FIRE! THREE DUNCAN LPNS FACED DANGER WHEN THEIR EXTENDED CARE FACILITY BURNED PAGE 7

Guardian

VOL. 14 NO 1 THE VOICE OF THE HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1996

Working for better care are HEU members Sandy Harper, Victoria General, Deb Hills, Gorge Road, Baljit Bhatia, Lands End, and Marilyn Rust, Western Human Resources.

Ready to bargain!

STEPHEN HOWARD PHOTOS

HEU heads to the bargaining table Feb. 22 with a package of proposals designed to preserve health care services by protecting the jobs of the people who provide those services.

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ALSO
SPECIAL BARGAINING SUPPLEMENT INSIDE

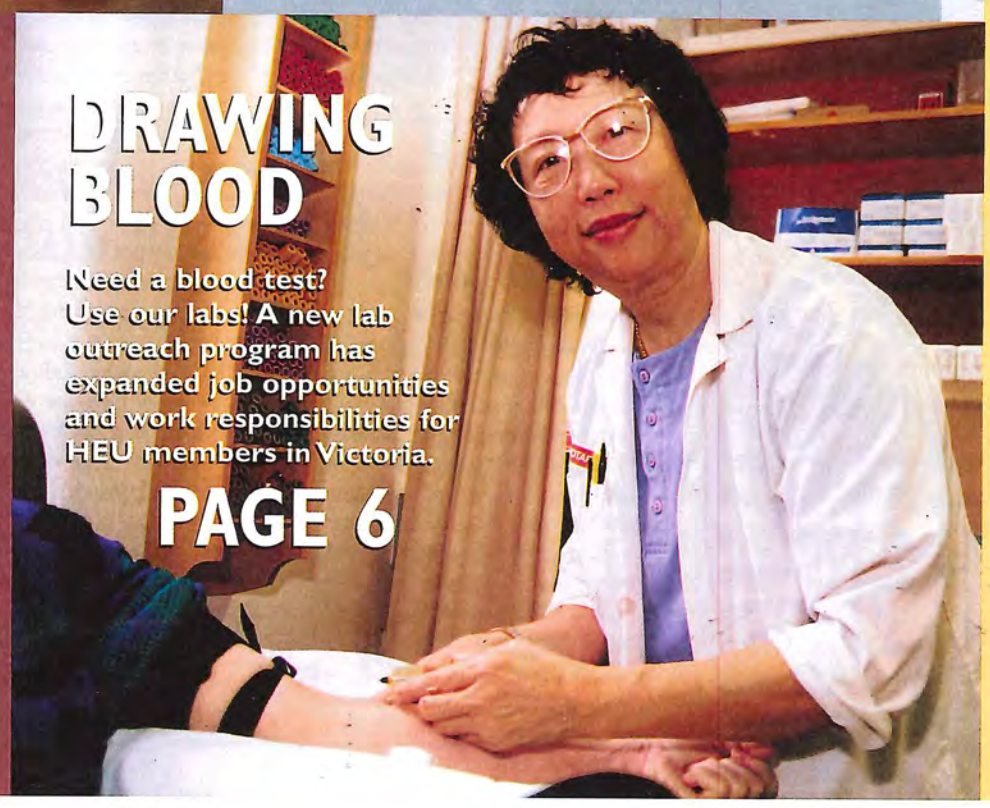
Premier Clark

B.C.'s new Premier, Glen Clark, strongly backed employment security on the NDP leadership trail. HEU president Fred Muzin was part of Clark's campaign advisory committee.

THEY'RE AT THE TROUGH

JANUARY 25, 1996 — CORPORATE TAX FREEDOM DAY

PAGE 8



DRAWING BLOOD

Need a blood test? Use our labs! A new lab outreach program has expanded job opportunities and work responsibilities for HEU members in Victoria.

PAGE 6

HEALTH WORKERS
THE heart OF HEALTH CARE

COMMENT

Are employers committed to protecting medicare?

by Chris Allnutt

THE BARGAINING demands HEU will be advocating in negotiations this month pose this challenge to health employers: are you committed to health reform and protection of medicare?

Or do you just want to cut services?

A recent poll conducted by HEU shows overwhelming public awareness that you can't protect health services if you're laying off hundreds or thousands of health care workers. More than 95 per cent of British Columbians want to protect their sizeable investment in the skills and training of health care workers.

Taxpayers believe we have an excellent health system, but they're fearful that federal cuts will hurt services and they support more funding to protect medicare.

'If employers think now is the time to roll back basic protection for caregivers, they are sadly mistaken'

HEU is taking a bargaining package to the table which we believe can meet those goals.

Our Wage Policy Conference set an ambitious agenda to redress longstanding shortcomings in many areas. The bargaining committee has developed these into practical and pragmatic approaches to take to employers.

Employment security, action on workload, improved benefits for those facing injury and disability, a fair wage – those are the basic ingredients of a new agreement.

With those elements in place, we can protect services and tap the commitment of health workers to deliver better care.

But if employers think now is the time to seek concessions, to roll back basic protection for health caregivers, they are sadly mistaken.

Neither health workers nor the public will support an Alberta or Ontario-style slash and burn approach that can only undermine medicare.

HEU members will be evaluating the response health employers make to our proposals, which are designed to achieve a quick, negotiated settlement.

Together with the other unions in the health sector, we will be working hard to meet the public's demand for quality, accessible medicare services.

But if employers want to head in a different direction, they will have to answer to the people who are paying for our health care services.

Our commitment to British Columbians is simple: we're working for better care. We can't deliver on that promise if we're confronted by unemployment, displacement or contract cuts. If necessary, we'll have to be ready to take action to back up our proposals.

The NDP has made its position clear: it is committed to protection of medicare and it sees employment security as a critical element of its pledge to protect services.

Health workers and B.C. taxpayers are looking to health employers to make a similar commitment.

voice/mail

THE GUARDIAN WELCOMES YOUR FEEDBACK. SEND LETTERS TO 2006 WEST 10TH AVE., VANCOUVER V6J 4P5 OR PHONE 1-800-909-4994. PLEASE BE BRIEF.

Mandatory work programs help women says reader

In response to Workfare Won't Work, [*Guardian* September/October] by a man, Dan Keeton, I think you are very wrong to attack the idea of workfare.

I can see eliminating a law that would allow recipients to replace existing workers, however.

Approximately 17 years ago I was on welfare, depressed and unsure of myself. A wonderful man, a social worker, put me on a mandatory work program.

I was afraid, but also, with his encouragement, I learned first aid, and how to use a power saw. I also learned to care for the elderly.

Today, I use a power saw to cut firewood and I have earned a living as a long-term care aide for 15 years.

Also, there are many teenage, single-parent women in this part of the province who need self-esteem and help to channel their talents. These women have addiction problems and dependency on male-abuser problems.

An attack on a program like this is an attack on these people. So, if you honestly want to help workers, watch how you attack a system that helps women to obtain a better lifestyle. Buster, it's women's tax money now too.

KATHLEEN MCMULLIN,
Vanderhoof

He really likes the Guardian

I finally got around to reading the September/October 1995 issue of the *Guardian*.

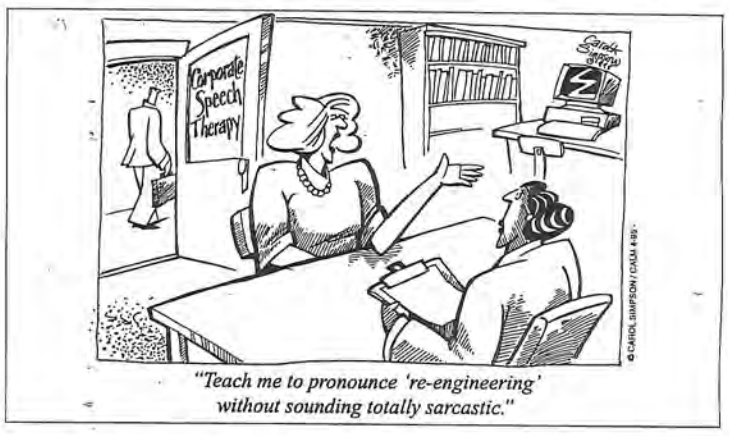
I really like your paper. The non-preachy writing style is great. The contents are a nice balanced mixture of institutional information, political insights, local and broader union issues, and useful personal material. I particularly liked Dan Keeton's article about *Under the Tree Alternatives*.

May I go so far as to say it is by far the best local union newspaper that I have seen in Canada, or anywhere else.

Keep up the good work.

GILBERT LEVINE,
Ottawa

• Levine is a former CUPE national research director who's catching up on back issues in his retirement.



"Teach me to pronounce 're-engineering' without sounding totally sarcastic."

CEP sounds sirens to save medicare

On behalf of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers' Union of Canada (CEP), I want to extend our recognition for the assistance and cooperation that HEU provided to our Ambulance Tour to Save Medicare.

In many of the 16 B.C. communities that our ambulance tour visited, HEU members turned out to offer their support.

CEP's goal with the ambulance tour was to raise awareness of the emergency facing medicare and to underscore our strong opposition to the introduction of a two tiered for-profit medical system in Canada.

We believe that we met our goal through the distribution of thousands of pieces of literature and by speaking through the local media.

One of the most successful parts of our campaign was speaking directly to workers at their worksites. Thousands of signed cards in defense of medicare were collected, and hundreds of photographs of working British Columbians were taken and sent to Ottawa for the culmination of the campaign on Dec. 4.

The Ambulance Tour to Save Medicare was a major effort for our union, and we are grateful for your assistance. We intend to continue campaigning to preserve our medicare system and social programs, and we look forward to working together on these issues again.

