Meeting the challenge to change

In a powerful debate, delegates approved a constitutional amendment to give formal standing to the four equity caucuses and convention credentials.

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Delegates also approved an action plan to press for a contract settlement for community sector members. Premier Clark pledged that health workers should be paid the same wherever they work.

PAGE EIGHT

Global inequality at its worst as most of the world's AIDS sufferers live in developing countries with no hope for treatment.
A Guardian feature on the recent AIDS conference in Vancouver.

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Hospice hearth
Dying of AIDS, HEU member James Pratt is still contributing to his community. He's raising funds to build a fireplace at a new Vancouver hospice.

page SIX

one world, one hope?
COMMENT

Change can be a two-edged sword
by Chris Allcutt

FOR HEU MEMBERS change has been a constant factor in our working lives. Our jobs and workforces have been incredibly transformed in the last five years. Rather than standing on the sidelines, our union has been immersed in the dynamic, and we’ve traded old for new to respond to immediate pressures to deliver for our members and protect Medicare.

The push to make things better is an extremely powerful force to improve our lives and the work of the union. It can also create a climate of stress, anxiety and insecurity.

This two-edged sword of change was at play at HEU’s recent 20th biennial convention, where delegates displayed a hearty appetite for refashioning and improve support on many fronts.

For example, there was the convention decision on our equity initiative.

It made history and sent a clear message: the union needed to do things differently to be more inclusive, and responsive to the diverse needs of our members.

Another convention debate — on a motion to have province-wide, regionalization workshops serve as key measure of just how much the union’s culture has shifted.

In years past, faced with immense pressures of change in the workplace, delegates would have demanded to know what actions the Provincial Executive was taking on their behalf.

But the message at this convention was different. Activists and they needed the workshops to sharpen their skills and deliver the boss’s restructuring plans in the workplace.

The pressure for change was also reflected in the outcome of elections for the union’s Provincial Executive.

There are 11 new faces on the HEU’s top decision-making body, and I look forward to working closely with president Fred Moot, financial secretary Mary LaFlamme and the new executive in carrying out the ambitious agenda set by convention.

Most of you will know that a decision to direct staff assigned to work at convention back to their normal jobs has caused some friction. Here too the tension of change had an influence. It was a decision that hurt people who are actively committed to the union.

We’ve emerged from a short job action by staff with an agreement to get back on track and work together to learn from the events.

To be sure, different perceptions of the convention’s outcome will emerge. But what can’t be overlooked is that solid record of decisions adopted by delegates, and the quality and intensity of debate, which was the best I’ve ever been a part of within HEU.

Yes we have to overcome hurdles. Yes we have to heal. But in the long run, we’ll emerge from convention even stronger and better equipped to meet the challenges of progressive reforms within the health care system and our union.

One view of the meaning of equality

I go to the local meetings and everyone has their chance to speak as we’re all equal. We elect people to send to conventions where they represent us as equal among the delegates deciding the future direction of the union.

From the delegates present at convention, everyone is nominated and voted to the Provincial Executive. Any of the delegates can be equal as we are all equal.

I do not belong to any of the four cause groups seeking special status in this union, so I am equal.

I suggest you delegate think long and hard before going favour to any group, for any reason.

ROY ROUTLEY,
Shuswap Local

Union’s equity catalyst for change

We both felt we had to respond to a recent letter in the Guardian from HEU brothers and sisters of Cowichan Lodge regarding their thoughts on the four equity causes. We are taking a wild guess here, but it is our suspicion that none of the Cowichan Lodge signers would be eligible to be included in any of those above mentioned causes.

For us, this is not a matter of special attention, or special funding. It is long overdue, and all HEU members should respect and support the efforts and work of the four equity causes. All of us need to examine our own, health, hospital, and big-boxed bias and if it makes us feel uncomfortable or hard done by well, folks, isn’t that what it’s all about?... being uncomfortable enough to understand that we have to change these opinions... uncomfortable enough to want to change the system.

There are enough people in society ready and more than willing to be biased and bigoted. Let’s not let it be an issue in HEU. This isn’t really an issue of special interest groups but it is necessary chain of events to bring TRUE equality to all union members, actually, it would be much more to be able to say to all members. Let’s all support our brothers and sisters who make up these four causes, and stop funding them when the members of these groups feel there is no longer a need.

DIAMON BEARDO

and LYNNE ANDERSON

Mount St. Francis Local, Nelson

LPN’s point taken

I am writing in regard to the article in the most recent Guardian "Laid off nurses: don’t blame Prince George LPNs." The article was excellent, but the title bothered me. I have been an LPN for 29 years, and I have always considered myself a "nurse," although, sometimes it seems to be a losing battle. So I would have appreciated if the title was: "Laid off RNs: don’t blame Prince George LPNs." We should not be "put down" by our own union magazine. We are nurses too.

S.M. SMITH, LPN

Peace Arch Hospital

continued on page 11

GUARDIAN

"Oh, the horror of it all! But what can we do?"

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The Guardian welcomes your feedback. Send letters to 2000 west 10th ave.,

Vancouver VaL 4PS or on phone 1-800-899-4944. Please be brief.

Surrey ratification vote process outlined

I am writing in response to the brother’s letter published in the last Guardian. I know if he feels Surrey local executive is dictatorial, he is entitled to his opinion.

As the local chairperson and an activist for the last 14 years, I do hate to see the local’s executive as they are doing what is necessary for the union.

Firstly, at our May 16th local union meeting, he did not as well, that is, in attending the meeting of the union. He did not attend the meeting of the union. He did not attend the meeting of the union. He did not attend the meeting of the union.

As the chairperson, I pointed out that we couldn’t discuss the brother’s concerns if there wasn’t a seconder to the motion.

At this point we did get a member to second the motion. We then had discussion and the brother brought forward his concerns on not having a meeting prior to the vote to bring forward questions that could sway how other members voted. Executive members did point out that questions could be raised prior to voting, and we couldn’t be sure that if we called a special meeting that we could get someone from Provincial Office to attend to answer questions on such short notice.

Our vote was to be held on May 22nd, but not only that, how could we be sure to get a quorum for a special meeting to close to the vote?

I don’t think it’s fair to those members who attended this meeting to say the table officers swayed them to defeat the brother’s motion.

If the brother wasn’t able to put forward a good enough argument for his motion to pass it was not because the table officers swayed the membership, it was because after debate they decided a special meeting wasn’t necessary.

KATHY DARVILL, Chairperson, Surrey Local
Pay equity agreement boosts pay in dozens of HEU job classifications

HEU REACHED agreement Aug. 29 with the Health Employers Association of B.C. on pay equity adjustments for 1996 and 1997. The agreement arises out of the Job Value Comparison Plan in Article 69 of the Master Collective Agreement.

In the report of the industrial inquiry commissioner, Vince Ready which formed the basis of a new collective

'We're pleased that members will receive their entitlements shortly'

agreement for the two years ending March 31, 1996, Ready set aside 10 per cent of pay in each year for pay equity adjustments.

The pay equity adjustment retroactive to April 1, 1996, has been set at $29 a month for eligible classifications, and the pay equity adjustment for April 1, 1997, has been set at $34 a month for eligible classifications. The groups scheduled to receive the $29 and $34 a-month increases fall into two categories.

The first category is those members with a gender-based wage gap greater than 10 per cent, as defined by the target wage rates set in the Job Value Comparison Plan. The second category is patient care technical classifications where wage discrimination is both gender based and bargaining unit based.

Members in the Cook classification will receive an adjustment of $122 a month on April 1, 1996, and Charge Transportation Attendant T7 classification will receive an adjustment of $68 a month on April 1, 1996, to deal with classification anomalies.

