for the next 18 months.

As a first step, Task Force members will produce a discussion guide that will be widely circulated to the membership and form the basis for a broad consultation including polls, focus groups, member meetings and questionnaires.

That exercise will result in an "options" document – that will be the

core of a second round of consultation with union members. The Task Force and the provincial executive will then make recommendations to the 25th Biennial Convention in 2006.

"Engaging HEU members in a dialogue about the future of their union is the only way to strengthen the union," says HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy.

"Members have been very clear – we must change the way our union operates. Our challenge over the next 18 months is to determine what works, what doesn't and what changes will result in a more democratic union that supports our members' needs.

"We have to give members confidence that this exercise will result in real change. The Task Force is working hard to ensure the process is respectful and transparent," adds Darcy.

The Task Force has confirmed that its work must recognize the occupational and sectoral diversity in the membership while increasing the collective strength of an industrial union built on social justice principles.

The Task Force members are: first vice-president Sheila Rowsell, fourth vice-president Doris Gripich, trustee Harold Burns, Carolyn Unsworth (Queen's Park), Janice Varga (Juan de Fuca), Cathy Hamilton (Kamloops-Thompson), Vicki Poburn (Cranbrook) and Joanne Foote (Fraser Crossing).

Darcy, president Fred Muzin and financial secretary Mary LaPlante are ex-officio members of the Task Force.

You can reach the Task Force c/o the Provincial Office or by e-mail at task-force@heu.org. Check your local bulletin board and the union website for updates.

STV or not STV? That's the question

At least that will be the question when voters go to the polls May 17 to elect a new provincial government. Hanging in the balance is a radically different way to elect MLAs in British Columbia.

Voters will face this question: "Should British Columbia change to the BC-STV electoral system as recommended by the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform?" If adopted, the system will apply to future elections.

Recommended by the 160-member Citizens Assembly, which was mandated by the Campbell Liberal government, the STV (Single Transferable Vote) has been heralded as either more democratic than our current system, or less democratic, depending on individual points of view.

Its promoters say there will be fewer "wasted" votes than under the current "first past the post" system. And BC-

STV will allow candidates from smaller parties to be elected, breaking up the domination of large political parties.

Critics of BC-STV counter that the system fails to deliver on its promise of more representative democracy.

And, they charge, the formula used to determine winners is so complicated the average voter can't follow or understand it – and that's undemocratic.

So how does it work? BC-STV will create larger ridings that are represented by between two and seven members. Under that system, voters rank their choices by placing a "1" beside a person's first choice, a "2" for their second choice, a "3" for their third choice, and so on.

The ballot count involves a mathematical process that must be calculated by a computer. That process first determines the minimum number of

votes a candidate needs to be elected. The candidate who receives more than the required number of votes is elected on the first ballot count.

Then the winner's "surplus" ballots – those that exceed the required number – are "transferred" to the remain-

ing candidates through another mathematical process that determines something called "transfer value."

As election day approaches, the pros and cons of BC-STV are getting more airtime. And several websites devoted to either pro-

moting the new system, or challenging it, are springing up.

The Hospital Employees' Union has not taken an official position on the STV, but is encouraging members to take a close look at the information, consider the various pros and cons that are emerging, and on May 17 cast an informed vote.

As election day approaches the pros and cons of BCSTV are getting more airtime.

<<newsbites>>

AIDS group seeks regular monitoring at St. Paul's

The BC Persons With AIDS Society wants the head of Providence Health Care to clarify the state of cleanliness and hygiene at Vancouver's St. Paul's Hospital. The Society says it is concerned that several of its members and other HIV-positive patients might have "suffered" because of poor hygiene services, which have been privatized.

In a February 9 letter to Providence president CEO Carl Roy, Society chair Paul Lewand cites "published and other personal reports" that cleaning is substandard because of the con-

tracting out of the service to a private business "which pays its staff at or near the minimum wage."

Lewand asks for a report on the hospital's cleanliness, regular monitoring of the effectiveness of the cleaning staff, and whether there will be "a financial accounting of the true impact of the contracting out."

Keep Five Alive

The Gulf Island's Keep Five Alive Coalition yesterday sent a group of its members to the BC Legislature (February 17) to deliver a 1,000 name petition to the provincial government.



The group wants the province to do something to stop the erosion of public schools on the islands and throughout the province.

Since September 2004 the Gulf Islands have been subjected to a four-day school week because of a lack of funds due to provincial government underfunding.

Union training courses help laid off members find jobs

Just over a year ago, HEU member Sarah Ismail signed up to become one of about 250 care aides and LPNs who have now received training from a union sponsored upgrading program.

Aimed at helping laid off and other members increase their skills and improve their job prospects, the year-long program offered a series of short courses in such areas as mental health support, dementia care, psychosocial rehabilitation, palliative care, assisted living and career development.

For program coordinator Priti Shah, the most important question when the courses were completed was "Did they help? Were people successful in getting employment?"

And the answer, she says, was a definite "yes."

By doing a follow-up survey, Shah discovered that more than two-thirds of all those who completed the courses had been hired into positions that ranged from casual through to permanent full-time jobs.

Ismail was one of them.

After being laid off from her care aide position of 14 years at Willingdon Park Private Hospital, Ismail was initially confident that she would find another job. But it didn't happen.

"After a year I still wasn't getting any calls," she said. Then she heard from a friend, who'd heard from another friend, about HEU's upgrading program. "I called Priti Shah right away and it was on the last day they were accepting applications."

Ismail immediately enrolled in a Mental Health Worker course, which she says was "very interesting, very helpful, but it took a lot of work. The course was very heavy."

She also says, "It changed my life. I would never have taken this course if the union hadn't offered it." And if she



Priti Shah (left) shares a lighter moment with a course graduate.

hadn't taken the course, she feels she would not have found the employment she's in now.

Like several of her fellow classmates, Ismail was hired following a two-week practicum at Douglas College.

Currently, she's working for Victory House, which is operated by St. James Community Services Society in Vancouver and Magnolia House in North Vancouver. Both are unionized positions with HEU.

Shah says the program, which

received funding from Vancouver Coastal Health Authority as part of a continuing care initiative, covered the students' tuition costs and books.

It was the final series of courses in a program that had begun in 1999 and had been set up in partnership with Vancouver Coastal Health to assist care aides and LPNs with educational upgrades. Since then, the program has provided training upgrades to about 700 HEU members.

"In this final phase of the program we targeted laid off care aides," says Shah. "So many of the people who had lost their jobs to contracting out and staffing cuts had many years of experience, but they needed to increase their knowledge base, and they needed an up-to-date certificate."

Shah says the recent survey of course participants showed that members are eager to take advantage of training opportunities and that those opportunities play a key role in helping them increase their job prospects.

PATTY GIBSON • HEU COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

Occupational conferences in the works

As the union begins laying the groundwork for the next round of bargaining in 2006, HEU's Provincial Executive is busy planning a series of occupation- and sector-based conferences.

The conferences will provide members from particular occupational groupings – such as nursing, trades and maintenance, and patient care technical – with a place to discuss issues related to their job areas, and an opportunity to develop proposals for this October's wage policy conference.

"We need to prepare for bargaining in a way that's more responsive to our members' changing needs in complex health care workplaces," says HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy. "Plus we need to address the looming retention and recruitment crisis for many occupations that will be the result of this government's mean-spirited and arbitrary wage cuts."

Details will be discussed at the PE's April meeting. Information will be circulated to locals and posted on the website.

HEU members sign up for Summer School 2005

After a four-year fight back against the Campbell Liberals' attack on health care and health care workers, about 200 HEU members will gather to reclaim some of their power at the union's upcoming Summer School, July 3-8, 2005.

The week-long school *Grassroots Leadership Development – Expanding our Power Base* is aimed at both experienced and new activists who are committed to strengthening our union and continuing HEU's fight for justice and fairness.

The "in residence" school program, held at the University of British Columbia, offers two parallel tracks.

The first is an introduction to leadership, union activism and shop steward training. Offered to members who are committed to becoming shop stewards at their workplace for a minimum of 18 months, this track focuses on union rights, HEU's culture of activism, skill development and fostering confidence.