BRIAN PAYNE,
Western Region Vice-President, CEP

Guardian

"In humble dedication to all those who toil to live."

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CALM ACPS

What we're up to

Senior casuals covered in hiring priority

With new Master Collective Agreement provisions that went into force Jan. 1, casual employees with more than 2,400 hours of seniority are now included in the regular employee hiring priority.

Casuals with less than 2,400 hours seniority are encouraged to continue to apply for all vacancies as well, since 90 percent of the 7,800 vacancies posted with the Health Labour Adjustment Agency have been sent back to facilities unmatched.

Kelowna Office now toll free

That long distance feeling just got a little cheaper for HEU and union members living in the Okanagan.

Effective Jan. 1, members calling the Okanagan office from outside Kelowna can dial 1-800-219-9699, toll free.

LTD recipients cleared to serve on health boards

Recent correspondence from health minister Paul Ramsey has broadened the ability of HEU members and other unionized caregivers to be members of regional health boards and community health councils.

According to a review by the health ministry, health workers on long-term disability are not direct employees of health care facilities.

As a consequence, all LTD recipients are now eligible to serve on these new health care decision-making boards.

Ramsey did say that when an LTD recipient returns to work, they would be ineligible to serve. Under the ministry's current conflict of interest policy, direct employees of health care facilities aren't allowed to hold decision-making positions.

Convention alert

It may only be February, but HEU officials are already hard at work making arrangements for the union's 20th biennial convention which is set for Sept. 16 to 20, under the big top at the Richmond Inn.

Here are some of the key dates to help locals plan for this important convention.

The Convention call will go to locals March 19. June 17 is the deadline for locals to submit credentials, constitutional amendments, resolutions and accommodation forms.

On Aug. 1, a package of all the proposed resolutions and constitutional amendments will be circulated to locals.

continued on page 4

The CLC's human rights conference in Montreal (Nov. 10-14) attracted union activists from across the country. Right are HEU's Nisha Buksh, Betty Baxter, Laura Muzin, Crystal Williamson and Roger Kishi.

Chris Allnutt named HEU's new secretary-business manager

HEU's new secretary-business manager is Chris Allnutt, who has served for six years as assistant secretary-business manager. Allnutt replaces Carmela Allevato as HEU's top administrative officer and chief spokesperson for the union.

"We have confidence that Chris Allnutt's wealth of experience in HEU and in the health care sector will be a major asset to our union as we face the challenges of negotiating new collective agreements this year," union president Fred Muzin said.

Zorica Bosancic, an activist at the Vancouver General local who joined the HEU staff in 1986, was named assistant secretary-business manager.

Allnutt, 44, started with the union in 1989 as senior research analyst and became assistant secretary-business manager early in 1990. Before coming to HEU, Allnutt had worked as a researcher for the B.C. Nurses' Union, the Management and Professional Employees' Society, the Trade Union Research Bureau, and in student organizations.

The secretary-business manager is appointed by the Provincial Executive, and the appointment is subject to ratification at each HEU convention. Allnutt is HEU's sixth secretary-business manager.

Allevato stepped down at the end of 1995 after six years as secretary-business manager.

She has taken a job as in-house legal counsel for the Canadian Union of Public Employees, where much of her work will involve HEU.

Facilities sector talks begin

HEU's Bargaining Committee was headed into intensive talks designed to achieve a new collective agreement as this issue of the *Guardian* went to press.

"Our goal is to negotiate a new agreement, including employment security, before the current contract expires on March 31," said HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt.

"That's the only way we can ensure protection of health services and stability as we confront the threat of federal cuts in health funding."

Talks for a new contract in the facilities sector were scheduled to begin Feb. 22 and continue for at least three days in the following week. Talks in the community sector should begin later in March.

HEU is advocating a two-year agreement that provides new measures to ensure that existing health care workers have the opportunity to move where health services are delivered in the course of health reform. The union is also seeking protection against excessive workload and improvements in long-term disability payments.

In the facilities sector, three unions are working together – HEU, the B.C. Government Employees' Union and the International Union of Operating Engineers. Unions at the community table are HEU, BCGEU and the United Food and Commercial Workers. Rules setting out how the new union bargaining associations will operate have also been issued by the Labour Relations Board, which will be circulated to members in a special issue of *Contact*.

COMPARABILITY UPDATE

HEU and health employers in the Health Employers' Association of B.C. are set to begin talks on comparability with government employees, which HEU members are due to receive starting April.

Comparability adjustments would restore the traditional relationship between wages in HEU and the provincial government, which was disrupted by federal and provincial wage control programs.

If agreement isn't reached by March 17, pay equity arbitrator Stephen Kelleher may be involved.

GETTING READY Katerina Marios makes her point at a Feb. 8 bargaining report meeting in Victoria.

Food services cost savings questioned

by **Chris Gainor**

A report produced by HEU and other B.C. health care unions has cast doubt on health employers' plans to centralize and privatize food production in the Lower Mainland and the Fraser Valley.

And HEU activists are using the information to lobby regional health boards – who've been left in the dark about the proposed changes – to take a second look at shared food services.

The plan for the mega-project was developed by the Marrack Watts Inc. consulting firm, which sold employers on potential cost savings. But experience with other similar projects show that cost savings may not be realized says HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt, "because the rethermalization process for the food requires costly technology which breaks down frequently and only has a 10-year lifespan.

"This proposal could saddle taxpayers with enormous ongoing capital costs without any guarantee of savings in labour costs."

While HEU rejects the Marrack Watts plan, Allnutt says the union supports reforming the delivery of food to patients and residents.

'This proposal could saddle taxpayers with enormous ongoing capital costs'

For example, says Allnutt, improved service and reduced costs have been achieved at G.F. Strong Rehabilitation Centre and the George Pearson Centre when management and staff worked together to produce these results. (This effort has been stalled by the Marrack Watts project.)

The union report raises examples of failed projects similar to the Marrack Watts proposal, including privatized services in Montreal which were found to be 13 per cent more expensive than if they had been kept in the public sector.

Ottawa hospitals recently turned down a proposal from Marrack Watts because of the "heavy capital requirement with limited payback potential for our member institutions."

A shared food services project at Lion's Gate Hospital in North Vancouver and Burnaby Hospital is over budget, racked by food quality complaints and is resulting in increased on the job injuries.

continued from page 3

Clearing up the LTD membership confusion

Many HEU members who've been hurt on the job may be wondering what happens to their membership status if they go on LTD.

According to HEU's constitution and by-laws, members on LTD – which number about 1,200 now – automatically maintain full regular membership status for the first six months of their claim.

To maintain regular status after six months, all a member on LTD has to do is inform the union in writing of their intention to continue to be a regular member. There are no fees or dues involved. Without writing a letter and after six months, an LTD member would have associate membership status.

HEU joined a demonstration organized by the Communication, Energy and Paperworkers' Union in defense of medicare.

Bad decisions behind plans to cut Red Cross workforce

HEU members at the Red Cross Society Blood Transfusion Service are preparing to fight plans by their employer to impose massive cuts on their workforce.

The Red Cross is blaming declining numbers of blood donors, but local chair Victor Elkins responds that blood collections have ended outside of the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island, where collections are now limited.

As well, the Red Cross has cut the jobs of the workers and volunteers who recruited donors.

HEU is planning to put pressure on governments and the employer over cuts which appear to be falling disproportionately in B.C.

"We are urging HEU members to become blood-donors, not only because our patients need blood, but because the fall in donations is threatening the jobs of HEU workers at Red Cross," Elkins said.

Activists learn at CLC Harrison school

HEU sent 16 activists – two from each region – to the recent Canadian Labour Congress winter school at Harrison Hot Springs. The school offers an extensive range of education course provided over a week in a unique setting.

The union received many applications to the school from activists across the province. It's interesting to note that the most sought after course was union counselling, a sure sign that HEU activists want to increase their skills and abilities to deal with a range of members' problems at the local level.

Marriott gets bad marks in Children's report card

The private management company hired in 1994 to run B.C. Children's Hospital food services is mired in controversy according to a newsletter prepared by union activists at the Vancouver facility.

The activists say Marriott has broken a long list of promises

Hartman broke new ground for women

A new book chronicles the life of former CUPE president GRACE HARTMAN, the first woman to lead a major union in North America. Here's an edited excerpt.

FROM THE outset, [as a secretary for a Toronto-area municipality in 1954] Grace Hartman found herself dealing with injustices in the treatment of women which the union had not yet recognized and that went far beyond wages and salaries.

It didn't take long for Hartman to find her bearings, and her tongue.

"Once in a set of negotiations, when the municipality had settled a fair settlement with local 94 and we were at the table with them the next day, I said that we would take the same increase and the reeve made the mistake of saying, 'Oh, but they are breadwinners and they have to have more.'

"I asked him if he knew how many women were sole-support mothers. He hadn't a clue. But I was always helping out women who needed a hand when they worked late and had to pick up their kids, and I knew.

"I saw the union as the only practical instrument for helping women overcome this barrier of discrimination – in pay as well as status."

The union was a natural choice for Grace Hartman. There was, after all, no women's movement in the fifties. Although there were scads of women's organizations none was organizing around women's rights, much less working women's rights.

In the late fifties it may not have been Hartman's alleged association with radicals that bothered people, but her gender.

Her challenge was not to gain acceptance as an expert, but as an equal, and as a leader among the men around the table at NUPE (National Union of Public Employees, a precursor to CUPE) council meetings.

BALANCING IT ALL

[NUPE staff rep Pat] O'Keeffe was there when Grace attended her first Toronto District Council meetings, and observed the resentment.