"We are pleased that we reached agreement on the pay equity increases, so that members will receive their entitlements shortly," said HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnut.

"The monthly increases are very modest, however, because the gender-based wage gap is so wide in health care that one per cent of pay increases spread very slim." The new pay rates, which show which classifications are receiving the adjustments, have been sent out to all locals.

More information on pay equity is contained in the pamphlet, Pay Equity: Recognizing the Value of Your Work, which was sent out to all locals in January 1994.

The Job Value Comparison plan which underlies the current pay equity increases in the collective agreement was first negotiated in the 1992 round of bargaining.

Allevato makes mayoralty bid

Former HEU secretary-business manager Carmela Allevato is running for mayor in Vancouver at the head of a progressive slate of candidates vying to unseat incumbent Philip Owen and his pro-business group that controls the city's municipal government.

Allevato, who now works as a lawyer for CPIU, stepped down as one of HEU's top officers at the end of 1995. Part of the Coalition of Progressive Electors ticket, Allevato slammed Owen for the recent council decision to implement a flat charge for garbage collection, which will bring big tax savings for owners of expensive homes but tax boosts for the average city homeowner.

HEU is offering strong backing to Allevato, and union president Fred Most. The COPE campaign office is at 2425 Main St., 708-9561.

Ready's first interpretation a security win

The process of interpreting the new Master Collective Agreement has begun with a win for the HEU and other unions. In his first clarification of his industrial inquiry report that formed the basis of the current sector deal, Vince Ready upheld HEU's position that there should be an uninterrupted transition from the old Employment Security Agreement (ESA) to the new collective agreement.

The ESA covers the 275 employees who were laid off after March 30, 1996, when the ESA expired, are entitled to return to work on March 30, 1996, with up to 12 months of employment security.

SEPTMBER/OCTOBER 1996 • GUARDIAN 3
WHAT WE'RE UP TO

Incidents of violence in long-term care to be studied by the WCB

With a ramp-up in workplace injuries resulting from incidents of violence in long-term care facilities, the WCB will be conducting a study over the next year to get at the roots of the problem.

Six long-term care facilities across B.C. have been chosen by noted SFU criminology professor Neil Boyd, who has been hired by the WCB to carry out the review.

Boyd is set to begin the study, which guarantees anonymity for the facilities and their workers. He'll review incident reports and conduct interviews with administrators and front-line workers, whose experiences are "really crucial in understanding this problem," he said.

Boyd said lost time injuries from incidents of violence have cost the WCB millions. "To chronically trying to make sense of that is part of my job." In 1995 Boyd completed a ground-breaking study for the Ministry of Women's Equality on violence in the workplace. It was during the first study that Boyd uncovered the mounting problem of violence in long-term care facilities.

All HEU staff at the six study facilities are encouraged to participate.

Employer walks on Meririt food service transfer deal

Meririt food services workers offered a late summer setback when their employer cancelled the purchase of cook chill equipment and walked away from a transfer of service agreement that met the needs of both parties.

In an example of bad faith consultation, the Meririt employer - which operates the Nicola Valley Hospital and Coquihalla/Algies long-term care facility - cancelled the planned purchase of cook chill technology to consolidate food services at an upgraded Coquihalla/Algies kitchen.

The transfer deal that the employer rejected - which the union spent six months negotiating - protected dietary workers in both facilities, utilizing voluntary options and retaining programs. Now the hospital is going back to using dietary workers in Nicola Valley, a move that the union is fighting.

Employers, unions ink deal on IMET transfer

HEU, HSA and HEABC signed a memorandum of agreement in August covering the transfer of Biomedical Engineering Technologists (BETs) from HSA to HEU.

Under the agreement, IMETs transferring to HEU from HSA will continue to be covered by the terms and conditions of the HSA Master Agreement until it expires on March 31, 1996. This includes duties, levels, wages, and benefits, and IMETs transferring to HEU will retain on the HSA Master Agreement.

The transfer of BETs from HSA to HEU takes effect the beginning of the first pay.

HEU spells out changes for New Directions in NDP's regionalization review

T
HE NEW Directions regionalization process has fallen short in many ways, such as a lack of input on decisions from workers and their unions, and unsatisfactory working conditions, HEU says in a submission presented to the group of MLA's reviewing regionalization.

HEU also called for a number of changes, including better integration of acute and community services, longer term funding, and promotion of the nursing team, in the submission, which was presented August 21 by HEU president Fred Murphy and financial secretary Mary LaPlant to the regionalization assessment team.

The team, which is due to report to health minister Joy MacPhail in early October, is made up of New Democrat MLAs Mike Farnworth (Port Coquitlam), Bill Goodacre (Okanagan-Okanagan), Linda Welsh (Kootenay), and Gisrene Rohl (New Westminster).

"Instead of supporting a fundamentally different and progressive restructuring of health care, regionalization appeared to be simply adding another layer of management onto what was already a top-heavy bureaucracy," HEU's brief says.

So far in three years of New Directions, regionalization has focused almost exclusively on operations of governance rather than service provision, the continuum of care from acute care to the community has not been put in place, the ranks of management have not been reduced, working conditions are still unsatisfactory, and workers and unions have little input in decisions on restructuring, the brief says.

As well, HEU says the private sector rather than the public sector has been driving in this largely shared services.

HEU recommendations include demonstration projects for restructuring, elimination of the bargaining barrier between the community sector and the facilities sector in health care, and more utilization of LPNs and other HEU caregivers.

Employers share blame in Austin severance travesty

Former health labour relations boss Gordon Austin will walk away with a $325,000 severance payout in a controversial payoff condemned by Premier Clark as "a travesty" by HEU.

"We're just as angry as Premier Clark that a diagnostic high-paying health employer - who always regarded at the bargaining table that there was never any money for low paid health care workers - will walk away with half a million dollars," says HEU secretary-businessman Chris Allnutt.

Austin was fired from his job in 1994 as president of the old Health Labour Relations Association. The Health Employers Association of B.C. replaced HLRA in 1995.

While the results of an RCMP investigation showed no grounds for criminal charges to be laid, the HEARC board - at the advice of the RCMP - was convinced that Austin was guilty of sexual harassment of a subordinate.

Allnutt says the high-paid administrators at B.C. hospitals should shoulder most of the blame for what he called "nothing short of a travesty."

"They were the ones who failed to monitor Austin's spending habits, and they sat on internal reports for six months which identified problems," Allnutt says. "And they were the ones who negotiated the lavish severance package in Austin's employment contract that served as the goad for subsequent negotiations initiated by Surge."" Allnutt says the government now has some real ammunition to force health employers to be more accountable.

Four union activists join race in upcoming municipal elections

Four HEU activists have tossed their hats in the municipal election ring, and they may have your support to win in the important Nov. 16 B.C.-wide municipal elections.

Long-time union activist Jean Birch is running for a council seat in Quesnel. A payroll clerk, Birch is secretary-treasurer of the Quesnel local.

In the City of North Vancouver, Kwiatkowsi Lyn activist Chris Dorais is at the school board race, while HEU member and Liebes Gate member Kristina Vanderlinden is bidding for a school board position in the North Vancouver District.

And HEU Provincial Office secretary Gall Paquette is running for a council position in Richmond. Paquette is a member of the Princeton local.

Getting active in municipal elections was an important theme at HEU's recent convention, where union members were reminded of the connection between union partnership and progressive local government.

"Municipal governments can affect your livelihood," they've got a big say in health care and the regional board system," John Fitzpatrick, secretary-treasurer of the Vancouver, District Labour Council, told convention.

Support the progressive candidates running in your local, and don't forget to vote Nov. 16.
period after facilities have been notified of the memorandum of agreement.