Track 2 is geared toward experi-

enced shop stewards and activists. This track will focus on building the democratic leadership and commitment to social justice unionism needed to sustain an activist culture in the workplace.

Applications must be received by Friday, May 6, 2005 at 5 pm at the HEU Provincial Office. Members can also apply online at www.heu.org by the same deadline. Childcare is provided. For more information, contact Catherine Jeffrey at 604-438-5000 or 1(800) 663-5813.

Fraser Health Authority fires CEO Bob Smith

The Hospital Employees' Union charges that pre-election panic by the Campbell Liberals led to Fraser Health Authority CEO Bob Smith's firing in February.

"They need to take responsibility for the cuts, closures and privatization that have compromised care at hospitals like Surrey Memorial," says HEU's then acting secretary-business manager Zorica Bosancic.

Bosancic noted that Mr. Smith – who was hired by the FHA in June 2002 – implemented the Campbell Liberals' policies, closing hospitals,

cutting long-term care beds and firing more than 1,000 workers, causing a noticeable decline in health care.

Smith stands to receive a hefty severance package of up to \$323,000, compared to the approximately \$8,400 in severance to fired hospital cleaners with 25 years of service.

Human rights decision boosts whistle blower protection

Workers who try to blow the whistle on bad working conditions have been given a boost by a recent interpretation of the BC Human Rights Code.

The February 9 decision concerns

complaints stemming from the case of Burnaby Firefighter Boni Prokopetz, who filed a Human Rights complaint last year about alleged harassment and intimidation on the job.

A Human Rights Tribunal has allowed fellow firefighters Perry Talkkari and Garry Wilson to proceed with their harassment complaints against the municipality, other firefighters, the Burnaby Firefighters' Association, and two superiors. They had supported Prokopetz's complaint and because of this were themselves victims of harassment, they claimed.

Section 43 of the Code was written to protect workers against harassment

arising from a previous Human Rights complaint. In its broad interpretation of the section, the tribunal allowed Talkkari's and Wilson's complaints even though their alleged harassment did not arise from complaints they had filed, but from their support of Prokopetz's complaint. "The purpose of s. 43 is to ensure that persons who raise human rights complaints, and those who assist them, are not retaliated against as a result," wrote tribunal member, Lindsay M. Lyster.

"This is huge," stated Prokopetz in a *Vancouver Sun* article. "It really wasn't clear before for individuals who did come forward to help a colleague or to



FRED MUZIN

Wal-Mart tactics fail to deter organizing drives

The organizing drive at Wal-Mart stores in BC and several other Canadian jurisdictions continues despite intimidation and delaying tactics by the Arkansas-based, anti-union retailer giant.

Workers at the Lube and Tire Express departments at seven BC Wal-Mart stores are frustrated at delays in counting ballots concerning joining Local 1518 of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW). The BC Labour Relations Board has delayed the count to hear unfair labour practice charges relating to the organizing drive.

The union had expected a count in late January; it's now slated for March 29-30. Meanwhile, the unionizing drive continues. "We're still organizing at several stores," says Local 1518 spokesperson Tom Cameron-Fawkes.

In Saskatchewan, UFCW Local 1400 is fighting the corporate giant in the courts as Wal-Mart Canada attempts to stall automatic certifications at stores in North Battleford and Weyburn. The local is also attempting to make public potentially damaging

internal Wal-Mart documents relating to the certifications.

The Ontario Labour Relations Board will hear unfair labour practice charges launched by the UFCW and Wal-Mart following an unsuccessful certification vote in Windsor. The union is asking the Board to allow a second certification vote. UFCW Canada national director Michael J. Fraser charges Wal-Mart with intimidating its workers into voting no. He points to evidence that indicates Wal-Mart secretly funded and equipped an anti-union drive by some employees at the Windsor store back in 1994.

"Wal-Mart Canada has been found guilty four times of intimidating employees during a union campaign, twice just in the last four months in Quebec," said Fraser. "Ten years later they are at it again."

In March the UFCW filed applications to represent both Tire and Lube, and store workers at a Wal-Mart outlet in Gatineau, Quebec. Other applications have been filed for stores in Saint-Hyacinthe and Brossard.

The company was recently fined \$500,000 for health and safety violations in Ontario.

Collective amnesia is our biggest enemy

This provincial election gives HEU members a glorious opportunity to hold the Campbell Liberals to account for their deceit, mean spiritedness and four years of oppression. Since 2001, we have seen our skills and abilities devalued and the quality of our lives dramatically impacted by both government and managers who are drunk with the abuse of power.

Our challenge now is to counter the business community's endless stream of election propaganda, crowing about our wonderful economy. Much of this current 'boom' ignores the cyclical 'bust', which is traditional in BC. It also ignores the injection of billions of dollars in federal transfer payments and the transitory escalation in resource prices.

There will be no useful additional information during the election campaign upon which to base our vote. We already have the facts.

This government has adopted policies that maximize the profits of its special interest friends while ignoring the other side of the ledger. Those costs – the real damage – are reflected in child labour, a \$6/hour training wage, exorbitant tuition increases, reduced pharmaceutical coverage, gutted WCB regulations

and employment standards enforcement, closed court houses, vandalized contracts under Bills 29 and 37, the sell-off of public assets like BC Hydro and BC Rail – and much, much more.

We already have the facts upon which to base our vote.

Collective amnesia is our biggest enemy. Our families and communities must not be allowed to forget the agenda these architects of privatization intend to complete if re-elected – the total sell out and sell off of BC.

We have already seen this agenda implemented in South America. And we've seen the results.

The same right wing policies embraced by Gordon Campbell – tax breaks for corporations and the rich, the privatization of income-earning 'state' companies and increased user fees – led directly to economic disaster, increased poverty and deeper inequality.

But the tide is turning. Exhilarating examples of reform are sweeping South America. In a continent that's been under the thumb of brutal dictatorships, people have risen up and demanded democracy for all. Today, more than three quarters of the population are governed by progressive, responsive leaders – Chavez in Venezuela, Lula in Brazil, Vazquez in Uruguay and Kirchner in Argentina.

If we work hard and do not lose faith, we too can change our government and create an environment for justice.

As health care workers our vision of society includes compassion, caring and inclusiveness. Another world is possible – where quality public services are available for all, people control their economy and where we can all live with dignity.

On May 17 vote for positive change! And fight like hell.

New rate protects pensions

Both health employers and HEU members will be investing more in their pensions now to protect hard-won retirement income and benefits in the future.

On July 1, contribution rates for the Municipal Pension Plan will rise by nearly one per cent for both employers and for HEU members who belong to the plan.

The increase is necessary to address an unfunded liability which if left unchecked would leave the plan short of the cash needed for the pensions of future retirees.

The shortfall results from lower

than expected returns on pension fund investments and predictions of modest returns in the future.

As a result of the July 1 changes, contribution rates will rise to 6.99 per cent on salary below the Year's Maximum Pensionable Earnings – currently set at \$41,000 – and to 8.49 per cent for earnings above this amount.

The increase also affects the cost of purchasing past service after June 30 – so apply as soon as possible if you want to do so at the old rate. Contact your payroll department or visit www.pensionsbc.ca for more details.

<<newsbites>>

help protect somebody or to give evidence in a human rights case. It now gives them more protection with the employer and amongst their colleagues."

On March 23, Boni Prokopetz announced she had reached an agreement with the parties named in her complaint, which cancelled a scheduled hearing before a Human Rights Tribunal.

The agreement also covers the complaints of Perry Talkkari and Garry Wilson. Prokopetz said she was "very happy" with the agreement and will continue in her job in fire prevention.

Court petition to stop MSP privatization turned down

In a recent ruling, BC Supreme Court Justice Melvyn turned down a petition by the BC Government and Service Employees' Union to halt the privatization of BC's Medical Services Plan (MSP).

The union had argued that the proposed privatization of MSP violated the *Canada Health Act* and *BC Medicare Protection Act*, and needlessly put privacy rights at risk.

Although government has argued that sufficient guarantees are in place, many British Columbians are concerned that contracting out to

Maximus, an American-linked company, will endanger their privacy since American companies are subject to the *USA Patriot Act* and could be required to hand over client data bases to the FBI.

