PARITY! At press time, talks for a contract in the community sector are at a critical stage. For the latest developments see PAGE 3.

Guardian

The Walking Wounded

Our members tell the Royal Commission on Workers' Compensation that prevention of workplace injuries and illness is paramount, while employers' groups press for lower payment rates, self-regulation and less benefits for injured workers.

No! No! to Nike

First, Doonesbury kicks at the corporate giant and now it's our turn. Page 10

LET'S BUCK THE TREND

Talk about a coffee klatsch! Bean king Starbucks wants to accept an invite into our hospitals. We say, "We can brew it better!" Page 13

Libby's off to Ottawa!

HEU staffer Libby Davies has won election as the new member of Parliament for Vancouver East. Story on page 3.
COMMENT

Bill 48 changes welcome, but not enough

by Chris Allmatt

In THE WAKE of the government's legislation amending Bill 48 it's hard to resist the temptation to say "We told you so." The 1995 legislation fundamentally changed health care and labour relations, stripping some workers of their rights to be represented by the union of their choice.

HEU opposed that aspect of Bill 48. Our preference was for a "council of unions" approach that would allow all the unions in health care to sit at the various bargaining tables.

Instead, workers were forced to decide which of the approved unions they would join. It also gave the Labour Relations Board an unwelcome opportunity to further meddle in health care labour relations. The interventions of the labour board have cost HEU and other unions thousands of dollars. The reclassification of HEU paramedical personnel threatened to further strip workers of their rights to be represented by their union.

In amendments to Bill 48 introduced in May, the lobbying of HEU members over the last two years was clearly in evidence. While the five bargaining tables in health care remain, HEU is no longer excluded from a bargaining table when an HEU member is reclassified into that bargaining unit. It's what we asked for in the first place.

The amendments to Bill 48 also contain a mechanism through which the Labour Relations Board can review the line that divides community caregivers from their facility counterparts.

While we support such a review, the board's involvement doesn't exactly inspire confidence among those health care workers who carry out innovative community-based health services in facilities. The board drew the line right through those facilities making the possibility of transferring many facility-based members into the community sector.

We should congratulate ourselves for our Bill 48 victories, keeping in mind that the biggest struggle has not yet been won — wages in wages and working conditions for community caregivers.

The only way we'll achieve parity is with a fair contract and legislation eliminating the artificial division between community and facility workers.

The best interest of community caregivers is still a long way from being won.

The benefit of the Provincial Executive go to HEU's Lishby Davies who was elected by the voters of Vancouver East as a member of Parliament. We've lost a valued staff member, but we're gaining a powerful advocate for health care and workers' rights in the House of Commons.

voice/mail

LTD improvements raise member's hopes

It has been a while since the Guardian printed an article regarding Vince Ready's concern about benefits for LTD claimants (Guardian March/April). One LTD recipient expressed that many of us have been receiving less than they would on social assistance. True, not a penny increase towards the cost-of-living in 10 years.

The fact that someone has now relanced this concern and the union is now looking into it for us, has raised many hopes. We have little news about these negotiations, except to hear that the employers seem to want to hang on to every penny in trust.

Disability is devastating and it hurts even more when you realize that all the effort you have put into doing a good job means absolutely nothing to your employer.

When you can't work anymore, you're replaced and how you survive after that is their least concern. You have to fight to get anything.

Well, at least a few have remembered we are still here and still hoping for a miracle. Let's hope for a miracle to walk another 10 years. P.O.OOH, Surrey

Guardian

"To humble dedication is all those who toll to live," wrote Washington Irving.

Stephen Howard

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Mike Old

INDEPENDENT PRODUCTION

Kris Kelner

Working Design

PRODUCTION IS PRINTING

The Guardian is published on behalf of the Provincial Executive of the Hospital Employees' Union, under the direction of the following editorial committee: Fred Nevin, Chris Allmatt, Mary Calliance, David Kedley, Colleen Fitzpatrick, Sheila Roroswell, Della McLeod.

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The Guardian welcomes your feedback. Send letters to 2006 West 10th Ave., Vancouver V6J 1G9 OR PHONE 1-800-858-4949, PLEASE BE BRIEF.
HEU's Davies topples Liberal incumbent

HEU staffer Libby Davies is the new member of Parliament for Vancouver East. With a decisive margin of 1,293 votes, Davies unseated Liberal incumbent Anna Teresa in the June 2 election. "The HEU has supported me personally and politically," says Davies. "They made a difference in Vancouver East."

Davies also credits her win to ongoing efforts in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver and among the urban Aboriginal community. "The free clinic on the doorstep was that voters felt betrayed by the Liberal record on jobs, social services and health care," says Davies. Davies will join a strengthened workforce as the caucus now includes 21 MPs from across the country including many trade unionists. Forty per cent of the caucus are women.

Nova Scotia health care worker Michelle Bocklett, a secretary at a drug dependency facility, is one of a new breed of NDP MPs. A member of the provincial government employees' union, Bocklett launched off health minister David Dingwall in the Cape Breton riding of Canso.

MacPhail severs CEO handshakes

Health minister Joy MacPhail has introduced legislation which will begin to address executive severance settlements and "double dipping" across the public sector highlighted by last year's release by HEU's Goldie Bondakoff. "We don't allow to the government to enforce standards established by the Public Sector Employers' Council retroactive to May 1, 1997. And it puts new muscle behind attempts to limit severance payments in all new and renewed contracts and allows the government to recover monies paid out in contravention of the legislation.

Community talks at critical stage for parity deal

A $5.1M Guardian given to pass, significant progress has been achieved in a fair contract settlement for community health care workers, but talks were entering a crucial stage when negotiations resumed June 24.

"Within the next few days, we'll either be scheduling a voting process to approve or reject a tentative settlement, or we'll be taking job action," said HEU assistant secretary-business manager Zorica Bosanic.

"HEU community bargaining spokespeople, Bosanic said the union bargaining association and the Health Employers Association of B.C. have made significant progress since talks resumed earlier in June after Victoria gave the employer group clear direction to reach a deal. The move came after community caregivers in BCHEU and HEU voted more than 90 per cent in favour of strike action for June 25 to back up demands for a fair settlement that included measures to bridge the significant wage gap in the sector. Community caregivers make up to 97 per cent of all nurses in acute and long-term care.

Bosanic says the parties have achieved an understanding on the first step to address the wage gap, which would provide significant wage bonuses for caregivers at the bottom end of the community sector pay scale. Employers and government have agreed that a second step to parity would be negotiated in the 1998 round of community bargaining. In addition to wage bonuses, caregivers would gain access to benefits like vision, dental and dental, and pensions for the first time.

But, according to Bosanic, the critical outstanding wage issue is to win amendments for community caregivers at the top end of the pay scale for whom the gap with the facility sector is not as large.

In addition, application of the health labour accord, which provides for job security, retaining initiatives, and human resource planning, across the entire community sector is seen as a major outstanding issue. Bosanic said the union's bargaining hotline and special bulletins will keep members up to date on the progress of talks.

HEU just says no to private labs

Lab workers are worried that a lack of direction from Victoria on lab restructuring will lead to privatization through the back door, as health care unions and other public lab advocates await the release of a provincial government "white paper" on lab reform. But in the meantime, "Canada-based lab giant MDS Inc has been busy behind the scenes."

"The provincial government is committed to a public solution to lab restructuring," says HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allmunt. "But without Victoria's direction, the system is in danger of becoming privatized by default."

MDS has made overtures to HEU and the Health Sciences' Association to make a joint proposal on the management and operation of lab services. "We will strongly oppose any involvement by MDS in the lab testing system," says Allmunt. "We will strongly oppose any involvement by MDS in the lab testing system." Meanwhile, progressive lab restructuring in the Vancouver/Richmond Regional Health Board region has been stymied by Vancouver General Hospital president Murray Martin who shoved lab restructuring initiatives that they had championed out of the way on lab workers in the region's catch-all hospitals.