"I took my coat off to hit someone once because of the way he was treating Grace. She had followed on a speech I'd made and this guy – Bill Overcott of Local 43 – asked her what the hell she was doing interfering when she ought to be home with her family. That was the kind of thing she had to fight."

However, as things progressed and Hartman established herself as a leader, there were still those who found it uncomfortable, particularly as she brought more women along with her. After she was elected president of her local in 1959 both the executive and the negotiating committees ended up with a majority of women.

"That was fairly representative of the membership of the local. However, up to that time the only positions routinely held by women had been secretary and social convener."

Grace Hartman: A woman for her time
by Susan Crean
New Star Books, Vancouver, 1995
ISBN 0-921586-47-7 $19

It was too much for some people in the engineering department, who decided to run someone against Hartman once in the early sixties.

"They decided on a man who was a very qualified draughtsman with a heavy drinking problem. I'd heard talk of this but didn't know that the women had gone through the building to get everyone out to the election meeting that night. I arrived early, as I always do, and found the place packed with women.

"When the men arrived, one of them griped, 'What's this? The women's auxiliary?' To which one of the women snapped, 'We aren't auxiliary to anybody.' I think the guy got two or three votes."

All the same, Hartman's rapport with her members was easy and open.

Though she shunned the stereotype of the female social convener, she did organize a lot of events anyway, since she saw the social side of union work as critical – the glue that would keep people together – especially with a group still establishing itself and its identity. There were children's Christmas parties and the Valentine's Day dances.

She did not, for all her electoral success, take her leadership for granted.

Hartman died at the age of 75 in 1993 after a 30-year career as a union activist. Crean's book can be obtained or ordered from bookstores across B.C.

• *BALANCING IT ALL is a regular Guardian column about the challenges facing women activists.*

Outgoing secretary-business manager Carmela Allevato accepts a framed photo montage from president Fred Muzin, celebrating her HEU career.

since the multi-billion dollar U.S. company took over, in the areas of improved food quality, better labour relations, more staff training and proper financial controls.

Marriott also faces a lot of complaints since it set up a Pizza Hut kiosk as part of its operation. To funnel business to the pizza joint, the full-service Shaughnessy site cafeteria is now closed at 4 p.m. and on weekends.

"Thanks for the tip," was one tongue-in-cheek response to a company survey, "I did not know that pizza was so good for you until I saw it promoted by this hospital."

Shop stewards courses are a popular event

As this issue of the *Guardian* winds its way through the mail to members, about 70 union activists from the Okanagan will converge on Kelowna for the three days of special training that make up the union's introductory shop steward course.

All told, more than 300 activists will attend the courses which started in late February in the Lower Mainland and end in late March in Prince George.

The course offers basic union history, an overview of social and political issues facing HEU, basic contract administration, and mock grievance meetings with management. The goal is to give new activists the confidence and skills to resolve problems in the workplace.

St. Paul's Local supports Mole Hill

St. Paul's local has joined the long list of community organizations and citizens fighting to save the last block of heritage houses in downtown Vancouver.

Last fall, the park board voted down a proposal to expand the West End's Nelson Park into the neighbouring block of heritage houses known as Mole Hill. City council then began a series of meetings soliciting public input on its future.

On Jan. 16, an HEU delegation led by Raimo Hietakangas told council that Mole Hill, which provides non-subsidized, low-income housing adjacent to the hospital, must be preserved.

"This well-intentioned, 'revitalization option' being considered here is not quite what's needed – but it's a step in the right direction," Hietakangas said. "Let's save all the houses, not just a few."

HEU members share Lotto winnings

Twenty-seven part-time food service workers and two housekeepers at Peach Arch Hospital got an unexpected Christmas gift Dec. 9 when one of their Lotto 649 Extra tickets was drawn for the $500,000 prize.

"It was a spur of the moment thing," said one of the winners.

By sharing the $500,000 prize, each worker gets a well-deserved infusion of $17,241.

"Some of the girls have taken holidays, and a couple of them are paying mortagages, so it's being well used," added the lucky winner.

Workload campaign backstops bargaining

HEU is launching another province-wide workload campaign focussed on patient care to back stop bargaining demands for measures to ease the workload crisis.

"There's a direct relationship between solving workload problems and improved patient care," says Karen Dean, HEU's director of health and safety and education.

"More and more HEU members are being hurt on the job because of workload and employer inaction," says Dean.

"The statistics are frightening, and the cost, more than $100 million, is a staggering waste."

Health care is the most dangerous work in B.C., and Dean said the union will be seeking a range of workload solutions to improve working and caring conditions like safe staffing ratios, ergonomics standards and mandatory replacement of absent staff.

The goals and objectives for the campaign will be developed at special province-wide meetings that began in Vancouver Feb. 12 and will end in Prince George March 4. The meetings will also share the successes of previous workload campaigns.

"We've proven that HEU members do find positive solutions to ease the workload crisis," says Dean.

Solutions sought in Vancouver health board's restructuring plan

by **Geoff Meggs**

HEU LOCALS in the Vancouver region are gearing up to push the new Vancouver Regional Health Board for positive changes in the sweeping restructuring proposals now under consideration for the next three years.

Effective April 1, the funding for 58 HEU locals with more than 12,000 members inside the city boundaries will be funnelled through the new board. The board is reviewing proposals for some massive changes, including bed closures, shared services, a shift to the community and more.

'By winning good solutions in Vancouver we can show a major employer how we can move forward'

"This is a chance to prove our commitment to protection of services," says HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt. "By winning good solutions in Vancouver – including employment security, action on workload and other areas – we can show a major employer how we can move forward province-wide. This supports our bargaining efforts.

"We believe we can work with this board to protect the services and make sure the changes don't take place on the backs of the workers."

A special emergency meeting of affected locals held Feb. 5 elected a five-person steering committee to guide union participation at the regional labour-management meeting and in presentations to the board itself. Chosen for the steering committee were Sheila Rowswell, G.F. Strong; Wanda Manu, Trout Lake; Judy Lonergan, Vancouver Health Department; and John McKenzie, B.C. Women's. A representative from the community health sector is still to be selected.

Allnutt said the Vancouver Board's strong commitment to protect medicare is one reason for optimism. Another is the board's proposal to make a major commitment to tackle injury and disability among employees. "Some areas of the proposal are of obvious concern for us," Allnutt said, "but other parts are positive and we need to explore them further."

The new steering committee will be working with other affected unions to develop a joint response.

OUR STORIES Based on the success of HEU's 1991 *Heart of Health Care* review, a new theatrical presentation to support bargaining demands is in the works. From left, Doreen Plouffe, VGH local, Ellen Chan, B.C. Women's local, and Marianne Davies, Cumberland local participate in a February script development workshop.

Paramedical definition settled by labour board

The conflict over the definition of paramedical professional under the Bill 48 changes to healthcare bargaining ended in December with a decision by the Labour Relations Board which affirmed the existing definition for that group.

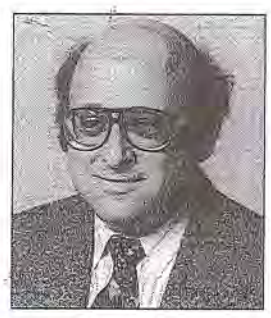
Under reforms to health care bargaining issued last summer by HEU was excluded from the paramedical professional bargaining unit.

A wide definition of paramedical professional could have forced thousands of HEU members to join other unions.

When faced with the challenge of an LRB hearing in November that could have widened the definition of paramedical professional, HEU members in every part of the province mobilized to show support for their union. Three weeks of work by HEU activists produced 15,731 signatures on petitions backing HEU.

HEU has applied to be represented in the paramedical professional bargaining unit, but no decision has yet been made on this application.

PRESIDENT'S DESK



Every member has an essential role in bargaining

by Fred Muzin

IN THIS year's bargaining HEU is determined to achieve an early settlement before the current Master Agreement expires on March 31. This time frame – which some consider ambitious given the usual employer stalling – is important if we are to protect quality public health care services.

The federal cuts in transfer payments to B.C. for health, education and social services will mean that there will be added pressure to cut and privatize services. Employers' threats of massive displacements on March 30 are an attempt to undermine New Directions and our NDP government.

We cannot allow medicare to be used as a political football.

The outcome of this year's bargaining will be directly related to the personal commitment of each and every HEU member. To win a fair settlement we have to maintain unity. Each and every member must be mentally prepared – like we were in 1992 – for the challenges that lay ahead. And equally important, we need to recognize that all the union's resources must be targeted on negotiations.

'It is critical that each of us takes ownership of the agenda and contribute as best we can'

It is critical that each of us takes ownership of the agenda and contributes as best we can to support our 13-person Provincial Bargaining Committee. What can one HEU member do? Plenty!

Locals are currently developing appropriate essential service levels. You can assist your local committee by providing information about normal staffing levels, liaising with coworkers from other unions and jointly recommending what work is absolutely necessary so that patient safety is not compromised.

Our next major challenge will be re-electing the NDP under Premier Glen Clark. The Liberals and Reformers have clearly indicated that their designs for health care include extra billing, bed closures, privatization and laying off health workers.

We have seen clear examples of the right wing vision in Ontario where 38 hospitals are scheduled to close and up to 26,000 workers may be laid off.

The Alberta laundry workers strike demonstrated that health workers can and must expose government schemes to reward corporate friends at the expense of medicare.

Our only chance of preserving the quality services that we provide rests with electing politicians committed to social democratic values: An election will soon be called, and we can help with local campaigns in many ways: phoning, leafleting, typing, erecting signs, door knocking.

Every member can ensure that HEU's message gets to the public by writing letters to the editor of community newspapers, speaking to others at labour council, church, school, sports and other community group events and leafleting.

