

# 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 VOICE OF THE HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

VOL. 15 NO. 3

MAY/JUNE 1997

## 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.

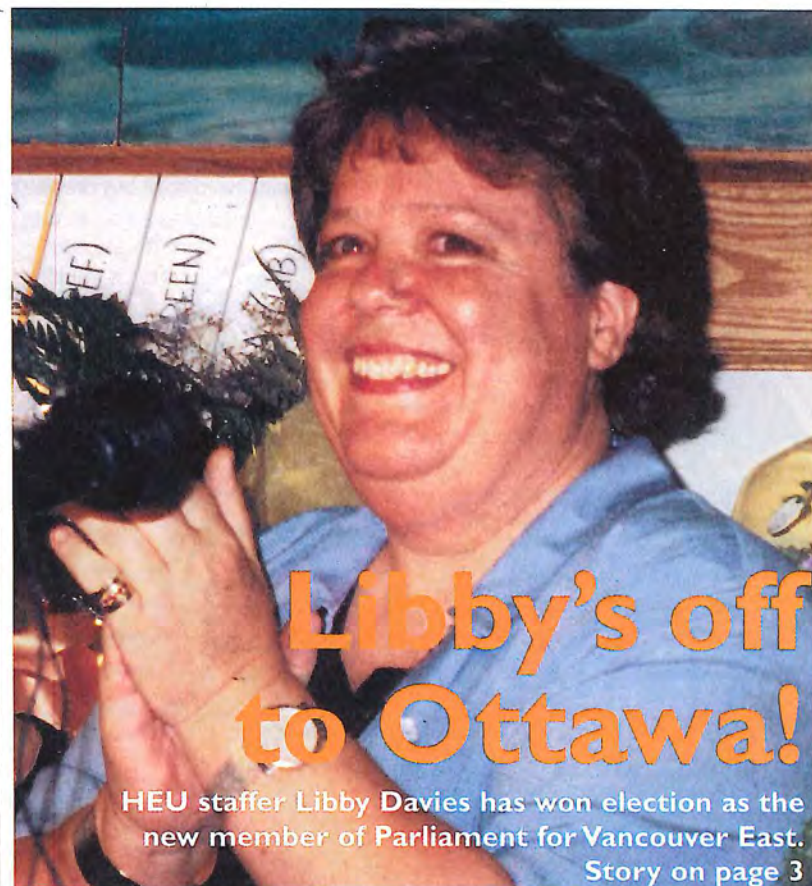
PAGE **8**

## 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 Allnutt

**I**N 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 sector 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 have allowed 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 the 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 reclassi-



fied 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 raising the possibility of throwing many facility-based members into the community sector.

Gleeful health employers couldn't relish their labour board victory long, however. Well-organized community health service workers in facilities returned strong strike votes and applied pressure to local management. As a result, in almost every instance, the health employers backed down on their classification of many facility-based services into the community sector.

## 'It's what we asked for in the first place'

We should congratulate ourselves for our Bill 48 victories, keeping in mind that the biggest struggle has not yet been won – parity 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.

It's a fight we must win.

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

## voice/mail

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

### LTD improvements raise member's hopes

It has been a while since the *Guardian* printed an article regarding Vince Ready's concern about frozen 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 raised this concern and the union is now looking out 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 employers.

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 now at least a few have remembered we are still here and still hoping for a miracle. Lets hope we don't have to wait another 10 years.