According to MDS bigwig, their company is in top level negotiations with Martin on a deal that would significantly expand their role.
continued from page 3

The volunteer painting went on for about a week before a B.C. union member tipped off the HEU local.

Loe says that a similar management play by Unifor Maritimes and Rosewood— which will soon be amalgamating—is an issue. She says that the new Richmond Health Services Society umbrella failed when HEU members flatly refused to do the painting.

**Miners’ Memorial Day celebrated**

HEU activists were among the 250 people who were on hand at the June 21 labour movement celebration of the 12th annual Miners’ Memorial Day in Cumberland on Vancouver Island.

The event, which commemorated the miners who worked and lost their lives in mines, was the 12th annual event. The miner featured in this year’s observance, "Our industry is the worst in injuries in B.C."

Darlene Logan, chair of HEU’s St. George local, laid the wreath on Goodwin’s grave.

**HEU Guardian the best again!**

For the fourth straight year, HEU’s flagship publication, the Guardian has been recognized as the best overall publication by the Canadian Association of Labour Media. The union says because some labour and gay men also belong to First Nations and some people with disabilities are also ethnically diverse, there was a "cross-over" among categories.

As a result of the final photo layout, the Lesbians and Gay Men caucus decided to invite the First Nations caucus to a future meeting, to share some of the traditions and cultures of First Nations peoples with its members.

"Now that [the caucuses] are enframed in the Constitution, there’s more of a long-range view," says Lien. "That’s the main difference from this conference — people have started to make long-range plans."

**Bill 48 problems to be resolved**

Two years of lobbying by HEU have paid off as the provincial government has introduced legislation to resolve problems resulting from its 1995 law restructuring labour relations in the health care sector.

Bill 28, introduced by the legislature May 22, allows health care workers to remain in their union even if they are transferred from one bargaining unit to another. The original legislation, Bill 48, limited the number of unions that could be represented in five different health care bargaining units.

In practical terms, the new legislation will allow the HEU to continue to represent members reclassified into the para-medical bargaining unit.

The new legislation also creates a mechanism by which the line dividing community sector caregivers from their facility sector counterparts can be reviewed.

 granddaughter also won in a second category — best photo- graph — for a picture of an AIDS rally by freelance photographer Kim Stalnichts which was part of a feature on the world AIDS conference held in Vancouver last year.

**Successor rights for Navigator/Renfrew members upheld at LRB**

An April 17 ruling on an employer appeal of an important Labour Relations Board decision on successor rights has come down in Navigator’s favour.

The original LRB ruling from November 1996 granted successor rights to workers at Navigator Lodge in Vancouver, whose work was transferred to Renfrew Care, a new facility also owned by the Navigator employer.

At the 1996 hearing, HEU argued that the Navigator/Renfrew employer was undermining the collective agreement, by transferring patients to the new facility by without transferring staff and that the two facilities, owned by the same private company, were in fact common employers. On March 21, 1997 Navigator closed, and the employees lost their jobs. However, on April 2, the LRB issued an interim order for the employees to be re- eninated in their jobs at the new facility, pending a final decision on the appeal.

This ruling on the appeal effectively gives the workers back their jobs on a permanent full-time basis, along with their full successor rights. Any wages they lost by the workers will be paid out by the employer.

**Caucus members forge links**

By Daniel Gawdard

Long-range planning and inter-cau- cus solidarity were the major themes at HEU’s third equity conference, reports equity officer Raymond Lien.

This year’s conference (April 15 to 16) was the first since a full-time equity officer position was established and four equity standing committees were struck at the 1996 Intranal convention.

"People felt this conference was important — they’re proud to be HEU members when the union embraces the caucuses like they have," says Lien. "People found out how much we have in common, in terms of being subject to the same prejudices and oppression,"

**Big WCB wins for HEU members**

The Guardian played a major role in these victories

WIO HEU members have won sizable awards recently from the Workers’ Compensation Board, thanks in part to the Guardian.

After Pearl Mercer’s husband died in a job-related accident, the WCB paid her widow’s benefit until she remarried. When her second husband died in a job-related illness in 1996, she began collecting survivor’s benefits.

In October 1996 she learned that a B.C. Supreme Court ruling could mean the reinstatement of her earlier benefits. All survivors of workers killed by job-related injuries or ill- ness are now entitled to benefits, regardless of marital status. Mercer was cautious. "I didn’t immediately apply because I was afraid to rock the boat." But after reading a summary of the Court’s ruling in the February/March Guardian, she decided to investigate.

Soon she had a cheque, retroactively paying all benefits from the time she had remarried. She also was bumped up to a full widow’s pension.

Mercer urges others to spread the word about this rule change. "Community centres would be excellent places to put up the information," she said.

Mary Ellen Beavers is smiling after winning her claim from WCB, but the smile was hard-won. After developing an extreme late sensitivity working as a care aide at Cotterwood long-term care facility in Kelowna, she could no longer work. Any contact with later brought on an attack. Her home had to be remodeled, and she had to take anti-histamines before going outside.

When her compensation was discontinued after one month, she began to research late sensitivity. It became clear to her it would always affect her ability to work; moreover, it had been caused by WCB coal dust. She enlisted the help of the HEU to appeal the board’s decision. Her struggle was featured in the September/October 1994 Guardian.

In April 1996, WCB acknowledged her claim but withheld any monetary settlement pending an exam by the WCB doctor in Victo- rion. She had to suspend her medication to take the tests as it would affect the results. This prompted an attack in the clinic before the doctor even appeared. "The doctor gave me some firsthand knowledge, and I was sent home," she said. In April 1997 the WCB awarded Mary Ellen Beavers $220,000, and she is happy with that.

Meanwhile, Commonwells is instituting protocols to prevent this condition, which Beavers and others claim is a growing problem. In 1980 it affected three per cent of health care workers; today it affects 20 per cent. Due to the efforts of people like Beavers, most glove manufacturers (the main culprit) have cleaned up their act, but many people have been left with an extreme sensitivity to latex.

The Guardian is pleased to have been a part of the victories of these two women.
Top honour to Stony Creek elder

At 84, former St. John Hospital worker still teaches Carrier language to young people

by Mike Old

When Mary John got a job in housekeeping at St. John Hospital in Vanderhoop, it was the first time she had ventured into the white world. But it was 1959 and, says Mary John, only a few years had passed since there had been "one wing for Indian people and one wing for others."

This past April, almost 40 years later, the Carrier elder of the Stony Creek Reserve holds the Order of Canada, and her story has now sold 23,000 copies. Asked what Mary John's story resonates so strongly with so many biographers and friend Bridget Mornan says, "It has a lot to do with the kind of person Mary John is. Women, even if they are not native, can relate to Mary's struggles."

And Mary John's struggles have been significant. Like many other children from First Nations, Mary John was sent to residential schools - first to the Mission School near Ft. St. James and then to Lepine at Fraser Lake. At these schools, children were stripped of their culture and beaten if they spoke their own language.

Then as a young woman, Mary John raised a family in conditions of extreme poverty that often defined reserve life under the Indian Act. Health care was inaccessible and diseases like tuberculosis were rampant. Mary John has lost six of her 12 children to illness and other tragedies.

It was poverty on the reserve which forced Mary John to seek work in an alien and often hostile white world. It was the beginning of a 13-year stint in housekeeping at St. John Hospital.

Balancing it all

"I couldn't eat in front of white people. I would hide my food."
PRESIDENT'S DESK

1997 summer school a chance to learn, share, and plan

by Fred Marin

WHEN 210 HEU members arrive at HEU's summer school this month, they will find that much has changed. Previous schools concentrated on leadership building, steward development and traditional advocacy.