Your innovative ideas will always be welcomed by local committees set up to coordinate job action if it's necessary and to develop tactics to pressure employers to act responsibly and recognize their staff as their greatest resource.

Our determination for justice and fairness, and our belief that solidarity among workers creates a better world for all, will go a long way towards HEU reaching an early settlement and defending medicare.

DRAWING BLOOD HEU lab tech assistant draws blood from an outpatient at the Royal Jubilee lab outreach program.

Need a test? Use our labs!

"We only stick them once," is lab tech assistant Rowena Lee's motto.

Lee works taking blood samples in the Royal Jubilee Hospital outpatient lab, where a pilot project put together by the Greater Victoria Hospital Society has expanded job opportunities and the duties performed by HEU members like her.

ON THE JOB

Developed with the help of the Health Labour Adjustment Agency and with the support of HEU and HSA, the outreach program has seen the GVHS upgrade its lab testing facilities to attract more outpatients in the $350 million outpatient testing "market," two thirds of which is billed by private clinics.

The outreach program has involved making the labs at Royal Jubilee, Victoria General and Fairfield sites in Victoria more accessible to the public, expanding operating hours, cutting down on paperwork, improving computer support and simple things like designating parking spaces for outpatient lab use only.

For the first three months of the program, hospital staff have concentrated on infrastructure improvements. Doctors can phone in lab work, while the improved testing turn around time means doctors and outpatients get results back quickly.

Now, GVHS is focussing on building awareness among the public about the new services they provide. Lee and GVHS officials want all union members to know that when a doctor orders a test, you don't automatically have to go to a private clinic. You can choose to bring it to an outpatient lab at a hospital.

In fact, polling carried out by HEU shows that the public would overwhelmingly choose a lab at a hospital where revenues are recycled back into the public health system over a private lab where tremendous profits go into the hands of owners and stockholders.

Lee says the new program gives outpatients good convenient service. "Everyone of us is doing a good job here," says Lee, who rotates through various lab assignments on a five week schedule. Customer satisfaction is high."

In addition to drawing blood for tests, Lee and the HEU lab tech assistants perform blood glucometer monitoring for diabetic patients. Lee appreciates the opportunity to learn new skills.

NOTEBOOK

Communications plan to help meet bargaining challenges

by Stephen Howard

With huge federal transfer payment cuts kicking in this year and a provincial election likely within the next 60 days, this is undoubtedly the most challenging round of bargaining that health care workers in B.C. have ever faced.

So our ability to communicate effectively and quickly with members, the trade union movement, the public, and politicians will be vitally important to winning a settlement.

To meet these needs, HEU's Provincial Executive has approved a comprehensive communications plan to backstop bargaining.

The most urgent priority will be to make up-to-date bargaining information available to union members and activists. The Bargaining Hotline, which fielded up to 50,000 calls a week from union members during the 1992 round of bargaining, will answer this call. The hotline will be backed up with more detailed *Bargaining Bulletins*, which will be faxed as soon as they are produced to locals participating in our special fax network.

Other materials, like the bargaining supplement inserted into this issue of the *Guardian*, will be prepared to meet specific communications needs. These will be distributed either in the workplace or sent to union members through the mail.

'Our ability to communicate quickly and effectively will be vitally important to winning a settlement'

Keeping in touch with politicians of all stripes in Victoria and health decision-makers across the province on bargaining-related issues is also a priority. One way we're doing it is through a new publication called *Insight*, which will present facts and background on a variety of topics liked shared services and privatization.

Some parts of the communications plan are already complete, like our poll of public attitudes towards health care and care givers. The results, just in at press time, show continued public recognition of the efforts of health care workers to keep the system going during difficult times.

And of course the colourful stickers and buttons that are the basis of most HEU campaigns are now in the workplace.

Two other initiatives will be underway shortly. The first is a province-wide television and radio ad campaign starting Feb. 19. The ads, which feature HEU member Diane Michaels from Vancouver's G.F. Strong local, will convey a simple message for the public: when you cut health care workers, you cut health care services.

The second is a new theatre performance about the working lives of HEU members and the role you play in the health care system. It's modelled on our hit *Heart of Health Care Review*, which toured the province to support bargaining in 1991. This year's show will begin a smaller-scale tour to several regions beginning in March.

With the shift in resources to support bargaining, this will be the last issue of the *Guardian* for a couple of months at least. We'll resume publication when a new collective agreement is won.

Bargaining Bulletin

HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

HEU's 1996 BARGAINING AGENDA

We can't protect health services without protecting the people who deliver them.

THE heart OF HEALTH CARE

HEALTH WORKERS FROM FACILITIES TO COMMUNITY

HEU goal is fairness, stability

by **Chris Allnutt**

ALLNUTT

ALL HEU members know that the entire health care system is in the midst of tremendous change. There are the cuts rumoured in Victoria's upcoming budget. There are plans for shared services, mergers of employers and reorganization through community councils and regional boards. Meanwhile Campbell's Liberals and Weisgerber's Reform Party promise to slash public services.

And all this is happening as our collective agreements are set to expire.

HEU's Provincial Executive and Provincial Bargaining Committee have a plan of action to deal with this instability and uncertainty. We are working to renew our collective agreement as soon as possible.

Our opening bargaining demands – which are summarized in this bargaining update – are designed to protect health care workers and the health care services we provide while changes are taking place. They are designed to avoid the confrontation and chaos of the Ontario and Alberta health care cuts.

Our bargaining is also taking place in the context of a provincial election. Glen Clark played a key role in negotiating the Health Accord, and he's remained strongly supportive of employment security for health workers. That's why HEU's Provincial Executive has endorsed his candidacy.

On the other hand, Gordon Campbell and Jack Weisgerber are both strongly against a renewal of the Accord. This means that HEU members will have to become involved politically in ways we haven't done before.

We need to talk about these proposals with each other. We need to work with our sisters and brothers in the B.C. Nurses' Union, the Health Sciences Association, the Operating Engineers and the B.C. Government Employees' Union. We need to come up with creative ways to drive home the importance of the proposals to employers in the workplace.

As we prepare to begin negotiations, we have two things working in our favour. First, we are a united and powerful union. Second, a fair contract settlement will provide the stability and certainty that the public, employers and health workers all need right now.

We will have a renewed and fair collective agreement sooner rather than later.

WIDESPREAD SUPPORT FOR HEALTH SERVICES

Here's what British Columbians told a national polling firm when asked their views on health care bargaining

Health care workers are doing their best to keep the system going in tough times

89% AGREE

Health care reform should not be carried out at the expense of health care workers

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To protect our health care system, we need to protect our investment in the skills of our health care workers

95% AGREE

Source: McIntyre and Mustel

Protecting services, preserving medicare.

THE heart OF HEALTH CARE

HEU'S OPENING CONTRACT PROPOSALS FOR A QUALITY HEALTH SERVICES PROTECTION AGREEMENT

HEU is issuing this challenge to health employers: sit down to negotiate an agreement that protects health services by protecting the jobs, skills, training and safety of health care workers.

HEU's bargaining proposals, outlined here, will form the basis for a final bargaining package to be presented to employers by a bargaining association including HEU, the B.C. Government Employees' Union and the International Union of Operating Engineers. Both BCGEU and IUOE will have input into the final package.

The package, hammered out in province-wide local meetings, debated at the Wage Policy Conference and consolidated by the union's bargaining committee demands action in four key areas:

• protection of the public investment in existing health workers through employment security, training and retraining, a shorter work week with no loss in pay and a province-wide system of posting and bumping;

• improved working and caring conditions to set minimum safe staffing levels and ergonomic standards to design safer workplaces;

• a commitment to fairness in wages and benefits, including a fair wage increase, settlement of classification disputes, increased action on pay equity; and

• improvements in long-term disability and other benefit provisions.

Here's the opening package in more detail – and why it's justified.

1. Effective use of health care providers: employment security, job protection

WHAT WE'RE SEEKING

We provide vital health care services. The public has invested in our skills and training. Health care is changing, moving closer to home. We need measures to ensure health care reform is not carried out at our expense. We need to be able to go wherever health services are delivered with the training to provide quality care. We propose:

- inclusion of employment security provisions in the agreement;
- province-wide system of posting and bumping;
- a joint union/management training fund;
- a 35-hour work week with no loss in pay;
- contracting out and privatization restrictions;
- early retirement at age 55 with no penalty, job sharing, improved severance and cash out of leave credits.

WHY WE'RE JUSTIFIED

- our system is one of the leanest in Canada, we can't afford to cut;
- we're providing quality care today with 2,200 fewer workers than in 1993, despite an increase in the population;
- employment security has been effective in protecting workers in the course of health reform and allowing services to move closer to home;
- the public overwhelmingly supports action to protect the investment in our skills and training;
- it makes sense to take existing health workers and send them where care is delivered;
- twenty-six per cent of all unionized Canadian workers are covered by "employment security" clauses.

WHAT'S NEW IN OUR PROPOSAL

HEU's employment security package tackles four important problems:

- it sets out detailed proposals for retraining, including a joint training fund paid for by the employer to give workers on-the-job preparation for new jobs in health care;
- it seeks increased protection for casuals;
- it provides for province-wide bumping and placement so workers can go wherever care is provided;
- it provides for real consultation, including the right of workers to investigate job-creation opportunities for new ways of delivering care.

2. Improved working and caring conditions

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- action to address human rights and equity issues.

WHY WE'RE JUSTIFIED

- health care has the worst safety record of any B.C. industry;
- cutting accident rates could save the system tens of millions of dollars a year;
- ergonomic design saves money by averting accident and injury while improving quality care.