At presstime, BCGEU was reviewing the decision to decide whether or not the union would launch an appeal.

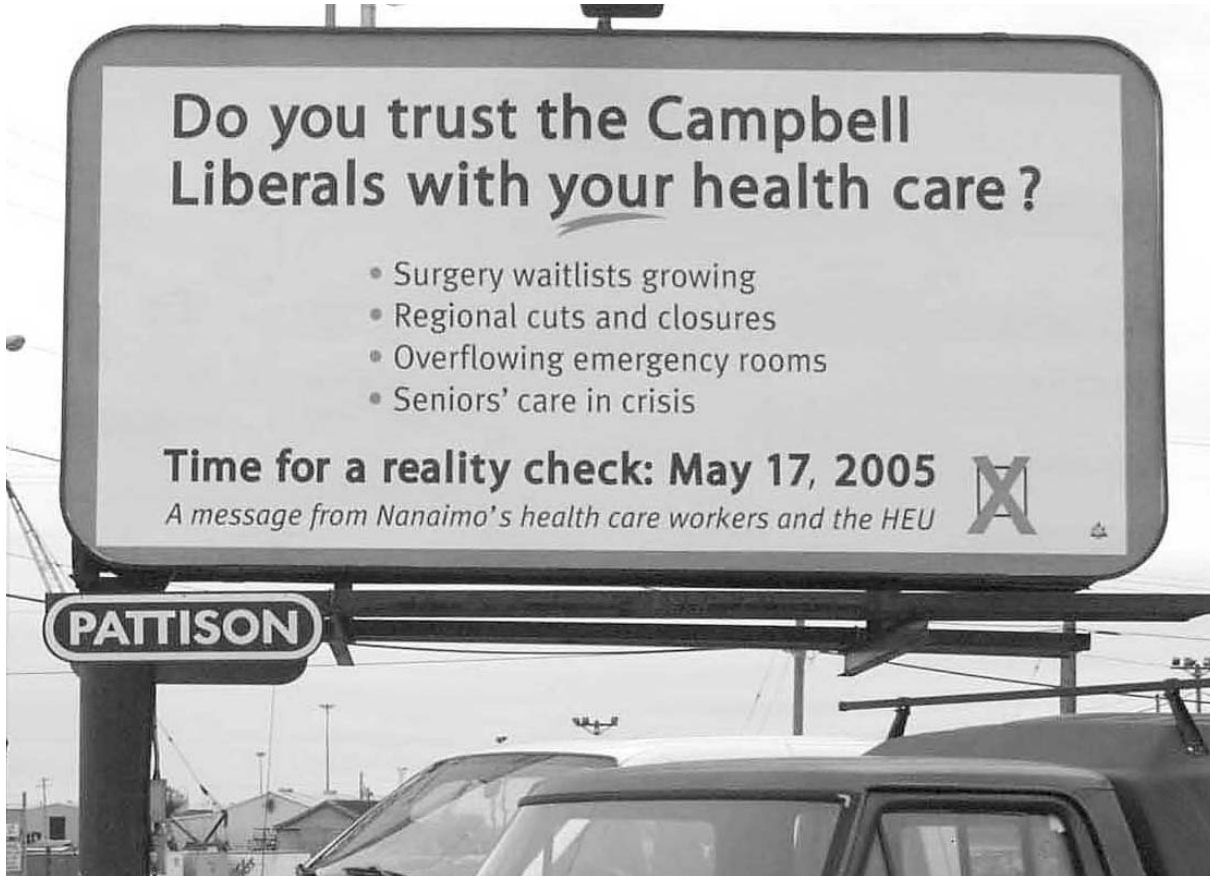
Corporate taxes continue to steadily decline

When it comes to sharing the tax burden, you pay a lot more than big business. A recent story from the Canadian Press reports that the cor-

porate share of federal income tax has been declining steadily since World War II.

Today, about 75 per cent of federal tax revenues come from individuals and only about 25 per cent from the business sector.

The recent federal budget granted small personal income tax reductions and much deeper ones for the corporate sector. The federal government projects that personal income tax revenues will rise by 30 per cent to \$120 billion by fiscal 2009-10; while corporate taxes are expected to drop from \$27.4 billion in 2003-04 to less than \$27 billion by 2009-10.



A SIGN OF THE TIMES. Members across the province are getting the word out about government's record in health care. Billboards are springing up on highways and byways from Vancouver Island to 100 Mile House.

Count me in!

May 17, 2005 is almost here. But for HEU members it can't come fast enough.

Under the Campbell Liberals, health care workers in every corner of the province have seen patient and resident care in hospitals and long-term care facilities deteriorate as this government pushes a privatization agenda of cuts, closures and contracting out upon unsuspecting British Columbians.

They witnessed the displacement of 8,000 dedicated and experienced co-workers – the largest mass firing of women in Canadian history – and watched lucrative health support services contracts go to huge corporations that pay their employees low wages with few benefits, little training and heavy workloads.

And tens of thousands of other health care workers including cardio, renal, pharmacy and x-ray technicians, trades and maintenance staff, licensed practical nurses, biomedical engineers, medical transcriptionists, unit coordinators and many more, had a legislated, 15-per-cent wage rollback forced upon them.

Now HEU workers are poised to hold Gordon Campbell and his MLAs to account for what they've done to health care and to health care workers – and they're taking to the phones, the airwaves, and the highways to do it.

Armed by a resolution calling for political action and resoundingly passed at the union's biennial convention last October, HEU locals can access funding for a wide range of political action initiatives that will enable members to tell voters why things need to change in Victoria.

The goal? To elect politicians who will strengthen public health care, halt privatization, expand long-term care and home support services for seniors and people with disabilities, and value the contribution

and commitment of health care workers.

And here's how they're doing it:

- extensive member-to-member phone canvasses across the province
 - cross-union and community events like March 17's Pink Slip day
 - "Make your vote count" barbecues, breakfasts and a Murder Mystery evening for members
 - local contests to identify election issues from the membership, inspire campaign slogans and design posters
 - all-candidates' forums for members and the community at-large
 - meet and greet opportunities with NDP candidates
 - print ads in local newspapers and radio spots on local stations
 - billboards on BC highways and byways from Vancouver Island to 100 Mile House
 - leafleting the public with fact sheets
 - HEU 'Count Me In Days' to sign up volunteers for a variety of political action initiatives.
- And that's just the beginning. HEU members are known for their generous gifts of volunteer



PINK SLIPPED. Members in Duncan gather outside Liberal MLA Graham Bruce's office March 17 to give him his 60-day notice.

time and energy to candidates' campaigns.

With a fixed election date, people have had an opportunity to plan their volunteer time well in advance – and many have done just that. Lots of HEU members, being seasoned campaigners, understand that early volunteers are the fuel that propels many successful politicians into office.

HEU financial secretary Mary LaPlante says that it's not too late for HEU locals to access funding to put local plans into action.

"There is no effort too large or too small when it comes to making a difference in the provincial election," says LaPlante. "The point is to get involved and make every vote count."

MARGI BLAMEY • HEU COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

I'm voting because ...

Here's what some HEU members told the Guardian about why they are voting on May 17:

SUSAN MACNEILL

Cariboo Memorial Hospital

I'm voting because silence would affirm this government. If we all remain silent, it's a clear indication that this government is A-OK, and it's not.

JOHN HODGSON

Lions Gate Hospital

Before the 2001 election, my father had cataract eye surgery and it was free. After the election, he had his other eye done and it cost him \$500. I don't like the way this government is treating people. We have to vote in order to make a difference.

RAVINDER BIRING

German Canadian Care Home

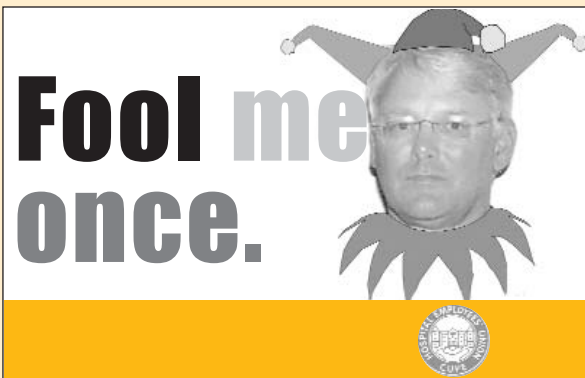
I'm voting because I think my vote will make a difference. People sometimes think that their vote doesn't matter, but it does.

