



Pink Triangle Committee members: Karen McVeigh, Gretchen Dulmage, Bert Munn, Tim Rattel and Debbie Lawrance.

## Learning tolerance is a good place to start



TIM RATTEL  
Editorial

I've been thinking about the word "tolerance". Recently, I was talking to a gay co-worker and we agreed that we both had lost patience with people merely tolerating sexuality.

We weren't that interested in helping people gain an understanding of our lives, or convince them of our rights. That might have been so on a cynical day.

But let me put it into context. Over the years, at least two co-workers – in my experience – have gratuitously given me their opinion that gays must have been molested in childhood. After 20 years of being openly gay, I've lost patience with people's naive and insulting opinions, so freely given. I know first-hand that when LGBT individuals go public – or, "come out" – they are appreciative of any acceptance received. But at some point, we begin to realize that we don't need approval.

I asked my partner about my impatience around tolerance. He quickly brought me back down to earth. He reminded me that we tolerate people every day in our workplace and communities, otherwise we'd all be in a constant state of irritation.

So, what is it about tolerance that is equivocal?

I got my answer in the prayer openly gay New Hampshire Episcopal Bishop Gene Robinson delivered at Barack Obama's Inauguration in January.

In one line he said, "Bless us with freedom from mere tolerance – replacing it with a genuine respect and warm embrace of our differences, and an understanding that in our diversity, we are stronger."

While we may tolerate annoying personalities and frustrating comments, a genuine respect for diversity and an honest attempt to understand differences is a good goal to strive for.

To that end, learning tolerance is a good place to start.

## Committee Report

### Pink Triangle Standing Committee rolls up its sleeve and gets down to work

In March, the Pink Triangle Standing Committee met for the first time since convention. We had a busy and productive session, planning our course and priorities for the coming months.

This will be a particularly busy spring for both HEU and Pink Triangle Standing Committee members. Many of us are working to support candidates in the May 12 provincial election.

The committee is also promoting the International Day Against Homophobia (IDAH) on May 17, and will be representing HEU at the IDAH breakfast on May 15 at the Coast Plaza in Vancouver, hosted by Vancouver's LGBT Centre. Last year, HEU was a major sponsor of the event, and assisted the Centre in publishing the *Health Matters* pamphlets that provide health information to the LGBT community.

On June 16 and 17, the union will hold its biennial equity conference, at which HEU standing committee members are elected. In past years, the LGBT contingent has had the smallest turnout. We hope to have a strong showing this year with many new caucus members learning more about equity, and exploring ways to get involved.

Eight people will be elected to the Pink Triangle Standing Committee, including a female and male co-chair, a communications officer, an assistant communications officer, four members at-large, as well as alternates. The conference is also a good opportunity for members to learn about other equity-seeking groups and build alliances with First Nations, People with disAbilities, Ethnic Diversity and Women.

This spring, the committee will also plan summer pride events throughout the province, and review its role in multi-union pride (a contingent in Vancouver's Pride Parade).

TIM RATTEL





## International Day Against Homophobia:



### Homophobia knows no boundaries

For the past few years, the HEU Pink Triangle Standing Committee has supported the International Day Against Homophobia (IDAH) on May 17.

Last year, we had a particularly strong presence at the Vancouver International Day Against Homophobia Breakfast (a gathering of community leaders and activists) because the theme was homophobia as it related to health care and LGBT health issues.

*Homosexuality Knows No Borders* is the theme for the 2009 campaign. As HEU represents a strong ethnically diverse and multicultural work force, this year's theme of understanding difference in a multicultural context is again particularly important to our workplaces.

The following, reprinted in part from the Fondation Émergence's (the Canadian group behind the IDAH) website <<http://www.homophobiaday.org/>>, describes the theme and goals of this year's campaign.

Since 2003, the International Day Against Homophobia has continued to grow. The 2009 campaign goal is to raise awareness among ethno-cultural communities of gay and lesbian issues, and sexual diversity.