WHAT'S NEW IN OUR PROPOSAL

- we're challenging employers to do a better job to avoid accident and injury through ergonomic design;
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HEU's bargaining proposals are for substantially less, in almost every case, than conditions already enjoyed by B.C. physicians under the BCMA agreement.

3. Fairness in wages and benefits

WHAT WE'RE SEEKING

- a two-year agreement April 1, 1996 to March 31, 1998;
- an across-the-board wage increase with a base amount plus a cost of living increase;
- implementation of pay equity;
- various benefit improvements including bringing health care workers' benefits closer to those available to health care managers.

WHY WE'RE JUSTIFIED

- the average HEU member supporting a family of four is living below the poverty line;
- eighty-three per cent of HEU members who live in an urban area and support two or more people are at or near the poverty line.

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- improved long-term disability benefits for current recipients;
- improvements in other LTD benefits to protect those injured or disabled on the job.

WHY WE'RE JUSTIFIED

- the Health and Benefit Trust has a surplus and is considering a premium holiday for employers;
- even a modest reduction in the current rate of injury and disability could fund a substantial improvement in benefits through the trust.

WHAT'S NEW IN OUR PROPOSAL

- it would change the way health services are delivered and recognize the contribution of those already injured or disabled.

FROM THE SECRETARY-BUSINESS MANAGER

HEU goal is fairness, stability

by **Chris Allnutt**

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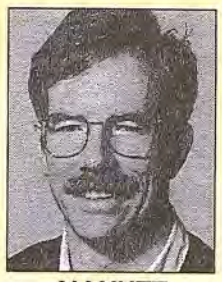

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THE heart OF HEALTH CARE

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PUBLIC OPINION

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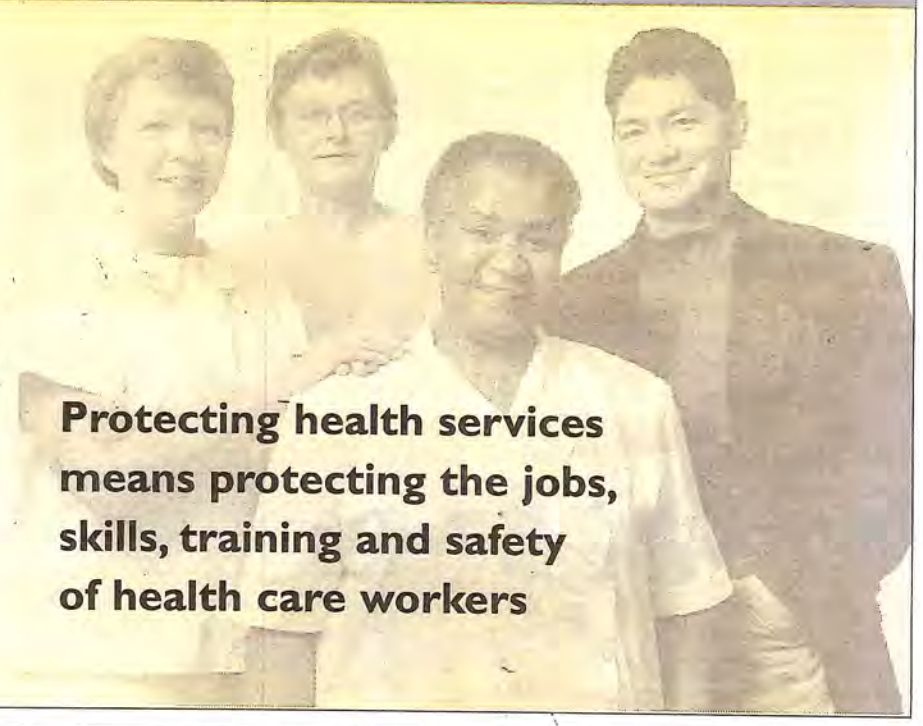

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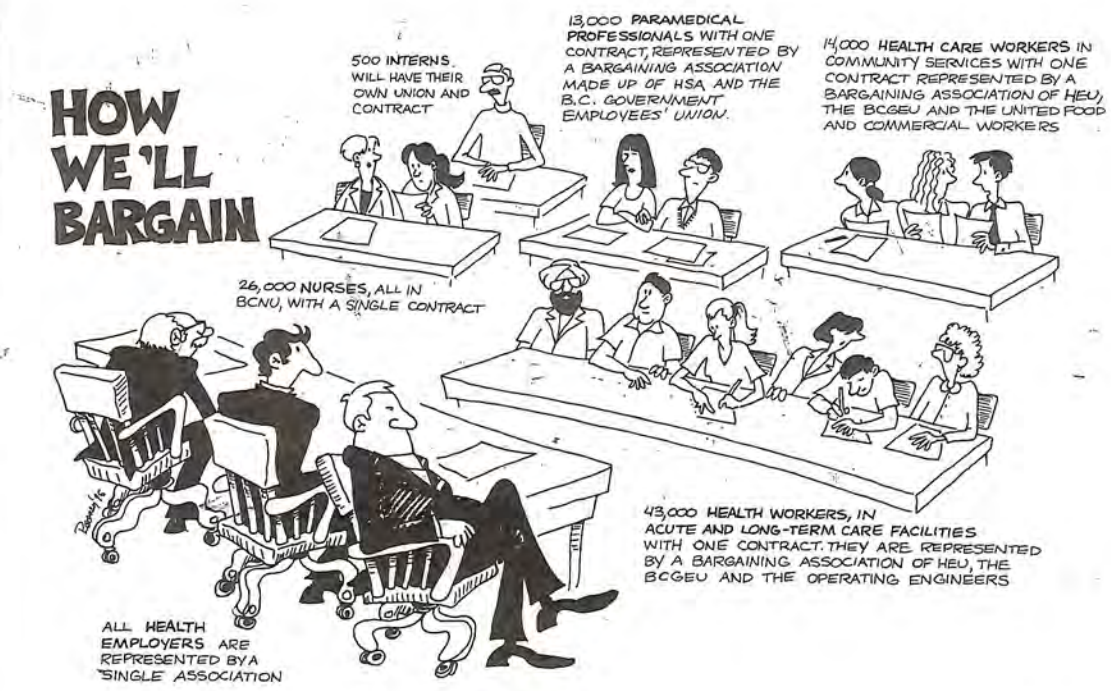


Health restructuring creates a two-table bargaining challenge

As a result of health care restructuring, HEU is bargaining at two tables this year.

We're working with new allies in both facilities and the community.

Most HEU members – those who work in hospitals or long-term care – are represented at the facilities table, where HEU will be bargaining in an association with the B.C. Government and Service Employees (BCGEU) and the International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE).

BCGEU members in this sector work at rehab hospitals like George Pearson, or in government-funded long-term care homes.

IUOE members are stationary engineers in hospitals or employees in long-term care homes.

HEU's community-based workers will be at a community table with BCGEU and the United Food and Commercial Workers. Both other unions represent homemakers and a wide range of health workers delivering services in the community.

Under the law, there will be a single collective agreement for workers in each sector as a result of this round of bargaining.

The rules for how these bargaining associations will conduct talks will be finalized by mid-February.

THE heart OF HEALTH CARE

Fairness for community health workers: an issue for every HEU member

More than 1,500 HEU members are delivering health services in the community and another 600 are delivering services funded by the Ministry of Social Services.

All these HEU members endure substandard wages and contract conditions – and those second-class conditions are a threat to every HEU member.

If health services are amalgamated, as employers propose, HEU members from the facility sector could find themselves facing a wage cut, transferring to the community or even losing their job.

Workers in other unions don't have this problem. Paramedical workers or registered nurses can move from facility to community without changing their collective agreement, their wages or their benefits.

An end to this discrimination is a key goal of HEU's Bargaining Committee.

The committee is urging the other unions in the community sector – the B.C. Government and Service Employees and the United Food and Commercial Workers – to step up the timetable so that health employers are unable to push community issues to one side.

And the union is insisting that health employers acknowledge that community-based health workers must be treated equally with facility-based workers.

Want to know more? Contact your local shop steward or the HEU office in your region. For more details call

THE HEU BARGAINING HOTLINE

1.800.663-5813

Local 515 & 516 (24 Hours)

Chris Allnutt, Secretary-Business Manager
Hospital Employees' Union
Provincial Office • 2006 West 10th Ave. • Vancouver, B.C. V6J 4P5

Bargaining top priority in HEU's balanced budget

The Provincial Executive has adopted a $19 million operating budget for 1996 which sets the top priority as winning a new contract that preserves health services by protecting jobs.

"Clearly bargaining is the priority for us this year," says union financial secretary Mary LaPlante. "It's been a challenge to budget for everything we need to do given the financial resources."

Tough but fair is how she describes the budget which she projects to provide for a limited contingency surplus.

LaPlante said all budget decisions made by the Provincial Executive were priorized on winning a settlement.

LAPLANTE

To harness resources for bargaining, LaPlante notes funding in some program areas has been reallocated. For example, computer upgrading at HEU offices has been delayed. Education programs will focus on basic and advanced stewards training, beginners health and safety, and orientation sessions for new locals. But the union's popular summer school will not be held this year, which LaPlante said was a difficult but necessary decision. Table officers conferences will also be put over to next year.

Commitments in other areas like equity initiatives adopted at the 1994 union convention will continue at reduced funding levels, as will other Provincial Executive action plans for women's issues, LPNs, and political action. The union's successful drive to organize more health care workers will also continue.

While the operating side budget process proved difficult, LaPlante said the union's separate strike fund was quite healthy, with more than $9 million available. In addition, HEU members will be eligible to draw on the $13 million CUPE strike fund. "It's going to be a very busy year," she said.