While this continues to be important, we now have unique opportunities to help set the health care agenda, to have our expertise from front-line workers included in the planning stages of health care reform, to develop alternatives to the right wing programs.

Students in 1995 were awed by the news that the Braniff Commission would deal with a new bargaining structure for the health care sector. We could not predict Bill 98 and the subsequent interference by the Labour Relations Board that would threaten to throw thousands of our members out of our union and into the private sector.

'Summer school also offers the ability to network and become stronger, to celebrate our victories'

The NDP was re-elected for an unprecedented second term. We achieved a new coalition agreements collective agreement with a strike, despite HEA&CO's stonewalling and disrespect for health care workers. The government's New Directions health care agenda was suspended and the resulting streamlined model included union representation on all regional health boards and community health councils.

The focus of our 1997 summer school at UBC will be on regionalization, restructuring, and labour adjustment. We will have the chance to not only share our experiences but also design a better medicine system.

We must develop strategies to counter those who are determined to implement layoffs, massive privatization, two-tier medicine and the fiscal considerations in health care above all else.

Summer school also offers the ability to network and become stronger, to celebrate our victories, to reach beyond the four walls of our workplaces and most importantly to re-energize for the struggles of Bargaining 98.

For 10 days in July, we will get to know each other better, free from the daily demands of family, the workplace and union responsibilities.

There will be guest speakers, representatives/students from other unions we work in partnership with, presentations on equity, an evening with the Provincial Executive.

After a two year break, HEU members are more than ready for another summer school learning "experience."

FABRIC ART FANS admire a section of Lee Olsen's 34-metre long "frieze" depicting the Queen Charlotte's culture and landscape.

Capturing Charlotte's beauty

by Daniel Gawlurup

Lee Olsen is a bit overwhelmed by all the attention she received lately. The local HEU chair for Queen Charlotte Hospital, Olsen is also an artist who was recently commissioned by Parcs Canada to design a scenic tapestry banner for the Queen Charlotte Visitors Information Centre. Olsen, whose work can also be seen at the Sandspit airport, was assisted by a group of local women for the new project: a one-metre high, 34-metre long pictorial tapestry that wraps around the entire Info Centre building.

Since the project was completed, Olsen has received visits from Western Living and a U.S.-based fabric arts magazine. But she's eager not to raise all the credit. "It's very definitely a community thing, it's not just me," says the laundry and housekeeping worker. "It was great getting everyone together, and everyone really showed support."

Olsen says she couldn't have done it without HEU members Marg Nielsen, Arlene Erickson and Nina Bissett. Also contributing to the design and sewing were TWA logescer, Betty Cardin, retired forestry worker Dolores Davia and former playshop volunteer Hazel McPhee. Rich in colour and wildlife imagery, the quilt is a "tribute to the people who entertain the world of outdoor life, all worked into Haida design. A forest of spruce and elder with ravens and hawks, and salmon swimming away to an ocean with seaweeds, cormorants, orcas, and a bear scooping fish out of the water."

The project was massive. "The hospital was very supportive and helpful," says Olsen. "They gave me the floor space of the basement at night."

Olsen, who has also designed theatrical costumes and held local exhibitions, is something of a renegade woman. Before arriving at Charlotte Hospital in 1980, she spent 10 years as a gillnet fisher. Renting her own boat and with her two sons on board, she fished the Nass and Skeena Rivers as well as the Charlottes, and was featured in Vicki Jenson's Salt Water Women.

When the mental load on the boats went up, she got out of the industry and went to work for the museum as manager and assistant to the curator.

The work was good, but Olsen was seeking more secure employment.

"I had the opportunity to work in a more organized position," she says. "I'm grateful to be under a contract, with good benefits.

Active in the union from "day one," Olsen has also served as shop steward and trustee.

NOTEBOOK

Liberals get lesson in politics of medicare

by Mike Old

Media pundit may have flagged national unity as the "hot button" issue in the recent federal election campaign, but Canada's medicare system was the real hot potato for the national parties.

Politicians positioned themselves as defenders of universal health care. The Liberals, arms long from 36 years of chopping health and social program transfers payments, claimed only they could protect Canadians from two-tiered, American-style health care.

And as a token of their sincerity, Jean Chretien announced he would cancel planned cuts for 1999/00, but he made no move to restore billions in health care dollars already lost.

The Liberals' credibility gap on health care came home to roost in Atlantic Canada when transfer payments cuts have hit harder.

In Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, victorious NDP candidate Wendy Lill said it was unacceptable that women have to choose between paying for a fee for gap tests for cervical cancer and feeding their children.

On Cape Breton Island, health care worker and NDP candidate Michelle Kenneth retired health minister David Dingwall at the ballot box. She says that the Liberal betrayal of their 1993 jobs promise combined with the deteriorating state of health care services on Cape Breton Island led to Dingwall's defeat.

The failure to defend health care and provide jobs cost the Liberals 20 seats in Atlantic Canada. The result - a razor thin majority government with only 38.4 per cent of popular vote - the lowest popular vote for a majority government since Confederation according to Ottawa-based Democracy Watch.

In the West, health care issues were cut down by Reform's controversial anti-CDM attacks on the unity question. They distracted Canadians from Reform's call for a loosening of the principles of the Canada Health Act to allow experiments like Calgary's private hospital to proceed.

This election has left us one of the most divided parliaments ever with five official parties vying for attention.

With a balanced budget expected in the next year or two, corporations, Reformers and Conservatives will be clamouring for deep tax cuts.

But with new MPs like Lily, Bockstiel and HEU's own Lilly Davies in a strengthened NDP caucus, health care workers and others allies of universal health care can exploit the Liberals narrow majority and bring back balance to the spending debate.

It will take hard work inside and outside Parliament to ensure a recommitment to health care in the post-deficit era.

The Liberals' credibility gap on health care came home to roost.
The Gospel according to Tony

Early changes in U.K. are encouraging, but trade union influence will continue to wane under "new" Labour, says UNISON leader

by Daniel Grewguro

Tony Blair's honeymoon period as British prime minister has produced significant social and economic changes, but the trade union movement continues to be left out of the public policy-making process, says Richard Bickerstaff, general secretary of UNISON, Britain's national public sector union.

In an interview with the Guardian, Bickerstaff acknowledged that Labour's dramatic win on International Workers' Day May 1 — a landslide majority that put an end to 18 years of Conservative rule in Britain — was far preferable to any alternative.

"If the Tories get back in, by now they would have demanded the privatization of all social services," said Bickerstaff.

Instead, "new" Labour Prime Minister Blair wasted no time announcing his plan to establish a non-party, non-political wage structure in Britain and signing the Social Charter for the European Union.

As well, Blair lifted Margaret Thatcher's 1984 banning of unions from the Government Communications Headquarters, established compulsory competitive tendering in the public sector, and set in motion referenda in Scotland and Wales that could give both ancient nations limited home rule.

On health care issues, Blair has adopted a tinkered approach. Apart from the memorandum on London hospitals, a plan to divert 100 million pounds sterling from the health budget in a targeted attempt to reduce waiting lists,

He has also appointed millionaire MP Geoffrey Robinson, the new minister for competition, to administer the Public Finance Investment program that will increase privatization of health care.

"To get private finance of capital projects, they may have to hand over the services as well as the buildings," says Bickerstaff, adding that some public health care workers will be forced to move to the private sector.

The government also announced a welfare reform strategy that sounds strikingly similar to North American "workfare," forcing unemployed 18-to-25-year-olds to take job training or unpaid work experience to receive their benefits.