Prince Rupert protest wins action on health and safety concerns
Prince Rupert Hospital’s pharmacy has been shut down temporarily to deal with health and safety concerns first raised by HEU members who stayed a 24-hour strike to protest unsafe conditions.

The problems emerged when the hospital’s regular pharmacist took a leave, and was replaced by a temporary appointment who wasn’t trained. It “bears out our concerns that working conditions in the pharmacy weren’t safe for workers, or for patients,” says Prince Rupert local chair Nancy Zacora.

One of the near-fatal mistakes made while the regular pharmacist was absent included an improperly mixed chemist treatment that would have been a lethal cocktail if administered. The pharmacy will open only after a review and independent audit of the situation is conducted. Members at the Prince Rupert local took the Aug. 21 action using Section 8.24 of the WCB regulations which covers the right to refuse unsafe work. Dozens of health workers participated.

250 code will change long distance calls
Remember that area code changes that will soon be implemented will change the way union members contact HEU offices.

The Lower Mainland, Sunshine Coast, Hope and D’Arcy retain the 604 area code. All other regions of the province have a new area code, 250. Don’t forget that you can phone any of HEU’s offices toll free. The numbers are listed on page 15 of the Guardian.

Election donations list an interesting read
In the recent provincial election, HEU contributed $66,700 — about $1,66 per member — to Green Clark’s campaign.

The financial support is detailed in the Election B.C. report on who gave what to whom in the May election. While most of the $3.8 million raised by the NDP came from individuals, the bulk of Gordon Campbell’s campaign cash came from corporations, which included a number of private sector health promoters. The giant lab testing company MDS and its Metro McNair subsidiary gave the Liberals more than $10,000, hedging their bets on election day by donating $1,000 to the NDP at the last moment.

Private clinic operator Brian Day’s company International Medical Centre Inc. donated $3,200 to Campbell, while another two-tier care proponent, the B.C. Medical Association, handed over $18,000 to the Liberals.

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Reflecting on NAC
Recent march against poverty is proudest accomplishment of former status of women leader Sunera Thobani

by Chris Gainor

WHEN Sunera Thobani took back on her three years as president of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, she lists this spring’s Women’s March Against Poverty as her biggest accomplishment.

The march began May 15 in Vancouver at the Canadian Labour Congress meeting and ended a month later at the NAC annual meeting where Thobani stepped down and was replaced by Joan Grun-Cummines of Toronto. About 100,000 people took part in rallies across Canada connected with the march.

‘The partnership we’ve built between the women’s movement and labour is an important one’

“The thing I’m most proud of was the Women’s March Against Poverty,” Thobani told the Guardian. “The partnership between the women’s movement and labour is an important one. The women’s march is a major step forward for the labour movement.”

Women working in unions have been able to make them more sensitive to women’s needs. At the same time, unions have been more hierarchical than the women’s movement, and the march has been a good learning experience for the union movement, she said.

Thobani has returned to Vancouver where she will be teaching Women’s Studies at Simon Fraser University while she completes her PhD thesis.

While at NAC, she gained headlines and controversy over her efforts to combat racism and make women of colour an integral part of the women’s movement at all levels.

The challenge that she concentrated on this issue to the exclusion of others is “ridiculous,” she said, because during her first year in office, the main issue was the 1993 federal election, when NAC took an active role and prepared a voter’s guide. Then NAC was involved in the battle to preserve social programs against federal Liberal cuts to health care and social programs. And in the final year of her leadership, NAC was organizing and carrying out the women’s march.

“The partnership of racism and I learned a lot from it,” she said. “I really felt the need for employment equity on the outside and just don’t practice on the inside.”

Thobani is a single mother of a daughter now aged 11, and during the three years as president, Thobani found there was little respite from the demands of office.

“I couldn’t take a break because it seemed like the whole country was waiting for me to fall flat on my face,” she said. “I put a lot of pressure on my daughter. She was very happy and young women of colour got overjoyed when I involved in politics. She said NAC will be active in the coming federal election, and will produce another voter’s guide.

NAC will also have a lot of work to do defending social programs. One of the key demands of the women’s march was a Canada Social Security Act which would set national standards for social programs much like the Canada Health Act does for health care.

“IT ALL

This will be a much tougher time than the last election. No one could guess the Liberals would become more right wing than the Conservatives were.”
Vigilance, not revenge required to heal wounds

by Fred Muzin

This year's 20th HEU biennial convention should be a time to celebrate—a joyous, historic occasion when equity, justice and fairness were enshrined in our Constitution. Our last Convention established caucuses to make HEU more inclusive, to reach out to our Sisters and Brothers from the First Nations, People with Disabilities, People of Ethnic Diversity and Lesbian and Gay Men groups, to learn and to share.

This year's delegates were prepared to significantly advance those causes.

Unfortunately, as a result of a few individuals choosing not to respect HEU traditions, convention 96 will be remembered with tremendous bitterness and hostility as a time when HEU members lost the safe environment where they could be honest and fully represent the views of the members who had selected them to attend.

Management should be decried for believing that the problems we now face have anything to do with equity or the caucuses.

There is a mood for revenge. We must overcome this for the healing and rebuilding to begin.

Many of us who have attended conventions of other organizations are accustomed to their management whereby people are listed up at all of the microphones, given written speeches to read and end debate by proposed motions after a powerfulorton has spoken, thereby circumventing balanced debate.

For over half a century, HEU members have consciously adopted a different culture and policies.

Our members speak from the heart rather than read prepared texts. We don't utilize pro and con microphones to ensure balanced debate—we prefer spontaneity. We don't lobby our committees about the priority of amendments and resolutions.

The distinct advantage that our culture provides is excellent attendance during all debates, and a safe environment in which delegates know they are present to work, rather than to spend time resisting political pressure and manipulation.

Evidence of this is the large number of issues traditionally debated and voted on at our conventions. The alternative that was clearly demonstrated this year was the number of amendments that were never debated and must wait for 1997 to be addressed.

HEU's time honoured culture has been severely violated without the democratically debate we deserve. The wounds are extremely deep.

There is a mood right now for revenge. We must overcome this natural tendency in order for the healing and rebuilding to begin. It will be a long and painful process.

How do we prevent future attempts to undermine our brand of democracy?

Concretely, let us reaffirm the importance of education and preparation in advance of convention, especially for first time delegates.

If each of us is trained to understand politics, recognize attempts at manipulation, and take responsibility to remain vigilant and outspoken, we can avoid feeling abused and ensure that together we all determine the ground rules.

Remember that the lyrics to our songs are more than just words—you've got to watch over liberty, each and every day...

DONOR James Pratt's fireplace fund got a boost from AIDS activist Elizabeth Taylor, who visited Pratt, at right, at the May Guttridge Hospice in August.

Fireplace is Pratt's legacy

by Stephen Howard

James Pratt knows he's going to die soon. "I'll get pneumonia before one of these days and not wake up in the morning," the former HEU shop steward says matter-of-factly.

But before that day comes, Pratt wants to complete his goal of raising $15,000 to build a fireplace at a new hospice being planned by St. James Social Services Society, which operates the May Guttridge Hospice in Vancouver.

A St. Paul's hospital cook who's been on LTD since 1991, Pratt was diagnosed with AIDS in 1988. He describes himself as an "emotional basket case" and close to suicide before he found the calming influence of the unique stogehoorn facility where fellow HEU members provide care in a homelike setting.

His new safe haven has given him dignity and allowed him to grow and contribute to his community. "You feel worthwhile, I have no family in Vancouver so this became my home."