COOL UNDER PRESSURE Duncan local leaders Jeanne Hardy, left, and Ion Barnes with LPNs Linda Linge, Jasbir James and Sharron Doerner.

Facility on fire!

Three Duncan LPNs faced danger as flames, smoke forced residents' evacuation

by **Stephen Howard**

SOMEONE YELLED "the building is going to blow," and as LPN Jasbir James raced back to her wing to evacuate residents all she could think about was her children.

James and fellow LPNs Sharron Doerner and Linda Linge were on night duty Jan. 15 when a serious fire in a loading bay threatened to engulf the Cowichan and District Hospital extended care facility in flames.

Their lives were in danger that night, but these three caregivers kept their wits about them for the next four hours and played a key role in the safe evacuation of 100 residents.

When a neighbour raced in around midnight to warn that flames were lapping at the 23-year old cedar-sided facility just down the hill from the hospital, Doerner went to investigate. She saw a small glow in the loading dock, and then was greeted by the sound of exploding oxygen tanks. "I came running back in yelling 'fire,'" she said.

Fortunately, a fire wall kept the flames from spreading to the wings where residents were sleeping and the flames were quickly drowned out by the Duncan fire department and a host of volunteers. But thick acrid smoke spread to the wards, making the evacuation of residents dangerous.

To make matters worse, the facility's evacuation plan also went up in smoke because the planned evacuation point – the main lounge – was threatened by flames and choked by smoke.

'The adrenalin kicks in – you know you have to get the people out but you don't know where the fire is'

"Your worst nightmare couldn't begin to deal with what you could go through in a situation like this," said HEU Duncan local chairperson Ion Barnes, who like most hospital employees raced to work to aide the evacuation.

With the alarm sounded, and uncertain as to where the flames were spreading, James, Linge and Doerner raced back to their respective wings to close windows and fire doors. "The adrenalin kicks in – you know you have to get the people out but you don't know where the fire is," said Linge.

Shortly after, the fire marshall ordered the evacuation. But the design of the building meant that fire doors had to be opened to get the big, bulky, extended care beds outside and away from danger.

"The smoke was so dense that you couldn't see," said Doerner. She had to put a wet cloth over her face as she returned to ensure that all the residents on her ward were safely out. "I basically crawled back out," she said.

It was raining that night, which helped stamp out the fire. But it made the scary evacuation a chilly and wet experience for the elderly residents who were evacuated to a nearby Girl Guide hall under a tunnel of tarpaulins held up by some of the dozens of community volunteers who also helped out.

Drenched to the bone from the downpour, Doerner and Linge helped lift the residents into 15 waiting ambulances. They offered comfort and a final word of reassurance to the elderly as they were driven off to beds at the Duncan hospital and to other facilities in Nanaimo, Ladysmith and Victoria. None of the residents were injured in the fire or evacuation, although a small number have subsequently died.

Duncan local chief shop steward Jeanne Hardy was also there to help out. "It would have been a hell of a lot worse if these women hadn't kept their wits about them," she said.

Repairs to the facility should take about six months. In the meantime the 150 HEU members have been transferred with the residents or redeployed at the Duncan Hospital as a result of an agreement reached by HEU and the employer.

VOICES

Anti-medicare surgeon apologizes to Ramsey

by **Bridget Moran**

Recently an ad sponsored by the British Columbia Medical Association appeared in the *Prince George Citizen*. Graced with a photo of the provincial minister of health, heavy black print proclaimed: "Paul Ramsey has made sure there are no waiting lists for orthopaedic surgery in Prince George because all the orthopaedic surgeons have left."

There is a story to be told about the missing orthopaedic surgeons, and much to be said about the motivation behind the ad which laments their exodus.

When the BCMA and Victoria settled their contract differences in 1994, most of the doctors in the province ceased extra billing. A few continued, including Prince George orthopaedic surgeons. Eventually legislation made extra billing illegal, but by that time three of the four Prince George orthopaedic surgeons left town. Two of them set up shop in Bismarck, North Dakota, leaving one orthopaedic surgeon to cover central B.C.

Recruitment to fill the gap began immediately. Meanwhile, emergency coverage was arranged with the Orthopaedic Division of the BCMA. This emergency service is not cheap – an orthopaedic surgeon flies into Prince George, performs the necessary services, flies out, and submits a bill for $5,000 for the day's work. In contrast, specialists in other fields fly in when needed at a daily cost of about $1,500.

'Their exodus is being blown up to convince the public that medicare no longer works'

Northern communities have always lived with periodic shortages in medical services. In my 42 years in Prince George I have experienced many such gaps in service – I cannot count the number of times during the Socred years when my four children and I travelled to Vancouver for medical care.

So why this sudden air of crisis because three orthopaedic surgeons left the area?

The fact is their exodus is being blown up to convince the public that medicare no longer works.

Under the banner of a two tier health system, a coalition of powerful forces believes the time is ripe to turn the clock back 30 years to an era when medical care depended on the ability to pay.

That coalition includes the BCMA, the Reform Party, many elements in the provincial Liberals, and private health insurance and pharmaceutical companies. It is strengthened by a government in Ottawa which shows no real commitment to medicare.

But let us come back to one of our missing orthopaedic surgeons – he has the last word.

Last Aug. 27, Dr. Phil Gattey of Bismarck, North Dakota, wrote an unsolicited letter to Paul Ramsey. I quote at random, "I left, with others, and now I'm writing to admit that you were right, in part ... Here ... everyone is scared of an illness or an injury, wealthy or not ... People here are sicker in general, and need the best of care because they get it later than they should have. Patients should not be frightened. Canadians are healthier and also better patients ... Please do what you can to preserve the parts of medicare that protect people from fear."

• *Moran is a freelance writer and author from Prince George.*

Labour

NOTEWORTHY NEWS ABOUT ISSUES AFFECTING WORKING PEOPLE HERE AND ABROAD

Teenager's work life is a free trade hell

by **Jim Rader**

For 16-year old Blanca Estela Rodriquez, life is a series of 10 to 12-hour work days, five and a half days a week. Blanca lives in Guatemala and has worked in the free trade zone, or *maquila*, since she was 11.

Blanca, who recently spent a week in Vancouver on an invitation from the B.C. Federation of Labour, spoke to about 300 people about her life in the maquila.

A typical day starts at 5 a.m. when she gets up to wash, have a cup of coffee and be on the bus in order to be into work by 7:30. She works till noon with a 15 minute break at 10:10. Lunch is from 12 till 1:00, with no breaks in the afternoon until the 6 or 7 pm quitting time. She has to be sure to go to the bathroom at the beginning of her shift because the washrooms are locked most of the morning and afternoon.

'If a woman does not work fast enough, the foreman slaps her around the head'

There is no lunch room; lunch is eaten standing up on the street outside the factory. Traffic is busy and diesel fumes from trucks fall on the food the women are eating. This is the only time the women can eat during their work day. They are body searched before they enter the factory to make sure they do not have any food with them, not even a piece of gum or a candy.

FOR GUATEMALAN worker Blanca Estela Rodriguez, conditions at home and those of Vancouver's Mr. Jax clothing factory (above) are worlds apart.

There are over 900 registered factories in the maquila zone in Guatemala employing about 9,000 workers producing everything from clothes to electric appliances

Blanca works in a 2,000 square foot room with 700 others, mostly women her age or younger. If a woman does not work fast enough, the foreman screams at her, slaps her around the head and tells her that if she does not want to work, she should go home. Few do. Jobs are scarce in Guatemala and many of the children that work in the maquila are a vital economic support for their families. The maquila is the other face of free trade and economic integration, the one you never hear about when the papers and politicians talk about economic growth and the benefits of world markets.

Blanca's Korean-owned factory produces clothes for the U.S. market. One of Blanca's jobs is to sew on the little tags that say "Made in USA."

• *Rader is a programmer for Co-Development Canada, a B.C.-based aid agency that specializes in work in Latin America.*

More tales from the tax trough

Corporate tax freedom day highlights breaks, loopholes and giveaways

by **Stephen Howard**

IF OTTAWA were really serious about curbing the federal deficit and debt, it would create a fair corporate tax system and stop slashing social programs.

That was the message delivered by B.C. Federation of Labour president Ken Georgetti at the labour organization's Jan. 25 Corporate Tax Freedom Day festivities.

Corporate Tax Freedom Day, says Georgetti, represents the approximate day when Canadian corporations have finished with their income tax responsibility for the year.

"It's a day to celebrate the tax breaks, loopholes, deductions, reductions and credits that have made this country what it is today," said Georgetti, "deeply indebted."

He fingered a number of big Canadian companies for using loopholes to avoid paying their fair share. For example, the Alberta energy giant Nova Corp paid only 6.6 per cent tax on $738 million in 1994 profits.

Alberta's newly privatized telephone company has enjoyed several years of big profits and very low tax rates. In 1994 it laid off 20 per cent of its work force, made a profit of $200 million and paid a tax rate of 2.9 per cent.

Chrysler Canada, a "real tax-fuelled road hog," says Georgetti, motored to a $283 million profit in 1994 but paid only about $9 million in income tax.

Federal finance minister Paul Martin, who's orchestrating Ottawa's funding attack on social programs, also received special recognition. His company, Canada Steamship Lines registered its ships in the Bahamas to avoid paying corporate tax.

AND THE WINNER IS Chrysler Canada, "a tax fuelled road hog," won this year's race to the trough. Chrysler paid only $9 million in tax on 1994 profits of $283 million.

"While we've picked on a few individual corporations today, we aren't saying they've done anything illegal," said Georgetti. "They're just making good use of the misguided generous tax provisions in this country.