Blair has deliberately excluded "old" Labour candidates from cabinet. According to Bickerstaff, the trade union share of votes at national party conventions — already reduced to 30 per cent — may go down even more.

"There has always been an organic link between the trade union movement and the Labour Party," he says. "If Blair wants to dispel the appearance that Labour is in the pocket of the unions. Over the next 10 years I suspect that trade union members will move out of the organic link."

One Canadian observer of the election says the Blair regime is far closer to Canada's NDP than the Clintonian U.S. "new democrats" to which the new Labour is frequently compared.

On their campaign literature, you could cross out 'New Labour' and put New Democrat. The language is very similar, especially on youth unemployment," says Randy Garrison, a Caronville College political science instructor and former aide to NDP Premier Mike Harris and previous NDP leader Bob Skill.

Garrison was in Britain for the last two weeks of the election campaign, and came away thinking that Tony Blair is almost identical to Mike Harris, but without the "green element."

The Bay, no way!

Striking employees of the Bay in Kamloops, B.C. and their supporters marched on the downtown Vancouver Bay in late April. They were demonstrating in support of the first-contract strike by over 100 employees in Kamloops. Their slogan was "The Bay, No Way!"

"The strike is not about money," says Beth Shyanko, president of the Steelworkers Local 898. "It's about dignity and respect — things the Bay in Kamloops has never shown to its employees in all the years since the store opened in the early '80s."

The strikers embarked on a province-wide tour of Bay stores, picketing, passing out information, and asking the Bay's customers to cut up their charge cards and send them back to the store.

The small Kamloops store unionized in 1993 when a majority of the 130 employees, mostly women, signed union cards. Negotiations for a first contract bogged down over the issue of "suitability" (read "favouritism") in determining job postings. After the workers went on strike last September, the Bay operated with management, then gave up and closed the store.

The strikers say they want to red the Bay's discriminatory practices like assignations based on youth and beauty. "Department store workers are not models," says Shyanko. "Most of us are ordinary women and men, working to earn income necessary to feed our families. We don't deserve to be cast aside as soon as the first wrinkle appears."

The strikers have a call-free hotline: 1-800-230-8792. And here's an offer: if you cut up your Bay card and send it to them, they'll send you a Bay, No Way! T-shirt. Send to USWA Local 898, 1 Seymour Street, Kamloops, B.C., V2C 2E2.

Photographer depicts danger at work

Gallery 199 in New York City is featuring the work of photographer Earl Dotter. His show, The Quiet Sickness, chronicles hazardous workplaces in the United States. The show will continue until June 24 and opened, appropriately, on May 1. This photo shows laundry workers sorting disease-laden linens in the Bronx, New York.
It's a battle to make our workplaces safer

The WCB Royal Commission is hearing two opposing views for change. Unions want tougher prevention measures. Employers want to gut existing regulations and roll back benefits.

**The WCB Royal Commission**

**What the Act is saying**

...employers have been told to the contrary.

The Royal Commission is hearing two opposing views for change. Unions want tougher prevention measures. Employers want to gut existing regulations and roll back benefits.

**The provincial government's performance on WCB issues during the last six years has been frankly quite poor**

In June 2003, the provincial government introduced a new WCB system. It was supposed to be a modern, efficient system that would improve workplace safety. However, it has been plagued with problems.

**Prevention is the cure**

by Stephen Howard

Commission is first WCB review in 30 years

Amid growing employer pressure to reduce the WCB's compensation costs, the government announced in 2003 that a Royal Commission would review the WCB system. The commission's report was released in 2006.

**The WCB Royal Commission**

**Interview with Stephen Howard**

Stephen Howard, a lawyer and former WCB commissioner, discusses the importance of workplace safety and the need for stronger WCB regulations.

**The boss makes her blood boil**

Stephanie and her family were shocked when her mother-in-law, a long-time WCB employee, was killed on the job. The family's efforts to get justice for Stephanie's mother-in-law led to a public awareness campaign and changes in WCB regulations.

**The future of the WCB is uncertain**

As the WCB struggles to maintain financial stability, there are concerns about its ability to effectively regulate workplace safety.

**Prevention is the cure**

by Stephen Howard

Stephen Howard, a lawyer and former WCB commissioner, discusses the importance of workplace safety and the need for stronger WCB regulations.

**The boss makes her blood boil**

Stephanie and her family were shocked when her mother-in-law, a long-time WCB employee, was killed on the job. The family's efforts to get justice for Stephanie's mother-in-law led to a public awareness campaign and changes in WCB regulations.

**The future of the WCB is uncertain**

As the WCB struggles to maintain financial stability, there are concerns about its ability to effectively regulate workplace safety.
The WCB Royal Commission is hearing two opposing views for change. Unions want tougher prevention measures. Employers want to gut existing regulations and roll back benefits.

It’s a battle to make our workplaces safer

In the first major examination of B.C.'s workers' compensation system in more than 20 years, the battle lines have been clearly drawn between unions and employers about how the system needs to change to meet the health and safety needs of workers in the 21st century.

At public hearings — which are nearly complete — across B.C., union members have, with one voice called for tougher regulations and more stringent prevention programs to improve health and safety to reduce the workplace injury and disease. But employers argue that workplace safety improvements from a different agenda. They’re bitterly opposed to legally mandated prevention initiatives, and have argued for the existing enforcement power of the WCB to be reduced even further. And they’ve aimed a scalpel at compensation issues, demanding measures that would significantly reduce benefits paid to workers on WCB claims.

Called by former labour minister Moe Sobotka last year, the commission was given the mandate to look at a number of critical issues that can be generally lumped into two broad categories: prevention and regulations, and compensation and governance. It’s near completion of public hearings in communities across B.C.

The provincial government’s performance on WCB issues during the last six years has been frankly quite poor

At a June 20 public hearing in Richmond, where the WCB is headquartered, HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt delivered the union’s main presentation.

He pointed out to the commission that health care facilities are the most dangerous workplaces in B.C., with an injury rate 30 times higher than the provincial average. Between 1991 and 1995 the toll from workplace injury and disease totalled more than one million lost days of employment, primarily among LPNs and care aides workers with soft tissue injuries. And he argued that the real accident rate is actually much higher because of the sharp rise in rejected WCB claims which has resulted from aggressive health employer efforts to make it seem that the health care injury problem was under control.

"This Royal Commission has been given the challenge to establish a workers' compensation system into the next millennium," Allnutt told royal commission members’ judge Gormall Gill, business representative Osama Essel and former IWA-Canada president Gerry Sotney.

"You must find ways to stop the hurting and address debilitating injuries like soft tissue, repetitive strain, stress, allergies, and chemical sensitivities." In addition to Allnutt, the commission heard from more than 35 HEU activists who made presentations at public hearings across the province. The hearings started in April and will end later in July. Many more activities were turned away from the public consultation process, which was roundly criticized as too limited by the labour movement.

The activists told powerful — and in many cases heart-wrenching — stories about being hurt on the job, about being mistrusted by the WCB, of being in financial ruin before their claim was finally accepted.

Together with other CUPE municipal, school board, and library locals, CUPE/HEU made by far the most presentations of any union. "There’s no question the Royal Commission was a priority for our union," Allnutt said. "We need to drive home the put-your-health-and-safety-the-provincial-government’s-performance-on-WCB-issues-during-the-last-six-years-has-been-frankly-quiet-poor/"

A constant theme of HEU presentations was the need to end the current and make workplace safer.

"Workers in B.C. don’t have the same legal health and safety protection as workers in other provinces," Allnutt said, noting that the present Workers’ Compensation Act addresses health and safety "in its only a few sections."

He called on the commission to recommend new WCB legislation that would:

- clearly identify the mandate of the WCB;
- legally require the WCB to pursue prevention and enforcement;
- ensure individual and collective rights to refuse unsafe work.