The fireplace at Guttridge is the centre of life for the six residents who share common surroundings and a common thread: they're all there to die. "When I came here and saw the love and homelike environment I wanted my name on a tombstone but in a new hospice." So Pratt got the go ahead in February for the fireplace project, and his name will be on the hearth when St. James' new Cottage Hospice is built.

He's almost halfway to his target with donations coming from the St. Paul's local and individual donations from members of HEU's union of people with disabilities.

Actress and AIDS activist Elizabeth Tayloranoia in a significant contribution when she visited the Guttridge facility during August's international AIDS conference in Vancouver.

Hospice care, says Pratt, runs on a different philosophy than hospital palliative or respite care units. And Guttridge— the only free standing hospice in B.C. — also operates at significantly less cost per patient day than hospital care. But so far, the facility and hospice model has received only lukewarm financial support from Victoria.

"I have a lot of work," he says. "When I have stress and anxiety it mars all of my life. Living here eliminates those anxieties.

May Guttridge Hospice and James Pratt are profiled on the CBC program

Chretien's claimed defense of Medicare rings hollow

by Chris Gainor

As the next federal election approaches, the federal Liberals are busy setting themselves up as the defenders of Medicare. Immediately after the provincial premiers called for a diminished federal role in enforcing Medicare and social programs, Prime Minister Jean Chretien shot back with rhetoric we're sure to hear a great deal more of as the election approaches.

"If you abandon enforcement, you abandon Medicare," Chretien said. "So why have we a national government that makes sure we have services that are at a certain level across the land."

What Chretien didn't say was that if you abandon funding, you just as surely abandon Medicare. And that's exactly what Chretien and the Liberals are doing—abandoning funding of health care.

Prodded by New Democrats, the Liberals brought in national Medicare in the late 1960s. A decade later, Pierre Trudeau's government began cutting back, and Brian Mulroney's Tories deepened the cuts to Medicare and social programs.

While Chretien and other Liberals joined in the chorus of opposition to the Moloney cuts, once in office they stepped up the rate of funding reductions. Finance Minister Paul Martin's federal in-

The right wing antics of Klein and Harris are allowing Chretien to mislead Canadians'

The right wing antics of Ralph Klein in Alberta and Mike Harris in Ontario are allowing Chretien to mislead Canadians with his claim that he is protecting Medicare.

At the same time, Canadian doctors are promoting privatization and two-tier health care that is driving down their own salaries and ordering costs. The Liberal claim to be the defender of Medicare will become hollow.

Canadians should examine the Liberal record, not in the light of their affection for Chretien but in the harsh light of reality. We should ask if we can afford to maintain the Liberal and Tory tax breaks for wealthy Canadians and corporations while funding for Medicare continues to be reduced.

We should also ask if Medicare can be defended if the only opposition in the House of Commons is a Reform Party which wants to cut deeper into health spending than the Liberals are already doing.

We must also ask if we can continue to deny a voice to federal New Democrats, who prior to the 1993 federal election provided the only real opposition to the Liberal and Tory attacks on Medicare and social programs.
Delegates in mood for change, adopt equity initiatives, action plans for community bargaining and LPNs, and map out regionalization course

Convention embraces diversity

THE more than 560 delegates who took part in HERU's 20th biennial convention clearly had an appetite for change as they adopted important, and in some cases historic, resolutions to chart the union's course for the next two years.

Centre stage at the Sept. 16 to 20 convention was a constitutional change to formalize HERU's four equity caucuses—established at the last convention—to battle inequality and discrimination in the workplace and within the union.

The powerfully-debated resolution was approved overwhelmingly and gave constitutional standing to the four caucuses—First Nations, Ethnic Diversity, Lesbians and Gay Men, and People With Disabilities—as well as one delegate credential for each new standing committee at union conventions and wage policy conferences.

In other convention highlights, delegates elected a provincial executive with 11 new faces, heard keynote speakers like B.C. Federation of Labour president Ken Georgetti and CUPE national president Judy Darcy, adopted plans to press for action on community bargaining and LPNs, and charted policy on regionalization. They also debated many policy resolutions and constitutional changes, including one successful amendment which expanded the role of the president in the union's decision making structure.

But these positive events were almost overshadowed by a decision made late in the convention by the outgoing Provincial Executive to send most of the union's staff assigned to convention back to their normal duties. Taken because of perceived concerns about the role staff were playing at the convention, the decision spoiled discordantly the convention floor in the last two days of events.

The equity issue, on the third day of convention, featured two hours of emotional debate with tears, laughter, anger and pride as delegates recounted incidents of discrimination they have, suffered, some of them at the hands of other members.

Louise Hutchinson of the Children's Local and of the Lesbian and Gay Caucus, told of how she and other lesbians have seen attitudes to them change after they came out of the closet.

Despite being an activist and having written many bargaining demands, her local did not send her to last year's wage policy conference, she said.

Mary-Lee Jenkins of the Mount St. Francis local told of the racial slurs she and other members of her family have faced. And despite being chair of her local, she nearly wasn't elected as a delegate to convention.

"I felt so discriminated against. I was the chairperson and I wasn't going to be able to come here," she said, fighting back tears.

"Let us go forward to unity and towards equality, let us step forward to make history in our union."

Some delegates opposed the constitutional amendment, which had come to the floor with the endorsement of more than 20 locals, because they felt the equity standing committees should not have the right to each send a delegate to conventions and wage policy conferences.

Laura Nell of the Royal Jubilee local said giving the committees delegates would establish a "two tier system" of delegates, which isn't necessary because many members of the caucuses are present at convention as local delegates.

Wrapping up the debate, Lorna Partridge of the Arranglen Local said: "Let us go forward to unity and towards equality. Most of all, let us step forward to make history in our union."

After convention, the new Provincial Executive took steps to heal the rift with staff. Secretary-business manager Chris Allum said the events "hurt people who are actively committed to the union." He says an agreement had been reached with union staff to work together to heal and to learn from the events of convention.
Clark's budget balance won't hurt health

The R.S.C. government planned $70 billion in budget cuts over the next five years to reduce the budget deficit and improve the fiscal situation of the province. Despite these efforts, the province's budget deficit remains high, and the government is facing pressure to make additional cuts.

Regionalization, reform agenda set

Delegates set ambitious and progressive course for next two years

The new provincial executive has set ambitious goals for the next two years, focusing on regionalization, reform, and economic development. The executive aims to build a more decentralized and equitable system of government, with a focus on improving services and reducing bureaucracy.

Action pledged for community talks

The provincial government has pledged to hold community talks to address concerns and gather feedback on proposed changes. The talks will focus on issues such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure, and will involve stakeholders from across the province.

Message to Victoria: repeat B.C. Benefits

B.C. Benefits, the program that provides financial assistance to low-income people, is set to be continued and expanded. The government has pledged to increase funding for the program and to ensure that it remains accessible to those who need it.

Consensus built on game plan for health care

Despite the ongoing crisis in healthcare, a consensus has been built on a game plan for improving access to care. The plan includes increased funding for healthcare, improved access to services, and a focus on reducing wait times.

Poverty spreads in a land of plenty

Despite being one of the richest countries in the world, Canada has seen an increase in poverty rates in recent years. The government has pledged to take action to address this issue and to ensure that all Canadians have access to basic necessities.

SECRETARIAT-BUSINESS MANAGER'S REPORT

Change requires unity, solidarity

The change in government has brought new leaders to the forefront, and the business community is looking to the new administration to provide stability and growth. The business community is hopeful that the new government will prioritize unity and solidarity, working together to address the challenges facing the province.
Clark’s budget balance won’t hurt health

THE B.C. government’s planned $750 billion budget cuts will not come at the cost of health-care services or the workers who provide them, Premier Glen Clark promised delegates.