"But it's galling when business leaders insist that there is only one answer to Canada's fiscal problems: slash medicare, cut education funding, cut UIC, cut welfare transfer, and most of all cut corporate taxes."

Georgetti said there were viable alternatives to the government's approach to debt reduction that would cut corporate tax breaks, lower interest rates and create jobs.

CORPORATE TAX FACTS

- in the 1992 tax year, 66,000 profitable companies paid no income tax on $14.7 billion in profits;
- since 1980, about $170 billion in corporate profits have gone untaxed;
- in 1990 the federal government gave more than it received from corporations. Ottawa took in $11.7 billion in corporate taxes, but gave back $6.4 billion in business subsidies and lost close to $6 billion more on some of the more popular corporate tax breaks and loopholes.
- corporations owe more than $40 billion in deferred taxes. Unlike individuals who owe money, companies don't pay interest on their outstanding tax bill.

Vencor-Hillhaven boycott continues in California

Despite facing constant attempts by a huge long-term care giant, Vencor-Hillhaven, to destroy union solidarity, terrorize workers and maintain profits at any cost, health care workers in California are continuing a three-month boycott of the mega-corporation.

Since July 1994, more than 2,000 nursing home workers, members of Service Employees International Union (SEIU) who work at numerous facilities owned by Vencor-Hillhaven Corp,. have been trying to win better patient care, decent raises, health benefits for their families, safer workplaces and union security.

On Nov. 13, hundreds of union workers held a one-day strike against Vencor-Hillhaven. The day after the strike, the company permanently replaced 19 workers.

Thanks to an immediate boycott of Vencor-Hillhaven, most of the 19 workers were back on the job by February.

Workers also benefitted from a hardship fund organized by the union.

But Vencor-Hillhaven has shown no signs of budging on a new contract.

"The company has still refused to settle the patient care contract we're looking for," said SEIU spokesperson Lisa Hubbard. "But morale is high and we're still fighting on a number of fronts."

For more information call toll-free 1-800-984-3473.

Gains continue in mental health and long-term care organizing

HEU continues to be a popular union for unorganized health workers who want the protection and benefits of a collective agreement.

Since the last issue of the *Guardian* our organizing inroads continue in First Nations communities.

Caregivers at the Moricetown Health Centre and Healing Centre, in the First Nations community outside Smithers have joined the union, as have health workers at the Hagwilget Health Centre in New Hazelton.

Gains were also achieved in the mental health and long-term care sectors with a total of five new locals:

- Bieringer Proprietary Care Home, a mental health residence in Nanaimo;
- Kingswood Manor, a for-profit Salmon Arm mental health residence;
- Coldstream Park Lodge, an independent seniors living facility operated for-profit in Vernon;
- O'Connor Resources Ltd, which operates two for-profit Nanaimo mental health residences;
- J. Garnon Williams Ltd, a for-profit company that operates four facilities for mentally and physically challenged in Nanaimo and Parksville.

A welcome is also extended to former Health Sciences Association members at the Valemount Health Centre, and the Aurora Centre at B.C. Women's Hospital in Vancouver who are now part of HEU as a result of the Bill 48 process.

In related news, four HEU locals have merged into new larger units.

In Salmon Arm, the 90-member Bastion local joined forces with the 160 caregivers at Shushwap General hospital in the Salmon Arm local. They're proposing to the Provincial Executive to be renamed the Shuswap local. A decision is pending.

In the Lower Mainland, the 60-member Parkridge local has teamed up with the 30 member Maple Ridge Local representing workers at the Maple Ridge Intermediate Care facility to form the new Maple Park local.

VOICES

A day in my life

by **Crystal Williamson**

I START MY day carefully rolling out of bed. I try to ignore the headache and congestion. Moving slowly at first to gently stretch muscles, making my bed has become a sharp stabbing pain at the bottom of my back. After sitting at the edge of the bed to rest and contemplate I gather clothes and have a long hot shower.

No longer able to hold my arms above my head, blow drying and styling my hair is more awkward and painful than it used to be. But vanity prevents me from shaving my head bald and living in sweatsuits.

Now it's time to have breakfast! My diet has changed over the years. I'm now lactose intolerant and have cut back on meat, and spicy and greasy food. I relax at the kitchen table with some tea. I realize I need to vacuum again and the dishes will need to be done. I write a list of all I should do so I don't forget anything. After I cleanup breakfast I will rest and do the vacuuming later. It's my big job for the day. If tomorrow is a good day I will do the laundry.

That's only part of my day and I what I have to deal with. So if it's that tough why don't I just take early retirement? Because I'm only 28 years old. I was diagnosed with Fibromyalgia (FM) four years ago.

The FM is permanent! I ended up sick with something they are only just seriously researching. I've lost track of how many doctors and specialists I've been to, all looking for a quick fix for me.

How can you fix something when you don't even understand why or how it's broken. A lot of FM patients have had to deal with a fair amount of verbal abuse from doctors, myself included.

I applied for LTD almost 1 1/2 years ago, but it's under appeal. I had been laid off briefly, so my vacation time was paid out and I only had five days of sick time left because I had been constantly picking away at it. My only option was UIC sick leave for 15 weeks. But that ran out and now – me a unionized employee – I'm on welfare.

'If something isn't done, there will be more people like me stuck on welfare'

Since I've been off sick there's been a pay increase for my position. But even when I get my LTD, I only get two-thirds of my wage on the day I became disabled, with no benefits. There is no cost of living clause in the LTD program.

But I still have a life and part of that is spokesperson for HEU's People With Disabilities Caucus. We have a letter of intent (page 141) in our contract, with the employer promising to put any money saved with the return to work programs back into improving the LTD program. But the employer has balked at releasing how much money was saved.

If something isn't done, there will be more people like me using taxpayer dollars, stuck on welfare, when we are supposed to have an improved LTD program.

• *Williamson is a member of the Enderby local.*

VOICES IN VERSE

WILDCATTERS' ODE CUPE president Judy Darcy, left, joins Calgary laundry workers in their wildcat strike that stopped contracting out. Their fight song is printed below.

Alberta Laundry Workers' Fight Song

POETS' CORNER

We did the laundry, the dirty laundry.
We did it each and every day!
Now Ralph has told us he doesn't need us,
And he thinks we'll just fade away.

We took a pay cut, a hefty pay cut.
To keep our jobs is what they said.
But Ralph has told us he doesn't need us,
They will contract us all out instead!

We've got the Health Board, Regional Health Board
That does the dirty work for Klein.
They've cut the service, and screwed the nurses,
So now we walk the picket line!

Just keep on truckin', to K-Bro Linen,
Haul it all up to Edmonton!
We are too busy to do the laundry,
"Til our picket lines are done!

We are the workers, the laundry workers,
And we fight for all of you!
So come and join us, walk beside us,
Let's show Ralph what workers can do!

Untitled

by **Anne Wiebe**

She arises each morning with aches and pain;
Her ways of mobility are wheelchair or cane.

She inches her way to each scheduled meal;
Illness and age are part of life's deal.

Her family and friends have passed with the tide;
All she has left is her dignity and pride.

With wondering eyes she searches my face;
What will happen to me if they close this place?

And as I kiss her life-lined brow;
I want to answer but I don't know how.

They are our history; keep them safe and secure;
Let's fight for good health care and make it endure!

• *Wiebe is a member of HEU's First Nations Caucus*

Feb. 20 – March 28

Beginning of 1996 Introductory Shop Steward seminars. Contact Provincial Office for the times in your region.

February 22

Bargaining talks commence.

March 1/2

B.C. Federation of Labour Political Organizing Conference

March 8

International Women's Day

March 30

Employment Security Agreement expires

March 31

HEU Master Collective Agreements expire.

May 1

May Day observed around the world; Vancouver celebrates with Mayworks Festival

Sound options to Ottawa's budget slashing

The federal budget delivered by Liberal Finance Minister Paul Martin in early March is expected to be another lesson in neoconservative economics.

In his two previous budgets, Martin followed the lead of the Mulroney Conservatives in cutting public services and slashing transfer payments to the provinces for health care and social services, while maintaining generous tax breaks to corporations and wealthy Canadians.

In his 1995 budget, Martin ended the former setup for transfer payments, folding them together into the Canada Health and Social Transfer. This new transfer, which takes effect April 1, 1996, means B.C. will get $1.3 billion less for these programs from Ottawa over the next two years. That's on top of the $1.8 billion cut to B.C. health care and social programs since 1990.

These reductions will only pressure B.C. to cut health care and social programs through cutbacks and restructuring, workforce reductions and wage restraints.

Last year, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and a Manitoba coalition of social justice groups, CHO!CES, produced their first alternative federal budget. Although the 1996 version had not been released at press time, a framework document states that this year's alternative budget will be fiscally sound.

"We acknowledge the severity of the government's debt/deficit problem, but unlike the government, we choose to address the real causes of the large public debt – unemployment, excessively high interest rates, and an unfair tax system."

Instead of cutting programs, the framework document said, Ottawa should "cut" unemployment. If the unemployment rate was cut to four per cent, the Canadian economy would be $100 billion larger and the budgets of all governments would be balanced.

B.C. Finance Minister Elizabeth Cull has called on her federal counterpart to reorder his priorities. Instead of cutting medicare across Canada by $4.1 billion this year, Cull said Martin should cut $5.4 billion in annual subsidies and tax breaks to business.