Allnutt argued that the prime mission of a proper health and safety system is to prevent accidents from happening, not compensate people once they’ve been hurt. "Taking prevention seriously," Allnutt said, "means putting your money where your mouth is."

Commission is first WCB review in 30 years

Amid mounting employer moves to undercut the Workers’ Compensation Board, last year Victoria took the Royal Commission route to undertake the first review of its workers’ compensation system in 30 years.

Provincial court judge Gormall S. Singh was appointed by then-labour minister Moe Sobotka to head up the Royal Commission. He’s joined by business representative Osama Essel, and Gerry Sotney, the past president of the IWA-Canada.

The commission has a two-part mandate: to deal with issues of workplace accident prevention, and then to tackle governance and compensation issues.

But rather than covering both issues as part of their public consultation, the commission decided to deal with prevention issues first, and will issue a report to government by the end of 1997. Then they’ll follow with the equally controversial issues related to governance and compensation, which is slated to go to Victoria later next year.

Already the commission has taken some heat from the labour community for the way public hearings on prevention have been set up. And its failure to commit to further public hearings on governance and compensation issues has drawn further union criticism.

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by Stephen Howard

Pre
WHAT HEU ACTIVISTS ARE SAYING

FATHER KILLED ON THE JOB

"In 1970, my father was taken away from me in a terrible industrial accident. I don't remember too much of my childhood, but I do remember the day of my father's death and the police coming to our door; I remember all the crying. My mother never recovered and suffered from a nervous breakdown. This workplace fatality took not only my father, but as well, my mother's mind and heart."

Teresia Principe, Queen Park Local

THE SYSTEM FAILED HER

"Although I finally received financial assistance, I feel I was subjected to unnecessary delay in the adjudication of my claim. I feel the system failed me to such an extent that I faced eviction from my apartment due to lack of funds. I was forced to move and was never told that the reason for my problem was that my employer opposed my claim."

Jude Henchey, VGH Local

WORK ALONE IS UNSAFE

"Another cause of stress is having to work alone at night shifts. We have colleagues who will not work nights because they fear for their safety in terms of having an aggressive resident attack them. How is one staff supposed to get 35 residents to safety if a fire breaks out? There are industries that would never permit anyone to work alone, so why should royal entries be any different?"

Eva Nepeth, Summerland Local

TO-TO REHAB APPROACH

"On Dec. 1, 1996, I received an injury to my left shoulder. I went to physiotherapy for two months, which WCB says is all they cover. I also had many cortisone injections. After three months and still no answers, my doctor wrote to the WCB that I "needed intense physical therapy." It's ironic that those who care for the sick and injured are the ones getting injured the most."

Margaret Fehr, Burns Lake Local

The boss makes her blood boil

Cynthia Stephens was boiling in the Corner House. She'd just endured her employer's pitch to WCB to call in commissioners in Prince George that outlined the boss's standard attack: reduced benefits, a wait period before benefits start, reduced enforcement and penalties for workers who "violated" regulations.

So when it came time to make her scheduled May 29 presentation, she switched gears and tackled the employer line about WCB "reforms."

Stephens started working at Simon Fraser Lodge back in 1977, and recounted for the commissioners how she's been hurt on the job on several occasions — all related to the lack of proper lifting equipment at her 113-bed facility.

She was critical of her employer for not dealing with prevention issues.

"What about providing proper equipment, like the beds, and more lifts so you don't have to walk and walk to find one, or and up getting the patient up without one? It's fine for the employer to say we don't lift, but then they demand that the patients be up by 8:30 in the morning."

"Our accidents," Stephens said, "are not only caused by the lack of training and supervision, but as well due to heavy workload factors."

Vention is the cure

...
No fair, Nike!

Indonesian Nike worker tours Canada to decry Nike labour practices abroad

ICHISIKAESI was fired from her job in a Nike shoe factory in Indonesia when she tried to improve her working conditions. Recently, the Canadian Auto Workers' Union, in cooperation with the Alberta Federation of Labour, sponsored a tour by Sikaesl to Canada so she could tell her story and garner support for a boycott of Nike products.

Sikaesl speaks no English, but her presentation is sprinkled with words any Canadian worker would recognize: overtime, quota, wage, subcontractor, mask. Listening to Sikaesl's description of the factory where she worked, Nike's slogan, "Just Do It," takes on sinister overtones. The North American marketing mantra is for Indonesian workers, a corporate bullying technique that pushes them to work harder and reach their quotas.

The employer provided a one-meal-a-day and living quarters. The shift was 10.6 hours, with mandatory overtime. The U.S. $21.50 per day barely covered expenses — and sometimes not. An injured worker often had to wait for medical attention until the end of shift. One doctor was available just 2 hours a day for a workforce of 6,000.

"A little while ago we noticed that no matter what we wanted to see the doctor about, we would prescribe the same pill," said Sikaesl. "If a worker was sick and went to see her own doctor, her pay would be docked. Perhaps even worse, the worker would be punished before her co-workers and branded as lazy. Nike signed a presidential task force agreement in the U.S., committing itself to the minimum wage wherever it operates. Subcontractors use intimidation if workers insist on better working conditions and decent salaries. However, the agreement also makes companies like Nike responsible for the activities of their contractors and suppliers.

Despite Nike's relentless abuse of its workers, sports megastars like Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods sign lucrative, multi-million dollar advertising contracts that exceed what it costs Nike and its subcontractors to pay the annual wages of the company's 160,000 workers in Indonesia. The factory where Sikaesl worked had a "union," but the leadership came from government, military and management. In 1992 the workers decided they wanted a real union, with workers forming the leadership. They demanded improved working conditions and the equivalent of a 40% raise. The Korean contractor granted the workers' demands, but not before Sikaesl and the 28 other workers were fired. She has not worked since.

An Indonesian court ordered the Nike contractor to reinstate Sikaesl and the other fired activists with back pay, but it has refused to comply, and Nike has given no direction to do so. The Supreme Court of Indonesia will review the case, and Nike is confident to leave it there, knowing that a long-delayed resolution is a strong deterrent indeed for workers. Unions in Canada and the U.S. are calling for a boycott of Nike products.

Spousal assault charges on the rise

Statistics show more B.C. women reporting domestic violence

More women are reporting incidents of spousal assault and police are laying more charges in cases involving violent relationships, according to statistics released by the attorney general's ministry in April. The number of spousal assault incidents where police recommend charges increased from 5 percent in 1992 to 74 percent in 1995. The police now recommend charges in spousal assault cases at almost twice the rate for non-spousal assault, says the government.

"The increase in charges against offenders involved in spousal assaults is encouraging," said women's equality minister Sue Hammell. "Our work to stop violence against women requires strong enforcement that holds abusers accountable for their actions, serves victims, and changing attitudes and conditions that allow violence to happen in the first place."

Current government policy on domestic violence against women directs members of the justice system to ensure protection of victims and children who may be at risk. The Ministry of the Attorney General is currently examining the effectiveness of the policy implementation through case studies and feedback from community groups, victims, victim serving agencies, police, and other justice system partners.


Homophobic bigotry condemned

HEU has condemned homophobic hate mongering in two recent cases of high-profile bigotry

ON MAY 2, four members of the Simon Fraser Lodge 4000 and HEU regional staff picketed a crowd of 100 in Prince George for a candlelight vigil to protest an anti-gay conference organized by the United Right Christian Research Institute.

The conference, held at a local hotel, was backed against progressive measures by the B.C. Teachers Federation and the NDP government. Participants outside the area sang "Amazing Grace" and called for tolerance and acceptance of diversity.

"If the vigil was very positive," said long-time HEU aide Elizabeth Tachi, "an ethnic diversity delegate to this year's HEU equity conference. "I hope this will encourage gay and lesbian members to come out and join the labour caucus.""