CATHY HAMILTON

Royal Inland Hospital

I'm voting because I want to get rid of the BC Liberals. Look what they've done to the most vulnerable – women, children, seniors – and what they've taken from health care workers through Bills 29 and 37. We need to get that back.

NO FOOLING AROUND. At an April Fool's Day all-candidates meeting members from Vancouver General asked the tough questions.



JOE KYNOCH

Burnaby Hospital

We've not been heard democratically because there's too much of a majority on one side. I'd like to see more of a balanced situation in Victoria. The current government swings too far to the right and is in favour of privatization, and against the public sector and labour unions.

We've been fighting all the battles – wage roll-backs, privatization – and it's hurt. Now is the war. We have to fight back. We've got to get some power back.

RITA BERGMANN

Ft. St. John Hospital and Health Centre

I've always voted. It's my right. I want to do everything I can to get Gordon Campbell out. If we sit back and don't vote, we can't make a change.

MARY JETKO

Mount St. Mary's

When the Liberals got in, we didn't know they would backstab us the way they did. Now that we've had a taste of what the Liberals have done, people need to consider their options very carefully. Our local has a campaign to raise awareness, especially targeting the youth, to go out and register to vote. It's the only way to make a difference.

Taking a balanced approach

NDP leader Carole James
talks about restoring
public health care,
listening to communities,
and respecting workers.



What are British Columbians telling you about the direction of the Campbell Liberals and how would your approach differ?

There are some pretty clear differences between the Gordon Campbell Liberals' agenda and our agenda. The first difference is that we will actually listen and work with the communities. People have been ignored by their MLAs. They've been ignored by their health authorities. So the first step is actually to have a government and MLAs who respect communities and work with communities.

The second is health care. And again there are some pretty clear differences between the Campbell government and ourselves – like privatization. We have said very clearly that privatization in health care will end. We know what direction the Liberals are going.

HEU members and others have found that their relationship with this government has been confrontational and that the government won't listen to them. In a concrete sense, what would you do to try and restore some of these relationships?

I think HEU bore the brunt more than anyone when it came to this government's approach to dealing with things, which I've called abuse of power in the legislature. They basically decided what they wanted the end result to be and abused their power in the legislature to make it happen.

Some concrete ways that I put out there, first, is that whether it's on health care, education, finance or the economy, both labour and business will have a seat at the table. We aren't going to cut people out as you've seen this government do. I've suggested that we actually have a real progress board that is made up of business, labour and communities to actually look at providing real information to British Columbians.

Another piece that we have talked about is health authorities – actually having some elected members from communities on health authority boards so that they are accountable to the communities – not just to the government in Victoria.

What could you do concretely to start rebuilding people's faith in collective bargaining as a way that employers and unions can solve problems?

Well, I think the first thing is to actually have free collective bargaining once again in BC – to actually let that occur. It's not happened under this government.

The second step – we've been clear that we will withdraw any legislation that moves to privatization, whether it's in the health sector or other sectors, and allow the opportunity, again, for collective bargaining to occur and to end privatization in health care and otherwise.

And then I think the third piece is what I talked about earlier – labour actually having a seat at the table when decision-making is occurring, along with business – so they are not shut out.

Many of our members have a high expectation of an NDP government – they want their 15 per cent wage cut restored. What do you say to those workers?

Well, I think the first thing is to acknowledge how poorly they have been treated ... But I think the second thing – and I've been very upfront with HEU and other people out there – it's very tough to turn back the clock, and sadly under this government there is a long list of things that have been taken apart that took, in some cases, decades to build. And we're not going to be able to fix it all overnight.

But the commitment is to go back and sit down

at the table as contracts come up – that people will have the opportunity to bargain once again. That we are not going to tear up contracts. That we will honour the contracts that are signed and people have an opportunity to sit down at the table and bargain.

The second piece, and again I think for HEU members, is to end the privatization. So we will not be looking at contracting services out to private companies. The example we have under the Liberals – a four-year record now of what that looks like – and what that looks like is poor quality service. You know, we've had concerns around cleanliness in hospitals, around food services, around support for our seniors. We've seen what's happened under these contracts – so it's also a commitment around no further contracting out.

And then third, to put all of those contracts that are there – the privatization contracts – under a microscope. Put them out in the public so the public knows what was agreed to. Look at how we can hold them to account for the standards that are there. If it's not possible to get out of the contracts, then we better hold those companies to account for the kinds of things that they are ignoring in those contracts.

I recognize that it's not easy and that it's challenging for people who have gone through not only losing their jobs – many of them – but losing the supports for their families. And our commitment is to start building back those services as we are able to.

Does that mean that legislation like Bill 29 that ripped up contracts and Bill 94, which further enabled privatization, would be repealed?

Yes, we've been very clear that we will repeal all of the legislation that permitted privatization – that opened the door basically to those things happening. The flip side of that, of course, is that it doesn't mean putting back all of the salary of the contracts,

We've been clear that we will withdraw any legislation that moves to privatization.

unfortunately, that were removed by this government. But it prevents further privatization.

You've said you'd end health care privatization. What can be done to start to reverse this trend?

Well, I think there are a few things that can still be done, like moving BC Ferries back as a crown corporation, preventing any further privatization of BC Hydro.

And again I think we can take a look at all of the private contracts that are there, open them up to the light of day, which they haven't seen. The public doesn't know what's in those contracts. We don't know if they signed five-year, 10-year, 20-year agreements or what kind of clauses are in there to end those contracts. So I think it's important for the public to have some accountability and know what this government agreed to.

And then as I said, moving to get out of those contracts where you can, where the opportunities are there. But sadly, you know, there will be some things like BC Rail that, I can guarantee, CN is not going to offer it back to the taxpayers of this province for as much as they sold it.

What would you do to stem the proliferation of contracting out day surgeries that has happened under this government?

We have said that we would utilize the dollars for addressing waitlists in public surgeries. Take the example of a private clinic, a clinic for cataract surgery or orthopedic surgery. We would use unused OR space, use hospital space that's there within the public system, and designate it as a specific surgical unit to be used for cataract or orthopedic surgery, and provide it in the public system.

It's more cost effective. It's cheaper. And the research points very clearly to the fact that it's more expensive to do surgeries in a private clinic because you're paying for profit. We would say to the health authorities very clearly: that money is to be used in the public system, not the private system.

Do you think P3s constitute a good deal for taxpayers and would a Carole James government end the practice?

I think the first thing is that taxpayers don't know what these deals are. I think that's the first fear I have, is that these kinds of private deals are often done behind closed doors and aren't publicly accountable for what's being agreed to.

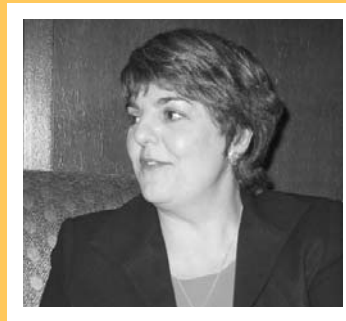
These are public facilities. I think they should be publicly financed and publicly supported.

You've made a commitment to provide 1,000 more long-term care beds in the first year of an NDP government. How are you going to achieve that?

We have been clear that it will be done with the not-for-profit sector. You could do it in a couple of ways. You could do it obviously through the not-for-profit sector in partnership with them. You could also look at some of the beds that have been closed down by the Liberals.

I think that's one of the things that should be no surprise to anybody in communities, that if a gov-

Carole James on ...



A DIFFERENT APPROACH

We have said very clearly that privatization in health care will end.

ENDING CONFRONTATION

We aren't going to cut people out as you've seen this government do.

HEALTH AUTHORITY GOVERNANCE

Having some elected members from communities on health authority boards so they are accountable to the communities – not just to the government in Victoria.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

The first thing is to actually have free collective bargaining once again in BC – to actually let that occur.