Clark, speaking at his first provincial labour convention since the NDP’s election victory, drew a clear distinction between his party’s deficit reduction plans and those of Gordon Campbell.

“His primary concern was a $1 billion tax break to banks and corporations,” Clark said. “A victory for Gordon Campbell would have been a massive blow for medicare.”

Despite a $435 million cut by the federal government this year, the NDP is committed to a $200 million increase for health care, including $23 million to cut hospital waiting lists and $5 million to help the aging population.

Clark told delegates he was dismayed by the number of NDP supporters who disagreed with his public support, before the election, of a renewed Employment Security Agreement.

“They said, ‘Gee, why did you do that, Glen? Don’t you realize that’s not a popular thing to do? We’re behind — we want to win.’” he recalled. “Well, out of all the things that was key to our success was to be completely and brutally honest about whose side we’re on — because people want to hear that. And we have always said that health-care reform should not come off the backs of the workers.”

Clark told delegates that his government intends to balance the budget, but that this goal need not come at the expense of health-care services. “I think it’s going to test us, I think the challenge is very, very real. Can a social democratic party committed to the values we’ve come to believe in, balance the budget? I believe that we can.”

During the question period following his speech, the premier pledged to slim his cutting knife as management.

“If we are to protect public services and make cuts, then we have to cut fairly deeply in that relatively unproductive layer of management right across the public service,” said Clark.

When asked his position on the community sector bargaining process, Clark said he expects a result similar to the facilities sector agreement.

“Whether you’re working in the community, or in the hospital, you should get paid the same money,” he said.

Action pledged for community talks

The battle to win a roster collective agreement in the community sector began in earnest as convention delegates overwhelmingly endorsed an emergency resolution for an action plan including job action.

The latest round of community talks — involving 14 HEU locals — with the health Employers Association of B.C. had gone nowhere, with the employers refusing to deal with crucial union issues to win party with the facilities sector.

The strongly worded resolution urged the provincial government to conduct an immediate review of the HEU’s role and the “validity of its future existence,” while directing HEU to negotiate an agreement.

It also called for the federal government to bring First Nations health sector wage levels and working conditions in line with the provincial facilities.

Finally, it called for HEU to “devise and implement a plan of action up to and including job action” to secure a fair and equitable agreement in the communities sector.

“HEU has created a ghetto,” said Margaret Cavin, a resident counselor in a group home who works a 40-hour work week and pays for her own benefits. “I make $13.12 an hour with no employment security, no succession rights or pension plan. The government needs to get rid of the wall that B.C. has created between the facilities and community sector.”

Richard Dennis of the Vancowen local urged HEU members in the facilities sector not to become complacent about the issue.

“While those people joined this union, we made a commitment to them, and this union lives up to its commitments,” said Dennis. “We are not going to let those people down.”

President’s Report

Rekindling passion for social justice

With an iconic collective agreement under their belts, HEU members need to stay militant in the fight for fairness, says union president Fred Mumlin.

Mumlin reported numerous encouraging developments since last convention. The facilities sector agreement that includes employment security provisions, has allowed the union to shift from being defensive to being proactive on several fronts.

The union was instrumental, for example, in redefining the NDP government on May 28.

Especially encouraging, says Mumlin, was the election of several trade unionists, including HEU/COPE member Brenda Walsh, who won in the North Okanagan.

Mumlin cautioned members, however, not to be “flooded into a false sense of security.”

Increased union militancy and public advocacy work is still greatly needed for health reform, accountable public health employers, and the preservation of Medicare.

Mumlin stressed that a union member’s concerns should be minimized during this crucial period.

“While we must always strive for economic justice for our lower paid members,” he said, “If we marginalize the aspirations of our LPN’s, our paramedics, our tradespeople, our union supervisors, we will become weaker.”

Mumlin also took the federal government to task for its regressive social legislation.

Today’s ticking time bomb to the dismantling of the Canada Pension Plan and the attempt to create conflict between retirees and young people,” he said.

“HEU membership is more than an insurance policy for wages and benefits — it is a commitment to bringing at the leading edge in demanding and achieving fairness for all.”

Mumlin, who was re-elected president by acclamation for a second full term, has assumed the position as HEU’s B.C. Federation of Labour officer. He also serves on CPUE’s national executive board.
Regionalization, reform agenda set

Delegates set ambitious and progressive course for next two years

EU WILL FIGHT for changes in our health care system, including curbs to privatization, cleanup of the Workers’ Compensation Board and the Health Employers’ Association of B.C., a larger role for workers in running the health care system, and greater utilization of Licensed Practical Nurses.

These directions came from convention delegates, who debated and passed resolutions setting HEUs political goals on regionalization and health reform for the coming two years.

A resolution pushing for government action also called for consolidation of facilities and community sectors under one collective agreement, an end to cuts in acute care funding, and pay equity legislation.

Another resolution on regionalization calls for provincial standards covering staff/patient ratios and use of the nursing team, and direct election of health board members.

Delegates also approved a series of special province-wide workshops to give activists the tools and resources to deal with restructuring at the local level.

"We need to think ahead of positive developments we can promote in health care," said G.F. Strong local delegate Sheila Rowsewell, who added that a social model of care which provides jobs for HEU members should be emphasized.

"In HEU we need to think about what a community health care system would look like," she said, referring to the priority for the union to press for primary care reform.

Linda Hargreaves of the Cumberland local, who also serves on her municipal council, said many appointees to municipal boards know or care little about their work. Elected members are more knowledgeable and involved in their work.

Other delegates also spoke of their concerns about privatization in health care.

Don Payant of the Children’s local said: “I would appreciate HEU coming up with a coordinated strategy to deal with Marriott and other corporations. It’s what we need to do to get these companies out and get them to stay out. Each time they fail, they also learn. And they keep coming back.”

COSTANTINOU BUFF Comox delegate Donna Vye, above centre, studies the fine print of the HEU constitution during debate. At left, Evergreen delegate Gaynor Lewis and Simone Chambonnel.

Poverty spreads in a land of plenty

Despite being the second richest nation in the world, Canada shaves all the symptoms of a Third World country when it comes to poverty among women and children, Joan Grant-Cummings, president of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, told convention delegates.

Grant-Cummings, quoting a recent United Nations report, the new NAC president said Canada has the lowest level of child benefits among major industrial nations.

She also recalled a meeting she had with the outgoing NAC president Susie Thomas held with federal finance minister Paul Martin, shortly before the Ottawa rally for the Women’s March on Poverty.

Martin, she said, told them the government had to answer to the multinationalists.

“Our response to him was: Canada is a G7 country. Let’s show some balls here. You’re telling me that for all the things we’ve done, that we can say no to multinationals? We can come up with nuclear weapons but we can’t eradicate poverty?”

Message to Victoria: repeal B.C. Benefits

B.C. Benefits, the program that cuts welfare benefits and imposes mandatory training programs on young people, must be repealed, convention delegates decided.

In a resolution passed unanimously at convention, delegates called on HEU to continue to work with anti-poverty groups to fight poor housing, and press to repeal B.C. Benefits and the federal cutbacks to welfare which have led to workfare and cutbacks across Canada.

“Most of us are just a job away or a partner away or an illiterate away from welfare,” said G.F. Strong delegate Sheila Rowsewell, who says that most people stay on welfare for less than six months.

SECRETARY-BUSINESS MANAGER’S REPORT

Change requires unity, solidarity

Only through internal unity and solidarity with other trade unions can HEU meet the challenges of the future while building on past victories, union secretary-business manager Chris Albutt told delegates in his convention address.

The next two years will be a period of adjustment for all health care workers. Regionalization, restructuring, enhanced consultation, amalgamations of employers, shared services, and the push for one collective agreement are just a few of the changes the union is facing.