Meanwhile, the Surrey school boards' board of directors has heard that three children's books about same-sex parents drew strong criticism from HEU president Fred Mouat.

"When official bodies such as yours do not proactively oppose discrimination, it permits and even encourages radicalizing, homophobia, and intolerance," wrote Mouat in a May 12 letter urging the board to reverse its decision.

"We urge you to consider the importance of educational and social equity, especially as it pertains to the promotion of an inclusive and democratic society."

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Practical nurses are not a threat to RNs

- A Kamloops reporter, intrigued by the British Columbia Nurses' Union's recent media campaign, went to local BCNU spokesperson Cathy Ferguson for clarification. Ferguson is not just the spokesperson for her union; she is the health care union's representative on Thompson Regional Health Board. Her observations spurred Heather Pockett, a Kamloops LPN, to put a renewed focus on the amended vote May 21 in the Kamloops Daily News, which is an exception.

Cathy Ferguson states that the BCNU is concerned they are losing good "lower-skilled workers." She feels hospital managers are transferring work to licensed practical nurses and health care aides.

I am a licensed practical nurse by choice, not due to a lower level of knowledge. I do not consider myself a "lower-skilled worker" nor should I be considered as such within my profession. We are all qualified as LPNs and perform our skills within the scope of practice and code of ethics.

As for BCNU losing jobs to LPNs, they need to have have their memories refreshed. In the last 70s and early 80s, hundreds of LPNs lost their jobs to registered nurses. The employers felt they had nurse skills that could perform all of the nursing skills. This proved to be very costly and in fact lowered the quality of personnel care patients were receiving.

Cathy Ferguson's answer

Regarding a letter to the editor by Heather Purdy-Powlson.

The British Columbia Nurses' Union (BCNU) is currently running a campaign called "We Can't Stop Caring." The goals of the campaign are:

- to educate the public and health care employers about the crucial role RNs perform;
- to stop the replacement of RNs with lesser skilled workers, particularly unlicensed, unregulated personnel (all L

licensed practical nurses are regulated professionals).

BCNU's present campaign promotes the work of registered nurses within the health care system. In a recent Daily News article, Nurses Oppose Shift to Lesser-skilled Workers, May 12, 1997, I quoted as referring to licensed practical nurses as being "lower-skilled" and bed baths as being "menial." I was dismayed after reading the article. It is certainly not difficult to understand why licensed practical nurses Mother Pockett interpreted BCNU's campaign as "badmouthing the other health care workers." Ms. Pockett responded with an excellent letter to the editor -- I don't blame her for the outrage.

However, I did not write the article. The article was written by a reporter after a lengthy 45-minute interview about BCNU's campaign. When I discussed my concerns with the reporter, he said he "boiled down" our 45-minute discussion and that's the way he heard me. Respectfully, the condensed version does not accurately represent my views.

During my 22-year career as a registered nurse, I have always had the utmost respect for licensed practical nurses. I have always valued teamwork.

I am well aware that all health care workers bring different levels of skills and abilities to the workplace. For me, varying levels of skills and abilities in no way constitute a negative reflection on the worth or value of any health care worker.

BCNU ad campaign only serves to divide health workers, says HEU

Many HEU members were upset and noted the recent BCNU media advertising blitz that included slick newspaper inserts and television spots nominated to have cost more than $100,000.

In a measured response to the BCNU May 22, HEU's secretariat-business manager Chris Allum called on the registered nurses' union to "pull the plug on the campaign," which has "inflicted licensed practical nurses and care aides."

BCNU says their efforts are designed to warn against the U.S.

-style approach of using untrained and inexperienced care providers in place of nursing staff, not to attack care aides and LPNs. But, Allum points out, by the nurses' union own admission, it's also to expand the role of RNs.

"Your campaign continues to imply that the only thing between the patient and death's door is an RN. This is not only inflammatory," said Allum in the letter, "but inaccurate, and all health care workers including RNs know that."

"At this very crucial time, when medicare is under attack and when health care workers should be working together for health care building alliances, this kind of campaign is not the way," he said.

Allum said for the last six months, HEU has been urging the BCNU to work cooperatively to come up with common solutions on nursing and patient care.

"Together, we have a window of opportunity here in B.C. to change the face of nursing and patient care staff nation in acute and long-term care, where rising activity levels and understaffing persist," Allum says.

"We can expand the role of RNs to perform tasks now the domain of physicians, but LPNs work in the full scope of practice, provide skill-building opportunities for care aides, and design innovative new models of delivering services in the community using the expertise of the entire nursing team.

"Unless we start working together now, employers will seize the opportunity and implement the changes that the BCNU has expressed so much fear about in the ad campaign," he said.
Shared food services at LGH a bust

Lions Gate food gets the thumbs-down from patients, workers and the North Shore News

Despite early predictions of cost savings and improved efficiency, neither has materialized and food quality has declined since Lions Gate Hospital launched its food service partnership with Burnaby Hospital in 1994.

In his February 1997 report to the Vancouver/Burnaby Health Board, medical officer John Blatherwick criticized an agreement between Lions Gate and Burnaby Hospital that has forced the North Vancouver facility to turn to St. Paul's Hospital for its food.

"There is a long history to that agreement having problems," wrote Blatherwick, "but it does not mean that some form of centralized food service between hospitals will produce savings."

In fact, cost per meal a day at LGH has risen from $19 to more than $24 since the hospital got its in-house food production centre. When food from St. Paul's or Burnaby is unavailable, LGH buys high-cost, prepackaged food from the private sector. Meanwhile, the hospital is cutting down on staff hours — reducing four full-time positions to half — and the cafeteria's revenue is falling fast.

Then there's the food quality. Patient reviews included the following:

- "During my stay in hospital, the medical services and staff remain excellent, but the food has declined to a level which is almost intolerable."
- "toast, soggy and lumpy, French toast, like foam rubber; cream of white that could not be spooned, grey fish, could not be eaten; turkey, rubbery and tough, peach that jumped off my plate when trying to cut with a spoon."

Even Timothy Renshaw, the restaurant critic and managing editor of the North Shore News, got his digs in. "Cook-chill. Doesn't really get the taste buds too tapping, does it? Sounds more like an aliment peculiar to kitchen staff."

Lions Gate dependence on St. Paul's has also been judged a failure, according to acting LGH chief shop steward Darcy Liss.

"The problem with it is that St. Paul's food is frozen, and it's hard to adapt to the cook-chill system," she says. "It's really hard to serve if it's not thawed properly."

Sadly, it will be very difficult and expensive for Lions Gate to return to in-house food preparation, she adds.

Kamloops members are coping with multi-skilling plan

One year after Royal Inland Hospital introduced multi-skilling as a budget-saving strategy, HEU members are learning to cope with the changes, according to local activist Domina Bernardi.

News of the job restructuring was not well-received at first.

Despite management's offer of an on-site office to discuss alternatives, job postings, and displacement options with members, the local union executive warned guarantees of no job losses and new skills training opportunities for employees.

Management argued that by combining the distribu-
tion, housekeeping, food and nutrition depart-
ments, overall job losses would be minimal.

The program — referred to as the "service worker concept" rather than "multi-skilling" — was up and running by July 1996.

The hospital posted all 35 jobs at the same time. Appointments were based on seniority.

Casuals who could only work for one department before could now cross over into other departments, with superior benefits applying.

The Healthcare Labour Adjustment Agency was able to soften the impact of displacements with early retirement and other options.

"This worked because management asked for our input and advice," says Bernardi. "They gained our support by committing themselves to making jobs more interesting and varied, and promising that nobody would lose their job."

The most frequent complaint of service workers has been the lack of "downtime."