PRIVATIZATION LEGISLATION

We will withdraw any legislation that moves to privatization, whether it's in the health sector or other sectors.

THE 15 PER CENT WAGE ROLLBACK

Under this government there are a long list of things that have been taken apart that took, in some cases, decades to build. And we're not going to be able to fix it all overnight.

RESPECTING CONTRACTS

We are not going to tear up contracts.

CONTRACTED-OUT SERVICES

If it's not possible to get out of the contracts, then we better hold them to account for the kinds of things that they are ignoring in those contracts...our commitment is to start building back those services as we are able to.

PUBLICLY DELIVERED DAY SURGERIES

It's more cost effective, it's cheaper ... We would say to the health authorities very clearly that money is to be used in the public system, not the private system.

P3 PROJECTS IN HEALTH CARE

These are public facilities, I think they should be publicly financed and publicly supported.

THE NDP PLAN FOR LONG-TERM CARE BEDS

We have been clear that it will be done with the not-for-profit sector.

HOW THE NDP DIFFERS FROM THE CAMPBELL LIBERALS

New Democrats care about working people and ordinary families. Gordon Campbell doesn't...it's about bringing back a government that actually cares about all British Columbians.

ernment starts closing down long-term care beds, and doesn't build the new beds as they promised, you are going to have a crisis in long-term care.

What would a Carole James government do to bring back some stability to community social services delivery?

I have worked in that field for most of my life, so it's an area where I've seen what's happened. I've seen the chaos that's been created by going forward with regionalization with no plan in place – no direction other than, let's say, money. And I am a supporter of regionalization. I don't think that's the wrong direction to go. But in order to do that you have to have a plan in place. You have to consult with the people in the field before you move in that direction – and you don't do it as a cost-saving measure.

Most HEU members are women, and along with the rest of BC women they have seen a lot of their rights backslide under this government. What can you do to start restoring some of those rights?

Well, again, I think the best thing we can do is get rid of this government. We were a leader in British Columbia – first women's equality ministry across this country – and we need to put that back in place again.

We need to support women's centres once again. Full funding for women's centres – we've already made that commitment.

We need to ensure that there is support once again for childcare in British Columbia.

It's an embarrassment that we are one of the only provinces that doesn't have a Human Rights Commission. That needs to be back in place again.

And who would have imagined we would be debating child labour laws in a campaign in 2005? It's appalling. Putting strict requirements in place around child labour has got to be back in place in British Columbia. The six-dollar training wage is another policy that tends to affect our youth, but it also tends to affect women who are first-time workers. It's an insult to first-time workers, and to our youth, and it has to go.

In a nutshell, what would you tell HEU members about how an NDP government could make a difference in their lives and in the communities in which they live?

I think the first one is New Democrats are putting forward a very clear agenda that will work with communities and with the people in the communities. New Democrats care about working people and ordinary families. Gordon Campbell doesn't. That's very clear in every direction that he's taken.

We are committed to investing in those things that matter to average families, like health care and education. We have already made a commitment around a tuition freeze – again, for post-secondary – so that it shouldn't matter whether you have a high income to be able to access post-secondary education or apprenticeship trades programs.

So it's about bringing back good, balanced, compassionate government to our province again. It's bringing back a government that actually cares about all British Columbians – that makes sure that when the economy is doing well, everybody benefits, not just a few as we see right now under Gordon Campbell. That's the opportunity that is there for the people of this province again with New Democrats.

Bush plan to privatize social security opposed

President George Bush might be dead set on privatizing Social Security in the US, but polls show most American citizens are having none of it.

A USA Today/CNN/Gallup poll in late February found 56 per cent of the respondents against Bush's privatization scheme. And the opposition just keeps growing, up by 8 points from 48 per cent in early February. An Associated Press poll found only 39 per cent support for the plan.

Some groups charge, and the White House acknowledges, that privatization may make the program lose funds. The AFL-CIO has launched a petition campaign and demonstrators are appearing outside Bush's hand-picked "town-hall" meetings.

Does NAFTA violate constitution?

The Council of Canadians and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers have asked the Ontario Superior Court of Justice to rule NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) investment rules unconstitutional.

This is the first time a court will consider the constitutionality of trade rules that allow foreign corporations to sue governments.

The court challenge began in 2001 in response to a United Parcel Service's NAFTA complaint threatening postal and other public services. "UPS claims that simply by having a public postal system, Canada is allowing unfair competition," said Council chair Maude Barlow. "We don't intend to let foreign corporations destroy our public services without a fight." CALM

Ontario health workers under attack

Ontario's health care workers are on the march to oppose their provincial government's plan to privatize health care services and to prevent the attacks on labour rights and wages that have taken place in British Columbia.

Health unions and activists accuse Premier Dalton McGuinty's Liberal government of betraying a pre-election pledge never to privatize health care. "Masked by the language of re-inventing government, coupled with meaningless consultations, the McGuinty government is actively creating the privatization and bargaining environment faced by CUPE workers in British Columbia, Quebec and Newfoundland," states a recent Action Plan document from CUPE Ontario.

The McGuinty government was elected on a wave of popular opposition against the devastating cutbacks and privatization efforts of the previous Tory governments. But since then, it has taken several measures to retain and expand privatization measures.

One is the creation of the Hospital Business Services Corporation, designed to merge and eventually contract out services such as human resources, information technology, purchasing, housekeeping, dietary and laundry at 16 Toronto area hospitals. The move will result in major layoffs.

Last year Ontario health unions fought hard against Bill 8, the *Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act*. That legislation, which threatens the future public delivery of health services, was eventually passed.



PAT DALEY, CUPE ONTARIO PHOTO

Ontario workers rally against plans to privatize health care support services.

Critics such as the Ontario Health Coalition point out that, among other things, Bill 8 seizes local control over health spending decisions and transfers it to the provincial government.

The province is also setting up regionalized health care delivery through Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs). The LHINs will ensure health care facilities meet government-imposed targets to reduce the costs of health care delivery, as directed by the legislation.

"The creation of this kind of umbrella body will make it easier for services such as administrative, dietary, housekeeping, pharmaceutical and diagnostic, to be consolidated, rationed and eventually privatized," says CUPE.

The union's position is backed by some mainstream media reports. A recent *Toronto Star* article, for example, reported that the government's

determination to achieve \$195 million in cost savings through integrated services means privatization and legislation attacking collective agreements.

Last November workers and supporters rallied outside the Ontario Legislature. "I promise you, we will never let what happened in British Columbia happen here," said CUPE Ontario president Sid Ryan. "We may not have the right to strike. But if you take one step in that direction, you will see political work stoppages right across the province."

Health unions and the Ontario Health Coalition have already seen the heavy hand of privatization through the rise of hospitals run as "P3s" – so-called public-private partnerships. Despite an election promise to end this Conservative-initiated development, the Liberals have continued it by stealth.

DAN KEETON

>>notebook>>



Once again, this provincial government has run afoul of international labour laws.

Campbell Liberals are repeat offenders

With an election just around the corner, the Gordon Campbell government's outlaw status in the international community has been confirmed by a key United Nations' agency.

In a March 23 response to a complaint lodged by several labour organizations – including the BC Government and Service Employees' Union, the Health Sciences Association and the Canadian Labour Congress – the International Labour Organization concluded that legislation passed in 2003 violated international conventions that protect workers' rights to freely associate and organize.

One of these laws, Bill 94, attempts to deny contract workers in health care the basic successorship rights enjoyed by workers in other sectors. Bill 94 was designed to sharpen the attack on health care workers first introduced via the contract-breaking provisions contained in Bill 29.

The ILO wants the BC government to repeal or rewrite Bill 94 to bring it into line with international labour standards.

The latest finding makes the Campbell Liberals repeat offenders.

In 2003, the UN agency found the Campbell government in violation of the same convention on freedom of association after it passed Bills 27, 28 and 29 which gutted collective agreements in health care, education and post-secondary education.

Campbell's response at the time betrayed a shocking contempt for international labour standards when he stated that he had no intention of making the changes needed to comply with the ILO ruling.

And it's not the only international body with which this government has run afoul. In 2003, the UN committee monitoring the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) singled out British Columbia for its numerous policies that negatively impacted women and girls.