“We need to identify and support what improves the working conditions of our members and the caring conditions for our patients, residents and clients,” said Albutt, “and to identify and oppose what harms our members and undermines the care we provide.”

In his first convention as secretary-business manager, Albutt praised union members for recent victories. "HEU is in good shape because of what you’ve done in the last two years," said Albutt, who was ratified in the position by a vote of delegates.

The union is 2,000 members stronger, said Albutt, and, with four active equity caucuses, more inclusive. The facilities collective agreement with employer security was achieved without a single day’s lost pay, and the union played a significant role in electing the first second-term NDP government. HEU also withstood the Bill 46 challenge involving a review of the definition of paramedical professionals.

He also welcomed Victoria’s decision to put regionalization plans on hold. "The process had begun to drift, with the powerful in the health care system managing, the private sector and doctors – taking advantage. Albutt also pledged to get a fair agreement for health and support workers in the community sector. "HEU will not tolerate a wage gives for these workers," he said.

GRANT-CUMMINGS

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**Presidential Role Expanded**

Convention delegates also approved a constitutional amendment that expands the role of the president in the union's administrative process. Before, the secretary-businessman served under the direction of the convention and the Provincial Executive. Now, the position also functions under the direction of the president.

Current secretary-businessman Chris Allnutt supported the measure. "It's part of the evolution of change within the union," he said.

**BCNU Leader Challenged on Anti-LPR Position**

The convention appearance of B.C. Nurses Union president Harry Warner was a lightning rod for delegate debate of recent statements by BCNU leaders against the use of LPNs. VGH delegate Leo Bilbo challenged Warner, who attended to deliver solidarity greetings—on her recent statements regarding the HEU's proposal to use the VGH education fund to upgrade LPNs. Warner denied that BCNU is trying to phase out LPNs. "Sometimes our jurisdictions cross over," she said, "but we don't need less of you. We need more of us and more of you, and we're very clear about that."

**Gavel Goes to Quesnel**

In recognition of their struggle to win a first contract, members of the small Quesnel Drug and Alcohol local were awarded the coveted convention gavel. The gavel is awarded each convention to the HEU local which epitomizes the union's traditions of solidarity and militancy. The four member local stuck together through tough picketing and thin to win a collective agreement after more than 200 days on the picket line in 1995.

**Financial Secretary's Report**

HEU meets challenges, stays financially sound

Despite the pressures of bargaining and the push to win re-election for the NDP, HEU's financial situation remains solid, union financial secretary Mary LaPlante reported to convention delegates.

"This wasn't surprising. HEU was under enormous pressure due to the Employment Security Agreement, ending on March 31," said LaPlante. "We all knew that we were in for the fight of our lives. It was not business as usual, it was a matter of pulling out all the stops to ensure that our members received a fair and equitable settlement.

HEU's finances were stretched further by the provincial election call in May.

The campaign against Bill 48, which could have affected more than 50 percent of HEU classifications, was also costly to the union"

"The money spent was absolutely imperative to ensure HEU would continue to exist," said LaPlante.

Since the 1994 convention, the union has increased its certifications through Bill 48 and organizing by 69 new locals for a total of 2,241 new members.

At the time of convention call, there were 311 locals. Of that number, 154 locals (49.5 percent) have less than 50 members; 26 locals have less than 10 members. Locals were encouraged at the last biennial convention to merge on a voluntary basis.

**LPNs set to wage fight, get support**

There was continued scepticism, however, about BCNU president Evans Warnick's willingness to campaign.

Warnick's presence as a guest speaker at convention was questioned by Poole and VGH local chair Leo Bilbo (see related story), who argued that LPNs are currently being laid off partly because of BCNU's lack of support.

Allnutt responded that HEU has frequently had disagreements with BCNU but has always worked hard to reach a fair compromise.

The way forward, says Allnutt, is to work together on issues that unite us as we work on solving our jurisdictional problems.

HEU's LPN and nursing team activists will meet later in November at a special conference designed to launch a nursing team campaign.

**Our seniors left to fend for themselves?**

The Canada Pension Plan is basically financially sound says pension expert Monica Townson, but radical and unanticipated changes now being considered by the federal government could mean the old age pension plan is only five years away from extinction, she predicted.

Townson delivered a sobering conversation address on the future of social security benefits for seniors.

By the year 2001, she foresees old age security benefits will be converted to a welfare program with eligibility based on family income.

**Federal Liberals in privatization concert**

National CUPE president Judy Darcy's opening day convention address was a reminder of the Liberal government's commitment to the privatization of public sector assets.

Darcy congratulated delegates for their role in redefining the NDP government's mandate. "You might not know it is important that election was for this country. It gave us hope that we can push back the right—not only in B.C. but in Alberta, Ontario and across the country."

Despite successes on the provincial front, however, Darcy reminded delegates that "the right never gives up and our gains are never secured."

Darcy pointed to the concerted efforts of Jean Chretien, the Canadian Medical Association, and drug companies to undermine Canada's $72 billion health care system. "They want to cash in on the elderly and the ill. They want to cash in on that $72 billion. It's about time we make the masks off this Liberal government and expose them for what they really are—worse enemies of health care."

Since then, three locals in Kelowna have merged.

LaPlante also confirmed the union's support for education programs. However, while financial pressures forced cancellation of this year's summer school, LaPlante pledged that the educational program will be held in 1997.

Also encouraging is that the arte lese fund is "very healthy," with $6.5 million invested. On one operating side, the union ran a small deficit in the 1995 fiscal year, which will be offset by a small projected surplus in 1996. LaPlante said the union is committed to responsible spending.
Record 25 bursaries awarded to students

The RAF has awarded a record 25 bursaries to HEU members and their partners and children to attend post-secondary institutions in the 1996-97 academic year. This financial assistance is worth more than $11,000 in bursary allocations was approved by the Provincial Executive for this increasingly popular program.

"Post-secondary education is expensive," says LaPlante, "and ensuring that HEU members and their families have the financial resources to explore their skills and horizons is a priority of our union."

Bursary recipients include Jillian Boyce (daughter of Eagle Park member Susan Boyce), Louise Buschman (mother Lois Berling, Retail; St. Mary's local member Caroline Cameron); Sandy Clancy (mother Joan Clancy, Burns Lake); Michele Farrell (mother Faye Thompson, Liuna Gate); and Yasmin Hasham (daughter of Delta member Marjham Hasham).

Seven union members are also returning for studies. They are Felthorq's Queen Park member Mary Grace Henderson; Wendy Hulko who hails from the Alliance local; Nancy Leonard from the Kelowna local; Donna McDonald from the Kamloops local; Mental Patients Association member Devon Serrano; Shannon Wilson from the Fort St. John local; and Brent Yalowic from Ridge Meadows.

Denise Kilpatrick (sister William from Liuna Gate); financial supporter is Roland Kirsten (husband of GMWSS's Linda Lucier), Marsha Karsh (daughter of Eagle Ridge's Herb) and Pamela Kupich (daughter James a Haynglief member); and Grace Pucket, whose mother Maureen works at Kitsilano Peninsula hospital.

"Seeing out the beneficiarv of the vizkud Ross (mother Phoemona of VGH), Doris Tannings (mother Margaret Sather, Maple Ridge); Clayton Willsss, whose mother Joan is a Coquitlam local member; Mariia Wyme-Jones (mother Susan from Richmond) and Jennifer Zander, whose mother Eleonora is a Coquitlam local member."

"We're proud to be able to support local students in this way," says Lucier, "and we look forward to continuing this important program." Funding is provided by means of local union locals and the HEU staff union.