WORKING TV FEBRUARY TO APRIL SCHEDULE

FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL
Thurs. 9 p.m.	**Thurs. 9 p.m.**	**Thurs. 9 p.m.**
Feb. 1, 15	March 7, 21	April 4, 18
Vancouver	Vancouver	Vancouver
Sat. 5:30 p.m.	**Sat. 5:30 p.m.**	**Sat. 5:30 p.m.**
Feb. 3, 17	March 9, 23	April 6, 20
Network, Shaw	Network, Shaw	Network, Shaw
Mon. 7:30 p.m.	**Mon. 7:30 p.m.**	**Mon. 7:30 p.m.**
Feb. 5, 19; Van.	March 11, 25; Van.	April 8, 22; Van.
Bby., Rich.	Bby., Rich.	Bby., Rich.
Tues. 3:30 p.m.	**Tues. 3:30 p.m.**	**Tues. 3:30 p.m.**
Feb. 6, 20	March 12, 26	April 9, 23
Network	Network	Network

and every month beginning on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays

VGH local seeks voice in changes

HEU computer operators at Vancouver Health Sciences Centre have won assurances from management that a new information system will have little impact on jobs, says local chair Leo Bibo.

It's all part of stepped-up local efforts to give HEU members a voice in hospital planning and to win management commitments to improve consultation and employment security as budgets tighten.

HEU activists, along with members of HSA and BCNU, have insisted on a special briefing on the hospital's budget situation and the strategic plan for next year by the facility's vice-president for finance.

In the wake of media reports that a costly information services joint venture with B.C. Tel could cause layoffs, local leaders pushed for more consultation through their labour adjustment committee.

A subsequent meeting with project leaders saw "many questions answered," Bibo said, "and they've promised to improve consultation in future."

The VGH local is working hard to plug members into the hospital's planning process as managers move ahead with several changes that could result in lost services and jobs.

"We're meeting immediately with managers who are planning changes in the laundry and stores areas," Bibo said, and work to ensure better use of LPNs in the nursing team is continuing.

Coffee break

All stories guaranteed factual. Sources this issue: Globe and Mail, CALM, Georgia Straight.

Monks hope discos will be their resurrection

Faced with imminent financial collapse, the hard-up monks of Belmont Abbey near Hereford, England have announced they are turning their ancient ecclesiastical abode into a nightclub of sorts, throwing open the Abbey doors for dinner-dances, discos, and wedding receptions.

The monks are praying that the move will be a big money earner that will cover their rising upkeep costs.

I had to sort my socks

A U.S. survey identified the most common reasons people give for being late for work: traffic (24 per cent), oversleeping (23 per cent), procrastination (14 per cent), home and child duties (12 per cent) and car troubles (11 per cent).

Another survey compiled a list of unusual excuses. these included: "I felt it was better to sleep in at home than to sleep at the office," and "I had to sort my socks."

What is floccipaucinihilipilification?

At 29 letters, it's the longest word in the English language.

What does it mean? The act of estimating as worthless.

He was miscast

Cambridge, England drama student Paul Fifield had to be taken to hospital after volunteering to serve as the frame for a plaster mould of a torso.

But Paul Fifield was literally cast in stone after hard-setting wall plaster was erroneously used.

Doctors had to chip the cast off with hammers.

"It had set on every single hair on my body," says Fifield. "It was extremely painful."

Manager gets fired for settling grievance

A post office manager in Indianapolis, Indiana was suspended recently for 14 days after he reinstated another employee who was up for discipline.

Tom Harris had been ordered by his superiors not to settle the grievance filed by the fired employee, a union member.

But he thought the case should be resolved, so he put the employee back to work. Now Harris is on the street.

Too much to bear

The Church of England dropped the crucifix from its printed ads promoting Easter because, says Rev. Robert Ellis of the church-owned Advertising Network company, it "carries too much cultural baggage."

But an executive with one of the world's biggest ad agencies said the decision was foolish.

"The cross is arguably the best-known brand logo in the entire world," said Marilyn Baxter.

Hammerless? Use your pistol instead

What Richard Gardner thought would be a simple home repair job backfired on the South Carolina man and his wife.

In need of a hammer to repair some moulding at his mother-in-law's home, Gardner decided to use his handgun instead. The gun went off while he was hammering, wounding both Gardner and his wife.

HEU people

Mary Bonderud: 30 years at Willowhaven and still going strong

Last October, **Mary Bonderud** was honoured by her coworkers in a special ceremony to mark her 30th anniversary on the job at Nelson's Willowhaven Private Hospital.

A strong union activist, Bonderud was part of the organizing drive when Willowhaven caregivers joined HEU in 1978, and served as secretary-treasurer of the local for its first ten years.

Bonderud's coworkers marked her anniversary with gifts of a custom apron for the facility's head cook and a commemorative pin.

Head set for new chapter

Ona Head says she's been fortunate to work with senior citizens and has learned a lot from them, but the Olive Devaud Residence LPN and activities director has no compunction about retiring after more than 20 years at the Powell River facility.

"I'm eagerly looking forward to this new chapter in my life," says Head, who served as secretary and trustee for the Olive Devaud local.

What's she got planned? Golf, golf, more golf, some travelling, a little needlework, and "cleaning those cupboards that were always put off until next week."

She also plans to do volunteer work with seniors.

Leaving with warm regards

After 16 years as a long-term care aide, **Virginia (Virgie) Cahill** is retiring at Yucalta Lodge in Campbell River with a treasure trove of memories.

"I leave with warm regard for all my HEU brothers and sisters, and all other staff and residents," says Cahill.

Cahill held down a number of positions with the Yucalta local including chairperson and vice chair. What's she got planned? "To do what ever I please," she says.

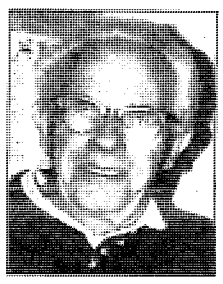
John Gavin retires from Central City

Central City Mission's **John Gavin** retired late last year after seven years as a building services worker at the Vancouver facility.

He plans to do some travelling and pursue his hobbies of woodworking and gardening.

Queen Alexandra pioneer member and activist Joe Schmit dies

The Queen Alexandra local reports with great sadness the death of one of its pioneer members and long-time activist **Joe Schmit**, 82, who died in Victoria Jan. 12.


SCHMIT

Schmit, a cook, was born on the prairies and came to B.C. by covered wagon during the Depression.

He rode the rails looking for a job. He also worked in relief camps for $0.75 a day using a pick and shovel to build part of the Hope-Princeton highway. As the Dirty Thirties wore on, Schmit eventually ended up in Vancouver where he was part of the unemployed who occupied the post office in the tense weeks before the On-to-Ottawa trek for jobs and wages.

After the war, where Schmit learned his trade, he started working for Queen Alexandra in 1951, and retired in 1978. He was always active in HEU, serving for many years as local secretary-treasurer. In fact for many years local meetings were held in the Schmit family living room before the local could afford to rent a space.

Schmit is survived by his wife Maria, who was also a member of the Queen Alexandra local from 1964 to 1990, and by sons Gary (a member of the Royal Jubilee local), and Merv (Queen Alexandra local).

WORD SCRAMBLE

by **Ruby Hardwick**

Find and circle the words listed below. Ten letters will be left. What word do they spell?

Alter
Apathy
Bill
Board
Care
Cart
Community
Deal
Eight
Facility
Forty
Health
Home
Labour
Level
Lease
Locals
Long
Mediations
Old
Paramedical
Pack
Pilot
Professional
Relations
Restructure
Seven
Sign
Site
Support
Union
Unit
Wealth
Work

T	S	N	O	I	T	A	I	D	E	M	L
P	A	C	K	C	L	I	P	E	R	O	E
F	A	P	A	T	H	Y	R	I	E	G	V
A	0	R	E	R	N	N	O	D	L	N	E
C	T	R	A	I	E	G	F	R	A	O	L
I	W	I	T	M	V	I	E	A	T	L	T
L	E	O	N	Y	E	S	S	O	I	E	R
I	A	U	R	F	S	D	S	B	O	A	O
T	L	N	N	K	U	N	I	O	N	S	P
Y	T	I	N	U	M	M	O	C	S	E	P
E	H	T	L	A	E	H	N	D	A	D	U
T	H	G	I	E	S	L	A	C	O	L	S
I	O	R	U	O	B	A	L	E	M	O	H
S	E	R	U	T	C	U	R	T	S	E	R

What do the remaining letters spell?

Answer: DEFINITION

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

talk to us

We're working hard to make our union better for HEU members with disabilities. We'd like to hear from you. If you are on WCB or LTD, or if you're invisibly/visibly disabled in the workplace, let us know how the union can better meet your needs.

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HEU People with Dis Abilities Caucus

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- feeling isolated?
- being harassed?
- want to know your rights?

for information
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- fighting harassment
- combatting homophobia
- fighting discrimination

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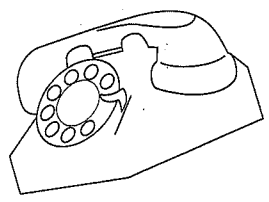

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VOL. 14 NO 1 THE VOICE OF THE HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1996

HEALTH WORKERS THE heart OF HEALTH CARE

Ready to bargain

We head to the table Feb. 22 with proposals to preserve health care services and protect jobs. Special bargaining supplement plus coverage on PAGE 3

Hartman the groundbreaker

The life of former CUPE president Grace Hartman – the first woman to lead a major union in North America – is documented in a new book. We've got an excerpt.

PAGE 4

Free trade hell

Guatemalan teenager Blanca Estela works 12-hour abused-filled days for thirty cents an hour in a free trade zone making clothes for the U.S. market. PAGE 8

Ode to the wildcatters

Our Poet's Corner features the fight song of the Alberta laundry workers who took on Ralph Klein and won.

PAGE 9

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