



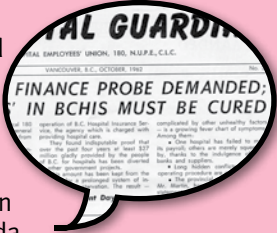
## COFFEE BREAK

### Remember when?

In the *Guardian* 50 years ago:

#### 1962 Hospital Finance Probe Demanded

“Officers and employees of the Union have penetrated a smoke screen of propaganda and untruths surrounding the operation of B.C. Hospital Insurance Service, the agency which is charged with providing hospital care...They found indisputable proof that over the past four years at least \$27 million gladly provided by the people of B.C. for hospitals has been diverted to other government projects.”



In the *Guardian* 40 years ago:

#### 1972 Editorial: The Prospects for 1972

“This past year must be characterized as a year of procrastination, delay and false platitudes in the area of labour relations. One of the reasons for this unhealthy condition is the tight-fisted policy of the Provincial Government and the low priority which the Government adopts to hospital operation and the improvement to health care delivery...It is obvious that the political powers that be”, do not view hospital financing and the development of an effective and efficient health care delivery system with the same priority as the construction of roads or the development and sale of Hydro power.”



In the *Guardian* 30 years ago:

#### 1982 HEU Announces “Don’t Get Sick” Campaign

“Just as it is unpopular to advertise an outbreak of staphylococcus, or scabies in a hospital, so too is it unpopular to advertise a dangerously overloaded health care system. However, responsibility demands that such risks be made known to the public...There are times when unions must take strong actions because of strong reasons. Now is such a time...If health care is to continue to be a right and not a privilege, then HEU must be prepared to lead the way.”



## Getting ready for independent bargaining

HEU’s bargaining agenda in 2012 not only includes contract talks in facilities, community health and community social services, but also negotiations at more than 40 independent bargaining tables before year’s end.

About 75 support services members – representing Acciona, Marquise, Compass, Aramark and Sodexo – will gather at the Sheraton Vancouver

Airport Hotel for the Health Authority Contracted Services Bargaining Conference from June 12 to June 14.

In preparation, members have been filling out bargaining surveys at more than 60 work sites around the Lower Mainland and on Vancouver Island.

Conference delegates will participate in large plenary and small group discussions based on the survey results

and prioritize bargaining demands.

“The main conference objective is to prepare and mobilize members for what will likely be a challenging set of negotiations,” says Susan Fisher, coordinator of organizing and independent bargaining. “They’ll prioritize issues that will form the basis of key bargaining demands expected to be presented to employers in the fall.”

HEU represents about 4,000 members working for independent contractors.

## Know your rights

# Your right to refuse unsafe work

**W**orkers’ rights extend beyond a negotiated collective agreement. They’re also firmly entrenched in the federal and provincial *Human Rights Code*, the *Labour Code* and the *Workers Compensation Act* (the Act), which encompasses the *Occupational Health and Safety Regulation*.

Many workers acquire on-the-job injuries because they’re unaware that they can refuse – by law – to perform unsafe work.

In this province, unlike some others, workers don’t have to prove that the work is unsafe; they just need to have “reasonable cause” or an “honest belief” that performing a certain duty would put them – or a patient/resident – at risk of getting hurt.

Although HEU facilities, community health and community social services collective agreements have language on occupational risks, there’s nothing specific on the process for refusing unsafe work.

That’s when workers need to rely on article 3.12 of the Act: “A person must not carry out or cause to be carried out any work process or operate or cause to be operated any tool, appliance or equipment if that person has reasonable cause to believe that to do

so would create an undue hazard to the health and safety of any person.”

So, if you identify that something about your job is unsafe, then the first step is to notify your supervisor; tell them your concern, and offer a suggestion on making the duty safer (if applicable). If there’s no supervisor available on site, then contact whoever is in charge.

Article 3.13 of the Act – “no discrimination” – protects workers from employer retaliation, disciplinary action or wage loss.

But it’s important to know that you are not refusing to work; you are refusing to do a portion of your job that you believe is unsafe.

The employer has the right to assign you other duties in addition to the ones you deem safe as part of your job. You cannot simply refuse to work, and then sit in the cafeteria or go home.

Once reported, the employer must investigate and make a determination. They’ll either agree that the task is unsafe and offer a remedy, or disagree and say there’s no risk of injury.

If you still feel unsafe, the next step is to contact your local OH&S rep or shop steward to advocate on your behalf. They’ll investigate with you and the employer, and render another decision.

And if you disagree, you still have the right to refuse unsafe work. You’ll need to contact a WorkSafeBC representative to do an inspection. Tell them: “I am exercising my 3.12 right to refuse unsafe work.” They have someone available 24 hours a day to investigate unsafe work.

If the WCB rep deems the duty to be safe, then you have to perform it as part of your job.

Examples of unsafe work may include: patient and resident handling (lifting when short-staffed), exposure to hazardous material without proper training or equipment, providing care for violent patients and residents, using broken or faulty equipment, and working in excessively loud or cramped quarters.

Find out more information at <[www.worksafebc.com](http://www.worksafebc.com)>.

BRENDA WHITEHALL

## <<newsbites>>

### Ontario doctors say ‘tax us’

A group of Ontario physicians want higher taxes on their own incomes and other high-income earners.

Doctors for Fair Taxation launched a petition earlier this spring with a demand for higher taxes on the highest 10 per cent of income earners.

“Almost all the economic gains of the past three decades have gone to Canada’s one per cent, but our taxes haven’t gone up accordingly,” they say. “It is immoral to ask the poor, the unemployed and low-income workers to balance the province’s books and not require anything significant of Ontario’s highest earning citizens.”

The doctors say they live a good

life, but many of their patients are suffering and that Ontario’s cost-cutting budget will axe programs and services that are crucial to health and social development.

You can find out more at <[www.doctorsforfairtaxation.ca](http://www.doctorsforfairtaxation.ca)>.

### Federal bill guts jobs and environmental protections

As the *Guardian* goes to press, Stephen Harper’s Conservatives are pushing a far-reaching bill through parliament that will result in 70,000 full-time job cuts (35,000 in the public sector and 37,000 in the private sector), weaken environmental protections and cut public services.

The 400-page bill contains sweeping changes to dozens of federal statutes including Employment Insurance, pensions, national parks, border security, foreign aid, fisheries and environmental protection.

The New Democrat Opposition is calling on the Conservatives to break up *Bill C-38* to allow for greater scrutiny and more informed debate.

Here in B.C., concerns are also being raised that the budget will gut the *Fisheries Act*, the most powerful federal environmental protection for coastal waters and weaken Canada’s environmental assessments for major industrial projects.

“We are dismantling public pro-