Tasks are assigned in 15 minute segments, and scheduling is very tight.

HLAA studies LACs

The Healthcare Labour Adjustment Agency has embarked on an ambitious research and development project which it hopes will improve the operations of Labour Adjustment Committees (LACs). Labour Adjustment Committees as health care facilities in British Columbia are an essential part of the province's health care restructuring plan, and the HLAA relies on them to carry out its work.

"These labour management committees are the foundation of our entire program," says HLAA executive director John Melnott. "It is essential that they provide effective service for workers and employers at all participating organizations."

Some of these committees function better than others. The HLAA will study 16 LACs around the province and in a range of different types of facilities.

Moreover, the committees being studied represent the full scope of dysfunctional to fully operational.

Six are in the greater Vancouver area, two are on Vancouver Island, and the other eight are in other regions of the province. Four are at extended health care facilities. It hopes that the results will reveal why some committees are effective and others are not.

The individual members of the 16 committees filled out a comprehensive questionnaire. Some of them participated in one-on-one interviews. There was equal representation from management and unions among those interviewed.

The research focused on learning how consensus is reached in meetings, how agendas are set, who participates on the committees and in the meetings, and how issues are communicated, both internally and externally.

The researchers also compiled a reading list which will aid LACs to examine how labour management committees in other sectors and jurisdictions operate. The data collection phase of the project was to be completed with a report by the end of May.

LAC members and HLAA staff will attend a workshop to review the findings and make final recommendations for the design of resource tools and an on-site education program.

Workers to counsel peers

HLAA to begin pilot project in the fall

The Healthcare Labour Adjustment Agency will offer a peer counselling service to health care workers, starting in September or October.

HLAA sent out a call for people who were interested or experienced to apply for the positions. Applications were accepted until June 9.

The program will be placed in the Vancouver/ Richmond, Capital, Fraser Valley and Thompson health regions. It has been conceived to give support to health care workers who are affected by restructuring in the health care sector. It will link other counselling, training and labour adjustment services already provided by the HLAA.

The 10 to 12 successful applicants will be selected from their jobs on an as-needed basis, and their employers will be reimbursed for their salaries and benefits.

Before they begin, they will receive intensive training in peer counselling, which, following HLAA's mandate, will focus on career-related issues. Over a period of six weeks, 10 to 12 days of training will be delivered in three to four day segments. It will take place in September.

Peer counsellors will advise their colleagues on such topics as job security, labour adjustment activity, training, and employment goals. Stay tuned, because if this pilot project is successful, it will be run on a continuing basis.
Maaxor Marriott dishes up indig... for future 'associates'

by Don Payant

To me, "associate" was such a warm, fuzzy term: a colleague. An equal. A stakeholder. A member of the inner circle. Someone who is in the loop. What's nearer to the truth is the hollow-promise of food services associate-bond. Marriott style.

Yes Marriott, the U.S. hotel giant with a lowly management services division operating in prisons, schools, and all too many publics funded Canadian hospitals.

On the surface Marriott appears to mix operational precision, upbeat attitude and financial savvy. But like any patron of a greasy spoon will tell you, bite into a tasty looking Marriott sales pitch and you end up with a mouth full of grease and wilted lettuce.

Despite a huge infrastructure and alleged experience running hospital's affairs, Marriott is shown on spectacles polishes and proceeds for day-to-day work. However, policies and procedures are often thrown out, in favour of an "ad hoc" approach by whomever happens to be in charge that day.

It starts with throwing out the old policies described above. Then they claw back or eliminate training time to cut adrift already floundering employees. For safety, safe lifting and food safe courses are cut back, delayed or cancelled. This serves two purposes:

- Training becomes informal. Employees assume their own job duties and those of apparently trained co-workers. All this plus workload increases too.

- If they can't lay you off, they make sure not as many of you work every day.

If you can't lay you off, they make sure not as many of you work every day.

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Starbucks battle brews

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TARBUCOUS once-proud reputation for progressive policies - actually suffering from a heavy contact dispute with CWA Local 3000 - may be gone for good if the North American coffee giant is allowed to cash in on privatized food services in the health care sector.

 Marriott's latest management proposal by Richmond Hospital to have Starbucks run a kiosk in a new building at the public facility. The idea was approved by the board on the grounds that Marriott, whose contract with the hospital allows it to "manage" food services. The hospital now claims that the Starbucks waterfront would be managed by Marriott.

"I have a little baffled how an agreement to manage suddenly changes into an agreement to buy a franchise and install it into the Richmond Hospital," local chair Vivian Love wrote, in a March 23 letter to hospital board chair John Partner. "Although the union does not agree with Marriott as management in the hospital... we do not dispute the hospitals right to hire such a company to manage. We do, however, disagree with the lack of inclusion in our union members to do our bargaining unit work.

Love told the Guardian that CWA Local 3000 - which has 200 members in Richmond - is targeting eight Lower Mainland outlets and the Burnaby distribution centre - is applying through the Labour Relations Board to cancel its contracts rights to all Starbucks outlets in the Lower Mainland.

Meanwhile, the B.C. Federation of Labour has called for a Starbucks boycott - the event of a lifetime.

"During this time of change and uncertainty in the health care industry, do we really need to add this problem into the mix?" Love wrote to Partner, urging the hospital to keep all revenues in the health care sector. "Level point is well-taken." Other hospitals which run their own coffee kiosks make tens of thousands of dollars which they are then able to plow back into hospital services.

To meet state enforcement on hospital turf, the union has produced a handful of memos (We can brew it better) for HEU, HSA and BCNU members to send to Richmond Hospital administration and board. "We get about 1,000 of them signed," said Love. "If they do put in it, well, pamphlets everyone who buys coffee. The majority of the membership is behind us."

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20/40/40 is the key

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LPNs needed in long-term care

The Hospital Employees' Union is proposing to government a change in the staff mix in long-term care facilities to utilize more LPNs to meet the rising resident acuity and short staffing problems facing the long-term care sector. Under HEU's plan the current ratio of 20 per cent RNs and 80 per cent care aides would change to 20 per cent RNs, 40 per cent LPNs, and 40 per cent care aides.

Right now British Columbia has the lowest LPN to RN ratio in the country, and HEU's scheme sees care aides receiving the upgrading and specialized training to fill the 'new' LPN positions.

Although the Interior and Northern Committee recommended that the Ministry of Health requires the use of LPNs in acute and long-term care, this recommendation has largely been ignored. The Ministry of Health Funding Methodology Committee reviewed on the extended care funding model advocated increased RN staffing, but ignored the role of LPNs.

HEU subsequently made a submission to the committee which urges the expanded use of LPNs in long-term care facilities. These facilities will face increasing requirements for nursing personnel skilled in gerontology, psychiatric care, geropharmacology and community care. LPNs already spend one-third of their training studying gerontology and doing practical placements in extended and long-term care facilities.

HEU secretary business manager Chris Allcutt emphasizes the advantages of the recommendation. "This is a win/win proposal. It will address the staff shortage and acuity problems and it will utilize more LPNs, who receive the most geriatric training of any of the nursing professionals."

The 20/40/40 mix does not represent a reduction in the use of RNs. The formula is based on a model which has been in use in New Brunswick since 1993. That province instituted the 20/40/40 mix, and filled as many positions as possible by upgrading already employed care aides to LPNs. This resulted in cost savings, a broadening of the LPN scope of practice and freeing up of RNs to do long term planning and support with residents and their families.

HEU argues that the same plan is feasible in B.C. because many of the care aides are recognized by many colleges as providing advanced standing towards LPN certification. Many long-term care facilities in B.C. are already working with local community colleges to design a bridging program for care aides, so that these facilities will be able to meet their rising care requirements.