Letters

continued from page 2

LTD member eager to join retirees' organization

I was reading in the Guardian about the new organization, B.C. Forum. I would like to take out an annual membership. I have been on LTD since 1996 (BC169 - Vancouver Hospital). Is the membership only for retirees or can LTD members join? Please send the application form for B.C. Forum. It is easy to encounter the Guardian and recognize the work that has been done by the union in the past and see the tasks for the future.

THERESA BOWIE, Chilliwack

• B.C. Forum's application has been sent to B.C. Forum, a new group set up for retired union activists.

Equity editorial is offensive to Christian

I wish to register a protest against the liberal statements made by Mr. Allnutt in his editorial "Special Interest" label the Christian in the September 10th edition. "Usage of the term "right wing" is an ambiguous and misleading idiom that is more often than not used to misrepresent or misinterpret the position of the opposition. I am appalled and disquieted at the gross hypocrisy of a union that preaches against "LAWLESS" yet retains derogatory terms such as SCABS, ELITE NARROW GROUPS, AND HOMOPHOBIES. The latter qip is an effective one employed against anyone who takes a stand against special rights privileges."

Mr. Allnutt manipulates the tone by insinuating that the real questions are related to retail services and independent living. He, who frames the question also frames the answer. In my 41 years of life, the incidence of people experiencing these "traumatic" problems have been magnified by mass media hysteria. As far as skins and avoidance are concerned (I do not consider "to wake up Mr. Allnutt, there isn't a single person

I know that has not experi-

enced it. What the union is attempting to do is legislate people's personality from the outside, and this is what proves that to be a fallacy, when will our union realize it as well? By opening the door to these various special interest groups, which I see are defined as causes or simply groups by you, I ask you where it will end? A caucus is a political power that can and does define policy. In other words, policymakers. From the context of your editorial, it would appear as though this union needs anoth-

er caucus established to deal with the concerns of the Christian element. How much of an opportunity do you think we would have at establishing this? It would be interesting, and not too surprisingly, I am hearing more and more people in this union looking for a way.

WILLIAM R. HILL, L.P.H., Pentiction Local

Change to end discrimination is inevitable

The country ruled by law, legislation and a healthy system are the best ways to guarantee a fair society for all. It is important for a country to have a fair system plus good legislative processes and public education on ethnic harmony.

To prevent the spread of racial discrimination and to promote ethnic harmony, it is important to build mutual respect and understanding. We all have roots and dementions. We should seek to live with our differences. Rather than confronting and reproaching each other, we should be included in discussions to express our different views understanding, unity and cooperation can be achieved by respecting each other's right to be different. Two basic traditional beliefs are respect and kindness to each other.

Canada has a proud tradition of recognizing and promoting cultural differences of our people that make this country special. I really believe there are groups of people who have been excluded from participating in workplaces, unions, communities, etc., solely because of perceived differences between themselves and the ethnic diversity group. Can we honestly say that the way things are now, with merit being the determining factor in holding a position, does this really work? If merit works, we should have equal representation of viable minorities, disabled, Aboriginal (First Nations) and other groups in this country.

How can you find answers to these problems if you do not have members of these groups sitting at a table while decisions are made? Despite qualifications, some candidates cannot have the aspiration that others take for granted - there are barriers all over the place. Any institution should believe that all its policies, activities and structures should reflect its commitment to equality for all members. It is upsetting that not all of us are able to express ourselves.

until their are minority mem-

bers present when discussions are held concerning policies and everyday running of any institution, systematic discrimination will remain invisible. Often the decisions that perpetuate this type of discrimination are seldom seen by members of the mainstream society. This change is inevitable and much needed for the benefit of the ethnic diversity group.

HISAA BUSH, Vancouver General Local

Royal Jubilee also has lifting team project

I read with interest the article in the June/July/August edition of the Guardian on "Lifting Smartter Lifting Safe." I believe we have a very different and unique lifting team project at the Royal Jubilee Hospital in Victoria. There is also a lifting team at "Victoria General Hospital." Our team at RJ consists of myself and my partner Dan Desaulniers. We both have nursing experience. We work strictly in the acute care settings. We keep statistics of all the lifts in the project area which can range from one case nursing units and have been peer for other areas of the hospital as well. Any time we witness a situation for a large or difficult patient transfer may just pass us. The lifting team will assess the situation, then perform the lift manually or mechanically. Our training is comprised of 10 week workshop on ergonomics, weight training and proper body mechanics at the Work Readiness Program situate

ated at the Gorge Road Hospital. The lifting team pilot project at the Royal Jubilee Hospital was started in 1988 and the team at VGH, which consists of two women, Val Flynn and Shannon Cameron, was started December 1995.

Needless to say, the demand and importance of having a nursing staff with is widespread.

SCOTT KENNEDY, Royal Jubilee Hospital

LTD recipient welcomes contract measures

I've been on LTD since 1996 when I lost my job as a result of a retinal detachment. Having been forced to quit the workforce, I was immediately put on LTD with pay from 2/3 of wages of 10 years ago hasn't been pleasant. So it was with considerable interest a friend read to me the article in the Guardian concern-

ing LTD and industrial relations. I was impressed by Industrial Inquiry Commissioner Vose. Ready and his concerns about France benefits to claims. It is true some LTD recipients have a hard time trying to have their claims, it is also true some claims today receive, in many cases, less than would result in the financial benefit to the employer. It is scathing say the least. This is a matter of fee HUL should have attached long ago on our behalf. While other workers may have "enjoyed" modest increases over the past 20 years, those of us on LTD have been stuck with benefits that are insufficient and way off today's living costs. Not only are these hardwon money, but we must still endure an abusive and patronizing system not from LTD benefit managers in addition to the extended health coverage. We have been the patients of this far too long. At least until now. Mr. Ready's recommendations are the right ones and we trust we at least will really see the light at the end of the LTD tunnel.

JACQUELINE ZAPPA

SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 1996 / GUARDIAN 11
Global inequality and workplace issues were high on the agenda as thousands of AIDS activists explored avenues for change at the recent XI International Conference on AIDS in Vancouver.

STORIES BY DANIEL GAWTHROP

one world, one hope?

A prime ministerial snub was overshadowed by a far more ominous development in the global fight against AIDS.

"A prime ministerial snub was overshadowed by a far more ominous development in the global fight against AIDS."

Many AIDS activists had been looking forward to meeting with their counterparts in the West, but the lack of engagement from key figures around the world was a disappointment. The conference was marked by a lack of commitment from leaders, who failed to address the root causes of the global AIDS crisis.

The lack of progress in the fight against AIDS is a testament to the failures of the international community. While some progress has been made in certain regions, the overall picture is one of stagnation.

Despite these challenges, there is hope. The scientific community continues to make progress in the development of new treatments and vaccines. And there are signs of increased engagement from governments and NGOs.

The UNAIDS report highlights the need for a renewed commitment to the fight against AIDS. The report calls for a focus on the most vulnerable populations, including women, children, and marginalized communities.

We must all do our part to ensure that the fight against AIDS is not just a story of failure, but one of hope and progress. Let us work together to make sure that the next conference is marked by real progress, not just empty promises.
But John Foster of Ormond College encouraged O'Malley and others not to give up. "It's important that we leave this conference with a practical agenda," he said, adding that a small tax on international transfers could make a big difference to a small country's economy.

However, convincing nation states and multinational corporations to move in this direction is easier said than done.

Peter Lurie, an assistant professor at the Centre for AIDS Prevention Studies at the University of California in San Francisco, told delegates how representatives of the World Bank had tried to prevent him from publishing an article last year in AIDS magazine.