The Campbell Liberals continue to invest heavily in BC's international image in the run up to the 2010 Olympics and in an effort to boost trade with Pacific Rim economies.

Ironically, those efforts are being seriously undermined as a direct result of government policies that unfairly target women and workers.

PATTY GIBSON • HEU COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

THE LIBERAL RECORD

When you're in the Campbell Liberals' crosshairs – as HEU members have been for the past four years – it's easy to forget how much other damage this government has wreaked on the province. Just for the record, here are some examples of what's been lost under Gordon Campbell's cost-cutting and privatization agenda.

Keeping women in their place

BC has the highest rate of violence against women in Canada. The Campbell Liberals' response? Last year they eliminated operational funding for the province's 37 women's centres, which had its own logic since they'd already axed the Ministry of Women's Equality. Add to that severe cuts to education, employment standards, welfare, childcare, and many other support services, and you've got the Liberal philosophy for women's equality.

Don't bother me kid

After pledging to protect children, the Liberals deep-sixed the Ministry of Children and Family Development and set out on a restructuring scheme. Of course, they'd promised to stop "endless bureaucratic restructuring" before the election. But that promise was out the window as soon as they landed in office. And just to make matters worse, they cut millions upon millions of dollars from children and family services. Community social services workers saw their successorship rights eliminated, along with government's commitment to fund and implement pay equity adjustments. Oh yes, their pensions were also axed.

Off the rails

In 1996 the Gordon Campbell Liberals admitted they would privatize BC Rail, along with other public assets. They lost that year's election. So in 2001, they pledged *not* to sell the crown corporation. Well, that was a whopper. BC Rail went on the auction block and last year was sold to CNR, amidst controversy and public scandal. The deal allows the private company to run trains on BC Rail lines for the next 999 years. And leaked CNR documents reveal that hundreds more workers than initially stated by Campbell will be laid off.

What standards?

It seems that no standard is too low for the Campbell Liberals. New Employment Standards' "flexibility" rules mean bosses can sidestep the 40-hour work week and the eight-hour day. Want to complain? Investigation staff has been cut by more than 30 per cent. But hey, you can fill out a form from an Employment Standards Self-Help kit and gather your own evidence before an investigation will be considered. The kit is in English only. Liberal

amendments also allow union agreements to deliver less than the benefits guaranteed under Employment Standards.

All work and no play?

It's one thing for a child to have a job and another to create a cheap labour pool by exploiting children. The Campbell Liberals made critical changes to the *Employment Standards Act* which allow children as young as 12 to work a 20-hour week, with only a note from one parent. Not only that, the rules about where a child can work have changed. Now, underage employees can work on construction sites or near moving equipment – despite statistics showing most serious industrial accidents involve inexperienced workers.

Ripe for the plucking

Within six months of being elected, Campbell's Liberals eliminated the environment ministry and replaced it with the ministries of Sustainable Resource Management, and Water, Land and Air Protection which facilitate mining and logging in ecologically sensitive areas. They chopped millions from environmental protection programs, repealed safe drinking water regulations, eliminated the special tax on most SUVs and large vehicles, lifted the moratorium on grizzly bear hunting, gave tax breaks to logging and mining corporations, eliminated fisheries and forests renewal programs, and more.

School's out

The Campbell Liberals chopped millions from K-12 public education. That's meant 2,500 fewer teachers. And over the past four years 113 schools have been closed.

Beyond reach

The BC Liberals are standing on guard for higher education – for the wealthy, that is. They removed the previous government's lid on tuition and watched college and university fees skyrocket. They dropped the student grant, putting post-secondary education beyond the reach of many.

Piracy on the high seas

Why the secrecy surrounding BC's coastal ferry fleet? In 2003, the Liberals quietly turned the former BC Ferry Corp into an entity called BC Ferry Services Inc., and transferred maintenance and repairs to another company. Many of the details are excluded from public scrutiny. British

Columbians are rightfully nervous that BC ferries are being quietly privatized. Last fall Ferry Services CEO David Hahn offered BC ferry routes to private operators at an international conference. And contracts for the construction of new ferries have gone to Germany, robbing BC of half a billion dollars in construction costs and 2,000 jobs.

Six bucks still sucks

The Campbell Liberals floored everyone by instituting a \$6-per-hour "training" wage, requiring first-time employees to work 500 hours before qualifying for the \$8 minimum wage. The rationale? Lower minimum wages increase job opportunities. Not so. Youth unemployment has gone up.

Hydro unplugged

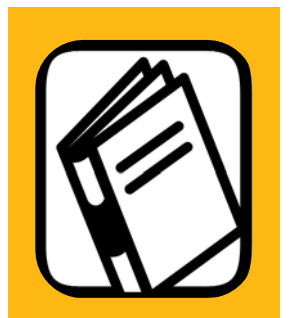
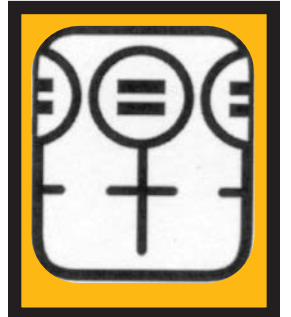
The Liberals' pre-election New Era document promised to protect BC Hydro, a well-run, publicly-owned company. Once elected, they set about dismantling BC Hydro by separating its various components, such as power generators and transmission lines. The Campbell crew also privatized Hydro's billing and accounting operations, handing them over to US-based Accenture. Meanwhile, BC owns the transmission lines, but future power generation will be contracted to private companies.

Just plain mean

In a rash attempt to push people off disability benefits, the Campbell Liberals subjected 14,000 British Columbians (who had already been granted disability benefits) to a reassessment process that not only cost millions, but put individuals under unspeakable stress. The result? A paltry 40 were found ineligible under the Liberals' new definition of disability. And they subjected another 12,000 people with "persistent and multiple barriers to employment" to a reassessment process as well.

Make them pay

Once in office Campbell's Liberals increased Medical Services Plan (MSP) premiums by 50 per cent. They also de-listed more drugs from Pharmacare coverage, and eliminated, or cut back on, medical services such as eye testing and chiropractor visits. They also contracted out the processing of MSP records to a US corporation, putting British Columbians' confidential information at risk under the US *Patriot Act*.



Change course, HEU urges health minister

The devastating effects of Bill 37 and other Campbell Liberals' health care policies were top on the agenda when HEU's administrative committee recently met with BC's newly-appointed Minister of Health Services, Shirley Bond.

"This was an important opportunity for the new minister to hear directly from HEU's leadership about where and why health care is off track," says then acting secretary-business manager Zorica Bosancic. "And we were able to discuss in very real terms how wage roll-backs and contracting out are hurting patients, workers and communities."

Privatization, concerns about the Liberals' failure to deliver on their promise to create 5,000 new long-term care beds, and emerging problems with recruitment and retention were also discussed.

Although the union urged Bond to take action, she would not commit to addressing these issues before the next round of bargaining.

LRB pressed to transfer paramedical professionals

In separate applications, HEU has asked the Labour Relations Board to transfer biomedical engineering technologists, alcohol and drug counselors, youth and family counselors at Children's and

Women's Hospital, and cardio technologists into the paramedical professional bargaining unit.

"Health care delivery is evolving rapidly as is the nature of our members' work," says HEU's then acting secretary-business manager Zorica Bosancic, adding that changing their bargaining unit is more appropriate than a benchmark reclassification.

Although HEU already represents biomedical engineers in the paramedical professional bargaining unit, the Health Sciences Association and the Health Employers' Association of BC oppose the application.

"There's absolutely no compelling legal or labour relations rationale for stripping

workers of their union membership just because their jobs have evolved," says Bosancic.

HEU is pushing the LRB to consider the applications of all four groups of workers together.

Hundreds more new workers join HEU

In recent months, hundreds more health care workers have opted to join HEU. Most workers had voted for HEU months before but Labour Relations Board challenges by the foreign-owned corporations now running the contracted-out services kept the ballot boxes sealed.

Close to 700 employees of Aramark, a US-based corporation providing hospital clean-

ing services in the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, joined HEU after the votes were counted in late January – nine months after objections were filed by Aramark and the Industrial, Wood and Allied Workers (IWA) Local 1-3567.