The Funding Methodology Committee's review has been tabled and discussions between the parties is ongoing.

HEU will continue to push forth its arguments for the consideration of the 20/40/40 mix in B.C.'s long-term care facilities.
Fine tuning, American style

by Dale Fuller

In 1993 San Francisco-based Global Exchange sponsored a tour of 175 Americans to Cuba. This was a direct challenge to the U.S. government's prohibition on travel to Cuba, but the travelers were confident that the penalty of 10-year jail terms and six-digit fines would not stand up in court.

It was the end of many trips, and after 600 Americans had enjoyed the hospitality of the Cuban people, it became evident that Clinton's government was not taking the bait.

But the American government hadn't heard of Benjamin Trushaw, piano tuner.

"He had a mission: tune all the pianos in Cuba that he could get his hands on on."

While other tourists on that first trip toured daycare centers and hospitals, Trushaw centered the hotel piano, took a look at his 1915 upright Wurlitzer and worked his magic. That won him an introduction to the director of Havana's Museum of Music.

Trushaw recalls, "The director let me tune and regulate the piano, a beautiful old Steinway grand, in their small concert hall.

After that there was no stopping him. He had a mission: tune all the pianos in Cuba that he could get his hands on, all the while shaving his nose at the American government. He has spent the last few years travelling to Cuba, taking donated old pianos and tuning tools with him.

He sent postcards, Cuban money and receipts from fresh fruit joints in Cuba to the American Office of Foreign Economic Control, a division of the Treasury Department.

He was charged, cited for "travel to Cuba, where you worked as a piano tuner" and fined $10,000.

Naturally, this met with derision in the press. Said the late Herb Caen, the San Francisco Chronicle columnist, "Ouch, government. He has spent the last few years travelling to Cuba, taking donated old pianos and tuning tools with him.

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Welcome to three new loc

Organizing health care workers in British Columbia is a major priority for the Health Employees' Union. HEU welcomes three new locals into its fold.

Columbia Valley Homemakers' Local No. 1 is a home support non-profit to the community sector. This local is in Invermere and has 11 members. Discussions of merging with another local are pending.

Parkerfield's McCarter Local is also a home support society. It was certified in September 1992, but there was a variance that brought supervisory and administrative staff into the bargaining unit. That part of the staff is investigating the possibility of merging with the Nanaimo, or perhaps another local.

The third new local is the Victoria Best Home in New Westminster. It is a mental health/residential care home and consists of 11 new members. It won its union certification in May.

Longest-serving union member gets 70-year pin

Wilie Coutee, 59, of Vancouver is believed to be Canada's longest-serving union member. He received a 70-year union service pin from Local 134 of the Carpenters' Union in March. When Coutee joined the union in 1925, he earned $28 a month, and paid $1.25 in union dues. At 96 he became ill and couldn't work, but he kept paying union dues. "I paid them until they wouldn't take them any more," he said.

In 1925 the union made him an honorary life member and waived his union dues.

Donut shops fry up union activity

In Cochrane, Ontario, birthplace of hockey star Tim Horton, two-thirds of the 22 workers at the franchise that

Coffee break

Back to Work

All stories guaranteed factual.

Sources this issue: CALM, Financial Times, Lean Trade, Staff Nurses Assoc. of Alberta, Vancouver Sun, Sunday Times.
Windsor's birthday brings Golden Ears good byes

Barbara Windsor, a 15-year employee at Golden Ears Retirement Centre in Maple Ridge, retired on her birthday, May 15. Staff and residents send best wishes to Barb, who will be missed.

Kwan will travel after Barrier's retirement

Bardere House attendant Wanda Kwan retired for medical reasons in January. She included travel and camping among her future plans and sends a big "hello" to all her co-workers.

Many Mills Memorial members bid fond farewells

It's Mills Memorial's retirement month at the Guardian as a number of experienced caregivers said their farewells at the Terrace hospital. In January, licensed practical nurses Patricia Watzig and Lola Hull - both long-time union members - bid their goodbyes. Dietary aide Lea Crick finished work two months earlier and LPN Geraldine Rodger retired on Halloween. Watzig spent 18 years with the union, while Hull spent 23 years as an HEU member. Crick retired after 17 years, and Rodger retired after 23 years with HEU.

Remple retires at Menno Hospital

Joyce Remple, who worked at Menno Hospital in Abbotsford for almost 20 years, said goodbye to colleagues and friends. For 14 years Remple worked as a nurses aide and then switched to the hospital laundry in 1992. Her HEU sisters and brothers congratulate her for her retirement and wish her all the best for the future.

Remple will spend more time with her grandchildren.

New staff at Provincial Office

A. Paul Gill comes to HEU from the Ministry of Labour's Compensation Advisory Services, where he worked for four years. The experience he gained there advising, assisting and representing workers on WCB matters will serve him well in his new position as a WCB representative.

He also worked for the Canada Farmworkers' Union as an advocate for members on WCB and UI matters. Gill joined HEU in April. Star Rosenthal started at HEU on May 1 as the servicing rep for Children's Hospital, Women's Hospital, Sunny Hill Health Centre for Children, and G.F. Strong.

TALK TO US ... TOLL FREE!

You can call any HEU office toll free to deal with a problem or to get information. It's fast, it's easy, and it's free.

PROVINCIAL OFFICE
Vancouver site: 1-800-463-5813
North shore site: 1-800-463-5832
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NORTHERN OFFICE
Prince George: 1-800-663-6563

ORANAGAN OFFICE
Kaleden: 1-800-219-9479

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Victoria: 1-800-767-8001

ROOTES OFFICE
Nelson: 1-800-637-9877

WEBSTER...WEBSTER

People with Disabilities

We're working hard to make our union better for people 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.

LEAVE A MESSAGE AT 604-530-9493 AND WE'LL GET BACK TO YOU.

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Five Cents for Fairness

Strawberry pickers in California are trying to unionize. And the United Farm Workers of America is helping them. It has kicked off a new campaign, its largest since the death of founder Cesar Chavez. Three years ago. Five cents for fairness is the campaign slogan.

Unlike previous campaigns to organize grape workers, there's no boycott involved. Instead, the UFW is asking unions, individuals, and other organizations to sign pledges of support. It says that a price increase of five cents a pint could increase the pickers' piece-rate by 50 per cent. There are about 20,000 strawberry workers in California. They work 10 to 12 hours a day in slippery, muddy ditches. For this, they earn an average of $8,900 per year. The industry makes $600 million. U.S. growers make more money from strawberries than any other crop except apples.

As with the grape campaign, the UFW is looking to Canada for support. Eighty per cent of the strawberries consumed in Canada come from California. Here is the pledge the UFW wants supporters to sign:

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Strawberry Campaign Endorsement

I endorse the strawberry workers' right to:

☐ a living wage
☐ decent housing
☐ job security
☐ health insurance
☐ an end to sexual harassment and abuse

I urge the strawberry industry to recognize the rights of strawberry workers.

MAIL TO: UFW c/o USWA, 25 Cecil Street, Toronto, Ontario M4T 1N1, Phone: 416.980.4954, Fax: 416.977.9551

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Guardian

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WCB Royal Commission sits

Unions cry out for prevention of accidents and illness at the workplace, while employers see the sitting of the commission as their golden opportunity to press for deregulation.

Nike brought to task

Fired Indonesian Nike worker tells Canadian workers that Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods earn more than all of the Indonesian Nike workers combined.

Chilled out

Lions Gate Hospital was so confident of the savings that would result after entering into a shared food agreement with Burnaby Hospital, that they shut their own kitchen. They have ample reason to regret that now.

Cubans stay tuned

The American government prosecutes a Berkeley piano tuner for his enthusiastic efforts to tune Cuban pianos.

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