(As in his article, Lurie argued that structural adjustment programs had contributed to the spread of HIV in the developing world. This happens in four essential ways: the undermining of rural economies, the creation of transport infrastructures meant to serve a country's export needs rather than the cultural needs of the people, an increase in urbanization and migration, and a program of curbs in the public health sector which contribute to an erosion of health care resources and preventative education standards.)

More local solutions were explored in a forum on AIDS in the workplace. Here it was argued that multinational companies and banks, as well as local companies, could create trust funds for workplace prevention programs in the developing world.

Worksite prevention programs are already in place in at least three African countries: Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Kenya currently have seven projects running at 420 workplaces.

Closers to home, trade unions have begun to show interest in workplace prevention programs. Chuck Einbok, the director of HIV/AIDS in the Workplace Education Project at the George Meany Centre for Labour Studies in New Hampshire, received much attention after the seminar for his proposal of an international caucus of trade union leaders to deal exclusively with HIV/AIDS as a workplace issue.

In Canada, CUPE has already introduced an AIDS in the workplace program, including an information kit that provides a broad overview on how AIDS/HIV impacts on the workplace. CUPE delegates at the union's 1995 national convention adopted an AIDS/HIV policy statement that respects individuals' right to privacy and includes an action plan for collective bargaining clauses such as discrimination, the right to continue working, long-term and short-term disability plans, medical/health benefits, life insurance, pension plans and leaves of absence.

"Defending and supporting people with HIV/AIDS is part of CUPE's long-standing fight against discrimination in the workplace and the community," the statement says. "Advancing the rights of workers with AIDS is a step towards equality for all workers with disabilities."

- Gawthrop is a Vancouver-based freelance writer and author. He's a frequent contributor to the Guardian.

DR. FLAVIO WITTLIN

rocking the AIDS boat in Brazil

By 1990, despite the increase in AIDS-related STD illnesses, local health clinics still lacked basic medical equipment such as X-ray machines. This meant that syphilis and tuberculosis could only be diagnosed after a lengthy hospitalization.

Witlin was able to address local health concerns through political activism by union rallies, and public meetings on the national church to establish a medical centre of preferential treatments.

"They assisted only the poor people that voted for their respective leader," Witlin recalls.

BY 1990, despite the increase in AIDS-related STD illnesses, local health clinics still lacked basic medical equipment such as X-ray machines. This meant that syphilis and tuberculosis could only be diagnosed after a lengthy hospitalization. Witlin was able to address local health concerns through political activism by union rallies, and public meetings on the national church to establish a medical centre of preferential treatments.

"They assisted only the poor people that voted for their respective leader," Witlin recalls.

By 1990, there were 3100 people living with AIDS in his district, but there was no way of notifying those who were HIV-positive because the health ministry only kept statistics on full-blown AIDS cases.

"I often met with a carrier in the poorest neighbour- hood in the city and produced a 15-minute video on AIDS and depression in Sao Paulo. Where he showed the video to his employer, he was fired the next day.

Witlin worked in various medical capacities after that incident, but since being introduced in 1994 with a rare, non-HIV blood disease, he has spent more of his time working for the family newsprint business.

"To be an activist, I used to be in my original field," he says.

Witlin was introduced to the Guardian by officials of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union, whose employee assistance plan hosted Witlin's Vancouver visit.

'Of the 22 million men, women and children in the world currently living with HIV, 93 per cent live in poor countries with no access to treatment'

GUARDIAN • SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 1996 13
Lewington Coulter's quilts sew strong social statements

by Della McLeod

I

N 1994, I was thrilled when the HEU commissioned the creation of a quilt as part of our 50th anniversary celebration that would be used for the cover photo of our Heart Health Care history book. When I saw the quilt at our 50th biennial convention I was delighted with the piece itself - a beautiful, hand-crafted keepsake celebrating the work HEU members do. My disappointment lay in the lack of feature or opportunity to meet its creator, Wendy Lewington Coulter, or to ask questions about the making of the quilt.

Fortunately, the chance to meet Lewington Coulter and to view more of her artistry came August 9 at the opening reception of her exhibition of contemporary quilts, 'Work, Work, Work at the Kootenay Gallery of Art. History and Science in Castlegar.'

I was immediately impressed by this 'poetic woman's vibrant and friendly nature, her charting with gallery visitors about her work and introducing them to her husband and their lovely young daughters. I overheard someone exclaim "where would she find the time to do this magnificent work?"

Some of her quilts make strong social statements, like, "Home Sweet Home" which addresses domestic violence. The B.C. Federation of Labour used this quilt to make a poster on the subject. Becoming bars for doll images to question the lengths women sometimes go to try to obtain an unrealistic standard of beauty.

The main theme of the series of large quilts is the unpaid work women do. With the Dishes, "Dry the Dishes, Turn the Dishes Over and Give Us This Day" acknowledge work so often unappreciated. No Wipe of Mine is Going to Work portrays such tasks as sewing, growing food, and child care.

Daily routines and mundane tasks are stunningly portrayed using colourful fabrics and a surprising mix of techniques, including dying, screen printing, hand painting, and appliqué. With objects such as doilies, earrings and buttons worked in, it was painful to obey Do Not Touch signs.

My favourite quilt is 'Tea Cup Austerity'. It was created in honour of the artists two great women, Rosa and Elise, who on special occasions handled their fine china tea cups too.

I told her the quilt reminded me of the ladies who arrive with their hankies at my morning homemaker teas and bazaars, lend a hand and then stay to visit with those they sense to be lonely. Although elderly themselves, they are determined to keep helping others for as long as they can. Lewington Coulter responded: "That would be my aunts."

The HEU quilt project spanned over months from her first meetings with Geoff Meggs (then HEU communications director), touring the MLA Hospital and ECUA interviewing members and taking photographs of their work, then designing and doing the detailed and time consuming labour. She told me she enjoyed working on the project, meeting the HEU members and learning about the work they do.

I left the gallery content, finally had the opportunity to compliment Ms. Coulter on the beautiful creation that I am so proud of, our Heart of Health Care quilts.

• McLeod is the senior trainer on the union's Provincial Executive.
Cook, who started out at St. Paul's, plans to travel with her husband, garden, play bingo and spend time with her family.

A former chairperson and assistant secretary, Sloman's gala goodbye included the "Golden Spoon" award for 25 years of stinting and serving. She also received a special quilt depicting the many activities she's involved in. Active in her local Legion branch, Sloman plans to travel, spend time with her grandchildren, and just enjoy life.

Cook has more time for bingo

On the other hand, retirement couldn't come fast enough for George Denby building service worker Ursula Cook, who finished at the Bromley facility in August.

"Golden Spoon" Tofino local activity Margaret Sloman, centre, at her retirement party marking 25 years of commitment.

Goldilocks finishes at Tofino General

An active in the Tofino locality for a quarter-century, Tofino General Hospital head cook Margaret Sloman retired from the hospital at the end of May.

A former chairperson and assistant secretary, Sloman's gala goodbye included the "Golden Spoon" award for 25 years of stinting and serving. She also received a special quilt depicting the many activities she's involved in. Active in her local Legion branch, Sloman plans to travel, spend time with her grandchildren, and just enjoy life.

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Allevato wants to be mayor

Former HEU leader Carmela Allevato has launched her bid to be mayor of Vancouver. Four other HEU activists are in the Nov. 16 B.C. municipal election race.

Making regionalization work

HEU fills a prescription for Victoria's regionalization headache. Here's how New Directions can get back on track.

Convention covered

500-plus delegates converged on Richmond for HEU's 20th biennial convention. They mapped out a plan to guide the union for the next two years. Coverage starts on

Working TV's new schedule

The award-winning labour TV show about working people starts a new fall season with an expanded schedule and national exposure. Check out our TV guide on