Also waiting several months to have their votes counted were housekeeping and dietary workers at Normanna Rest Home in Burnaby, whose votes tallied 14 to three in favour of joining HEU. Employees of the UK-based Compass Group, they joined Compass workers at Evergreen Care Home in White Rock who also voted overwhelmingly to join the union.

And there are 81 new mem-

BALANCING IT ALL

PATTY GIBSON

Outgoing NDP Leader of the Opposition **JOY MACPHAIL** reflects on her last four years in public office, holding Gordon Campbell's feet to the fire.

UNDER SIEGE IN THE LIONS' DEN

For 14 years Joy MacPhail has been at the centre of BC politics. Since 1991 she's been a sitting MLA for Vancouver Hastings. She served in two successive NDP governments as a cabinet minister several

times over, a government house leader, and as deputy premier. And for most of the last four years, she's been one of only two NDP MLAs in a government dominated by 75 Liberals.

Or, as MacPhail calls it, "that den of lions we call the legislature."

As controversial as she is courageous, MacPhail has her admirers and her detractors. But regardless of where people fall out on her previous government record, she's won tremendous respect across the board for her brilliance and tenacity in holding Gordon Campbell's feet to the fire, session after legislative session.

So however did she manage it? How did she face down 75 Liberals, day after day, for the better part of four years?

After acknowledging the support she has received from family and friends, and especially from Jenny Kwan, NDP MLA for Vancouver Mount Pleasant, she says, "Basically, I had to draw on every ounce of my

own self confidence, built over the past 53 years, just to stay alive.

"There were just so many moments when Jenny and I were completely under siege. And those moments were brutal."



"It was such an irony. Here was a government that was attacking the very people who provide care for our most vulnerable."

As a single parent mom to her now 16-year-old son Jack, she's also had to balance a host of personal responsibilities. And on reflection, she admits "there were some pretty close calls where it all could have collapsed."

Those close calls came when she had to be away from Jack for lengthy periods, but she credits support from her former spouse and "excellent co-parent" Gerry Scott for helping her through those times.

"Whenever I was in danger of a meltdown from being away from Jack for too long, he always pitched in without question and without fail."

She also credits her circle of several close, long-time friends as key to helping her keep it all together.

Asked about some of the highlights and lowlights while in Opposition, MacPhail says,

"Bill 37 stands out as a major lowlight. But ironically it was one of my most cherished times as well."

Recalling that long night last spring when she and Kwan stood on their feet for hours, stalling the inevitable and berating the government for its attack on health care workers, she says, "It was just so clear who were the good guys and who were the bad guys.

"As we walked home at seven that morning, I stopped at a picket line at a long-term care home, where several HEU members were holding the line with some of their residents and I just burst into tears.

"It was such an irony. Here was a government that was attacking the very people who provide care for our most vulnerable. And these workers, who had just taken a 15 per cent wage cut, they were thanking me. It was an extremely humbling moment, one I'll never forget."

Unfortunately, MacPhail has had many opportunities to witness the impact of this government's mean-spirited policies on people. And in order to denounce those policies effectively, she's had to be up to speed on a wide range of issues.

But quick-witted debate inside the lions' den is only one part of her job. Her duties outside the legislature are numerous.

She travels several times a month to support the work of her party. Serving the constituents in her riding requires numerous engagements and meetings. And she estimates that she does about three or four speeches a week outside of the legislature.

As MacPhail prepares to leave public office (she is not a candidate in the upcoming election) her professional and personal life is about to take a big change. She's getting married in July to noted film producer James Shavick and says she's looking forward to some long overdue "rest and contemplation."

What's next? MacPhail says she is taking time to make that decision "so my next career is not based solely on what I've done in the past."

Good luck Joy. There's no question, you will be missed.

bers ranging from food service staff to nurses at Rocky Mountain Village, a multi-level care facility run as a public-private partnership, which replaced a non-profit facility in Fernie.

Fortunately, the 25 house-keeping, dietary and laundry workers employed by Sodexo at Foyer Maillard, a Coquitlam long-term care facility, didn't have to wait. Their 100-per-cent in favour votes were counted immediately, on March 4.

New benchmark needed for unit coordinators

BC's unit coordinators are in the process of establishing a unified benchmark to better reflect their increasingly vital

role on hospital nursing units.

Health employers met with the union's unit coordinators' committee on March 1 to review benchmark criteria. The parties agreed on about 80 per cent of a new benchmark recognizing the rapidly evolving duties of these health care professionals, who are responsible for processing doctors' orders and prioritizing daily activities on their units affecting both patients and nursing staff.

"It's important that we keep up the pressure as we work to conclude the benchmark and move on to discussions about an appropriate level of pay that recognizes these duties and responsibilities," says HEU's then acting secretary-business manager

Zorica Bosancic. A final benchmark agreement will be announced shortly.

Union laundry project a resounding success

A successful union-led laundry project in Nelson may be giving the Interior Health Authority reason to reconsider its plans for an authority-wide laundry plant in Salmon Arm.

The IHA says that construction costs for the plant have increased by \$2.5 million to \$14 million and that projected transportation costs are also higher than expected.

At the same time, a pilot project led by HEU laundry workers at Kootenay Lake Hospital is on track to exceed cost-savings targets set by

the IHA in August, 2004.

HEU members proposed the project as alternative to shutting down laundry completely in the east and west Kootenays.

The project has been so successful that Jamie Friess, the HEU laundry worker spearheading the Nelson project, has been drafted to work with Okanagan laundry workers and IHA officials to find similar efficiencies in the Okanagan.

"Public delivery of laundry services in the IHA makes good economic sense – we've successfully made that case in Nelson," says Friess. "And I'm glad that laundry workers will have a chance to do the same in the Okanagan."

HEU members run for political office

Four HEU members and one staff person are running for office on May 17.

Pat Shaw, unit coordinator at Dawson Creek & District Hospital, is the Peace River South NDP candidate. LPN Don Roberts is running for the Green Party in Prince George-Mount Robson.

Cathy Pinsent is the NDP candidate in North Vancouver-Seymour and an activity aide at Lion's Gate Hospital.

NDP candidate Erda Walsh is hoping to regain the East Kootenay seat. She's a casual clerical worker at Cranbrook Regional Hospital. And HEU bargaining director Raj Chouhan is the NDP's choice in Burnaby-Edmonds.

factfile

HEU has represented LPNs since 1948

LPNs have a long history of union activism, participating in local executives, provincial executives, and bargaining committees

In the 1974-1975 Collective Agreement HEU secured 'equal pay for equal work' by negotiating the elimination of wage discrimination between practical nurses and orderlies

In 1999, HEU negotiated a \$5-million initiative that reintroduced LPNs into continuing care

In 2001, HEU negotiated \$5 million for LPN acute care positions

In 2002, BC employed 4,262 LPNs, 300 more than the previous year

In 2002-2003, HEU successfully advocated for Vancouver Community College to double its full-time LPN education seats and add an additional 40 part-time seats

Over the past few years, LPNs have been assisted to access refresher courses and upgrades to support their work toward full scope of practice

ON THE JOB

PATTY GIBSON

Whether she's on the phone, on her computer, or on the road, **KATHY CHOUINOR** is helping LPNs and others understand the role these nurses can play in health care.

SUPPORTING FULL SCOPE PRACTICE

When LPN Kathy Chouinor moved to BC in 1996 she was surprised to find that unlike Ontario, where she had worked for more than a decade, most health facilities in BC did not recognize "full scope practice" for LPNs.

Landing a job where she could use her full range of nursing skills proved a much bigger challenge than she had originally anticipated. But land one she did – in a residential home for young paraplegics.

Not long after that she received a call from Ponderosa Lodge in Kamloops asking her to fill their first-ever full scope LPN position. And a few months later, she took a job at Overlander in Salmon Arm where they were introducing full scope positions into their health care team.

"When I first moved here I didn't realize the limitations on the scope of practice for BC LPNs," says Chouinor, a consultant and mentor for LPNs in the *Thompson, Cariboo, Shuswap Health Services Division* of Interior Health.

It's the only position of its kind in the province and it's a job Chouinor loves.