Not all of the world's citizens are able to enjoy the privilege of living in an egalitarian society. In some countries, same-sex relationships are still prohibited. And in many countries, sexual orientation is recognized, for the same reasons as practising a religion, as a basic freedom, and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is illegal.

People from countries in which homosexuality is legally banned may have some of their own values challenged: what's prohibited in their own country is allowed and legally protected in another country. Homosexuality is a universal fact, and borders cannot be forced on it.

For more information, visit <[www.homophobiaday.org](http://www.homophobiaday.org)>, and watch for the posters and pamphlets at your local.



International Women's Day Breakfast

## LGBT ISSUES AND INFORMATION LINE

**WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!** *Did you know that we have...?*

- a confidential HEU LGBT Issues and Information telephone line: **604-456-7192, ext. 3**, or toll-free **1-800-663-5813 ext. 7192**
  - an HEU pride website – [www.pridepages.org](http://www.pridepages.org)
  - a quarterly newsletter, *Pride Pages*
  - a Pink Triangle Standing Committee that meets three to four times a year to work on all types of things for you
  - community events and campaigns that all are invited to attend or become involved in
  - an equity conference every two years with registration open to all LGBT members
- Email us at [glesbian@heu.org](mailto:glesbian@heu.org), phone us at **604-456-7192, ext. 3** or call toll-free at **1-800-663-5813 ext. 7192**.  
ALL CALLS ARE CONFIDENTIAL.



Karen McVeigh, Debbie Lawrance and Victor Elkins.

## Member runs for MLA seat

Over the past two years, HEU member Debbie Lawrance has become so active in the union and her community that she's now an NDP candidate in the Surrey-Panorama riding in this May's provincial election.

As with everything Debbie does, she throws herself wholeheartedly into it – whether it's joining HEU's Pink Triangle Standing Committee, working on the Living Wage Campaign, teaching union activism as a member facilitator, getting elected to the HEU Provincial Executive, or running for provincial office. She's positive, energetic and quickly draws people to her. Here's an excerpt of our recent interview.

**How has your involvement with HEU influenced your decision to run for provincial office?**

Politics and union go hand-in-hand. Basically, it was wonderful to be involved in seeing how the ability to change policies [at convention] can influence people and make a difference.

**How will you take your union experiences into provincial politics?**

As we all know, there are many forms of government. Unions are like a mini-government in terms of the systems and how they work. The experience of being able to really make a difference, participate in effective leadership and building relationships – within the powerful system of HEU – has definitely built my foundation for going into provincial politics.

**How does your experience as an out lesbian form your perspective?**

It broadens my horizons and support network, and allows me to reach out to all walks of life, including gays and lesbians within our society.

**How would you describe yourself as a leader? What is the key to your success?**

I'm a leader who encourages individual participation, looks beyond the surface, and tries to inspire my team. My [election campaign] team is extremely successful; they're stars. There's a buzz about my team right now, and how much they're doing. I value each person for all that

they bring to the table. I value everyone's contribution – great or small – because everyone matters.

**Has your work in health care influenced your activism?**

Having worked front-line health care at the Cancer Centre for 30 years, Gordon Campbell's cutbacks influenced me a great deal. I realized that I could just sit by and fall victim to that again, and not try to do anything about it, or sit at the table with Gordon Campbell and go to bat for us – health care workers.

**What do you see as some of the key issues facing this province?**

There are so many: health care, education, the environment... We need health care that is accessible for all, we need to strengthen our schools, we need to support and respect our seniors. Those are key issues.

**Do you have any suggestions for HEU members on how to be more active?**

There's something for everyone within HEU. I didn't think that the union was for me until the last few years when I found my door into the union through the LGBT caucus and the Equal Opportunities Committee, which encompasses ethnic diversity.

Maybe you don't want to be a shop steward. Maybe that's not your thing, but there are lots of options. We really need to encourage people to find something they're interested in, like what conference they can attend. Something as simple as attending the Women's Conference because they identify with being a woman or the Equity Conference because they identify with one of the equity-seeking groups. It's a great way to get out and meet people. HEU was the foundation that has inspired me to get politically active and take it to this level.

TIM RATTEL