On any given day Chouinor is busy providing LPNs with hands-on support, facilitating workshops, contributing to policy development or fielding calls from people across the province.

And she's passionate about her work. She sees the difference LPNs make on the floor and she knows how important it is for these nurses to be able to use their full range of competencies.

"Prior to full scope practice LPNs were essentially working with one hand tied behind their back," says

KEITH ANDERSON PHOTO



CHOUINOR

Chouinor. "They weren't really allowed to think, to make decisions, to use their clinical judgment."

Now, increasing numbers of LPNs are being trained and valued for the range of abilities they bring to the health care team. "My job," says Chouinor, "is to support them in that role, assist their skill development and help them understand

the expectations that come with full scope practice."

It's also Chouinor's job to educate others about the expanded role LPNs are playing in health care – whether it's physicians, RNs, care aides, administrators or family members.

So what is "full scope practice" and what exactly does it involve?

"The term 'full scope practice' is actually old language," explains Chouinor. "Now people refer to 'a full range of competencies' which includes things like administering medications, coordinating care within a health care team, and directing or guiding other staff."

Chouinor says her own role as a consultant and mentor is constantly evolving and adjusting to new or emerging needs.

"It never stops," she says. "I'm the only person of this nature in the province. I get a lot of calls. And of course, we share anything we build with anybody and everybody."

continued from page 13



Nisga'a members train for stewards

Six HEU members from the Nisga'a local in northern BC traveled to New Aiyansh in early March to take the union's one-day shop steward training course.

The women work at four health centers that provide services to First Nations people living in the Nass

Valley. The local negotiated its first independent collective agreement in 2000 and is now preparing to bargain its third contract.

Negotiations will begin in April.

Muzin meets with federal health minister

HEU president Fred Muzin

met with federal health minister Ujjal Dosanjh in early March to discuss the enforcement of the Canada Health Act, the ongoing privatization of health services and the need for national standards for community and continuing care.

Muzin emphasized the negative impact contracting out has on patient care and the vulnerability of our public health care system to free trade agreement provisions if privatization is unchecked.

In relation to seniors' care, he lobbied for national standards in community and continuing care.

Minister Dosanjh acknowledged the importance of the issues Muzin raised and

how federal and provincial governments must work together to address them.

HEU prepares for CLC convention

A national childcare program, credentialing of foreign-trained health care workers, and public-private partnerships are just three of the issues that HEU delegates want to talk about at this June's convention of the Canadian Labour Congress in Montreal.

HEU's provincial executive has submitted 16 resolutions for debate at the CLC convention.

More than 40 delegates will represent HEU at the national convention, which is held every two years.

New roads to travel

Carol Bjarnason has been called HEU's secret weapon. Her communications colleagues think of her as the union's hidden treasure. Members know her best for her graphic design and layout work on countless stickers and leaflets, and on our award-winning *Guardian* newspaper.

Carol's worked "behind the scenes" for HEU members since December 1989. Now she's leaving the union's employ to fulfill new goals and aspirations and turn her considerable talents to other pursuits.

Saying that Carol will be missed is an understatement. But missed she will be. Thank you Carol.

APRIL

MAY

JUNE

APRIL 4 - 6

HEU Provincial Executive Meeting

APRIL 13 - 16

CUPE BC Convention, Victoria

APRIL 22

Earth Day

APRIL 24

Passover

APRIL 28

Day of Mourning for Workers Killed or Injured on the Job

MAY 1

May Day - International Workers' Day

MAY 17

BC's Provincial Election

MAY 23

Victoria Day - HEU offices closed

JUNE 2

Aboriginal People's Day

JUNE 5

World Environment Day

JUNE 11

Trade unions become legal in Canada - 1872

JUNE 13 - 17

CLC Convention - Montreal

JULY 1

Kazimi's story of the Komogata Maru

Director Ali Kazimi's important new film, *Continuous Journey*, opens the DOXA Documentary & Video Festival May 24 at the Vogue Theatre in Vancouver. It tells of the 376 men, women and children from British India who sailed to Vancouver aboard the Komogata Maru in 1914.

Audiences in Toronto and New York have praised this prize-winning film as a complex tale of hope, despair, treachery and tragedy. The culmination of eight years of intensive research, the film is described by critics as "a provocative, moving and multilayered film essay" woven together by photographs, newsreels, home movies and official documents.

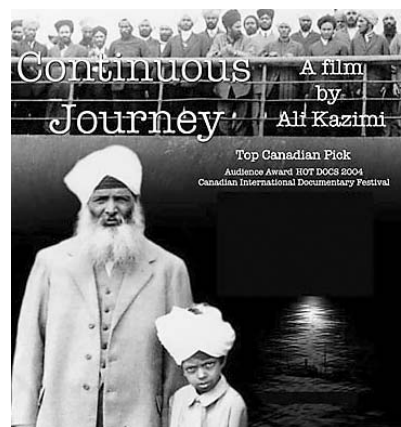
This compelling story is a landslide across Canada's bumpy road to multi-culturalism. It's one of countless examples of actions taken against non-European immigrants. Others include discriminatory head taxes, the internment of the Japanese and the 1907 mob attack on Vancouver's Chinatown and Japanese businesses by 30,000 supporters of the Asiatic Exclusion League waving placards "For a White Canada".

Sadly, the mainstream labour movement of the period supported these sentiments, believing that immigrants from India, China and other Asian countries would take their members' jobs, undercut wages or be used as scabs to break strikes.

By 1914 the BC government had passed laws designed to stop the so-called "brown invasion". To enter Canada, Indian nationals had to arrive by a direct route - a continuous journey - from India and have \$200 on their person.

As citizens of the British Commonwealth, this group of 12 Hindus, 24 Muslims and 340 Sikhs from the Punjab region believed they were entitled to immigrate to Canada. To test the blatantly racist laws, they began their voyage in Hong Kong, with a stopover in Japan. Few passengers had the required \$200.

By the time the ship neared Vancouver, after nearly two months at sea, its arrival was greatly anticipated. The *Vancouver Province* published inflammatory articles with headlines such as "Boat Loads of Hindus on Way to Vancouver." As government authorities prepared to turn the ship away, the Indian immigrant communities held meetings in Gurdwaras (temples)



across Canada to decide strategy, collect money to pay lawyers and buy food, and organize support.

The Komogata Maru entered Vancouver's harbour on May 23, 1914. Those aboard were immediately denied permission to land because they had violated the exclusionist laws. For the next two months, the

passengers lived like prisoners on the ship while the authorities held siege and drove them to the brink of thirst and starvation.

After two months of legal wrangling, only 24 of the 376 passengers were successful in their effort to stay in Canada. The others were finally given food for the return trip and were turned around on July 23 to sail back to India.

But the story doesn't end there.

As the Komogata Maru approached Calcutta on September 26, it was stopped by a European gunboat and put under guard. The boat was then forced to land at Budge Budge harbour and the passengers were told they would be transported to Punjab on a special train. However, most wanted to go to Calcutta where they had planned

to place a holy Guru Granth Sahib in a Gurdwara. The decision was made to walk the 17 miles to Calcutta.

The police blocked the march and forced everyone back to Budge Budge, where they were ordered back on the ship. Having spent five and one-half months aboard, the passengers decided to take a stand and refused. British officials opened fire on the group, killing 20 and injuring another nine.

History. But, as the title implies, the journey continues.

The few reminders of the Komogata Maru in Vancouver include a plaque near the Gateway to the Pacific and another in the Ross Street Gurdwara.

Now we have this film. It offers a detailed and insightful portrait of Vancouver at the turn of the century and helps us to understand the immigration history that continues to influence attitudes, laws and current events.

As director Kazimi says, "It's a story that affects all of us."

DOCUMENTARY

Continuous Journey

Produced and directed by Ali Kazimi, 2004
87 minutes, Canada

previewed by Joey Hartman



Gordon Campbell's Liberals

PUTTING OUR HEALTH CARE AT RISK

Find out more at www.heu.org

A MESSAGE FROM BC'S HEALTH CARE WORKERS – HEU

Authorized by the Hospital Employees' Union, Mary LaPlante registered sponsor under the Elections Act, 604.438.5000

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