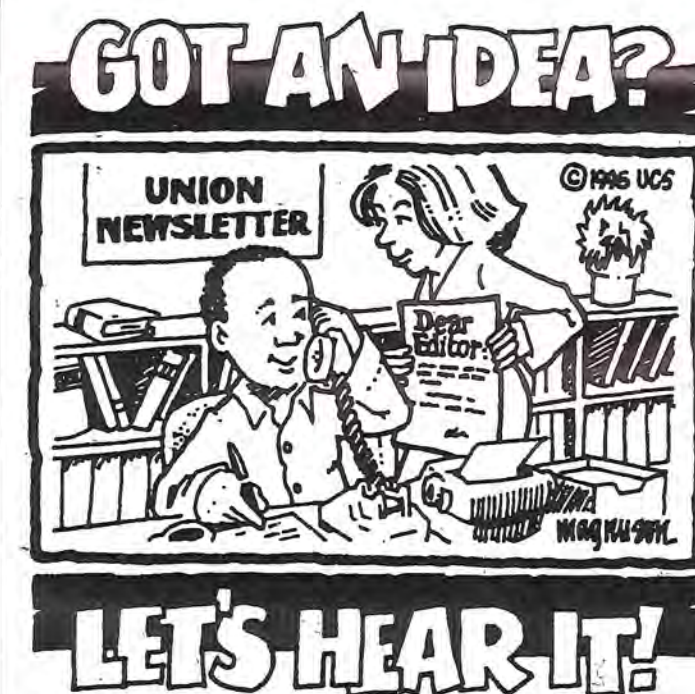
P. COOK,  
Surrey

### Election handbook is 'nauseating oppression'

I was shocked this week when I received a 16-page, pro-NDP propaganda booklet published by the Hospital Employees' Union (paid for with my union dues), which instructed me on how to vote. This "information" was slanted and opinionated, smearing the three major parties (Liberal, Reform and Conservative).

Are hospital workers so stupid that they need NDP big brother to tell them to who to vote for? We are not!

This is insulting and patronizing. The booklet goes



so far as to say that the NDP has the "stronger voice" to represent us in Ottawa. How can this be? This voice which might undemocratically dictate to some union people who to vote for will not translate into power or a strong voice in Ottawa. The NDP were successful in only nine seats last election.

This booklet is full of manipulation and fear tactics. The NDP may have the union clout to send out expensive booklets and force people into putting up signs, but polling stations will not be monitored by union bullies.

I'm not going to tell anyone who to vote for – or who not to vote for – but let's make educated, intelligent decisions dependent of union pressure.

I was in Communist Cuba in 1991 and was "encouraged" to

hear propaganda heralding the "great revolution" and its leader Fidel Castro.

I felt the same nauseating oppression then as I do today. These tactics are dangerous and, may I say, represent a "Non-Democratic Party."

BRIDEY WILLBOND,  
Saanich

Willbond's letter was published in the *Victoria Times-Colonist*. HEU's election handbook surveyed major parties for their views on 12 important issues, most of which were related to medicare and the livelihoods of health care workers. Based on the political parties election positions, the NDP clearly had the best medicare platform, which was pointed out in the election handbook.

## Guardian

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

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# What we're up to

## St. Mary's local rallies to win O'Hern's reinstatement

The St. Mary's local continues to press for the reinstatement of local vice-chair and shop steward Casey O'Hern.

O'Hern was fired in April after being assaulted on the job. The other party, a newly hired employee, was given a three-day suspension.

Local chair Lynn Halstead says O'Hern's firing tops a list of management actions poisoning labour relations at the New

Westminster facility.

"The local executive is really missing having Casey around," says Halstead. "He's so good dealing with members. Everyone is asking how he is."

Many HEU locals have sent donations to the St. Mary's local to help O'Hern make ends meet.

"I'm appreciative of the support," says O'Hern.

An arbitration date to hear the union's grievance on O'Hern's firing has not been set.

## Bursaries: dollars for union scholars

With the start of another school year just around the corner, HEU is making available 21 bursaries totalling close to \$9,000 to help union members, spouses — including common-



Casey O'Hern makes his case to the media at an April 18 rally calling for his reinstatement at St. Mary's Hospital in New Westminster.

law and same sex partners — and children attending post-secondary education for 1997/98.

Bursaries, which are funded by the Provincial Executive and a number of union locals across the province, are awarded on the basis of financial need and demonstrated satisfactory academic standing. Application forms for bursaries are available from the Provincial Office. Completed application forms must be

received by the Provincial Office no later than Aug. 15.

## Summer school targets challenges of change

After a two year hiatus, more than 210 union activists are gathering at UBC to take part in HEU's special summer school education program from July 2 to 10.

The school will take a new approach to its course offerings to reflect the big changes and challenges created by health care reform. Course offerings will combine analysis of the participants' work as activists with bigger picture issues of progressive health reform and ways of making HEU stronger and more democratic.

Another novel approach this year is that activists from BCNU, HSA and BCGEU will also be taking part, providing the opportunity to share experiences between different unions.

## Management 'volunteer' painting scheme nixed

Union activists at three Richmond locals have stopped an attempt by management to get non-maintenance hospital workers to do volunteer painting work during their off hours, Richmond local chair Vivian Love reports.

"(Richmond) hospital was under budget last year, yet they say they don't have any money to do maintenance," says Love. "Management said it would be nicer for the residents to have our members come in and do it. They actually had HEU and BCNU care aides and RNs painting the walls of the extended care unit. People were coming in on evenings and days off — always after union activists had left the building."

continued on page 4

## HEU's Davies topples Liberal incumbent

HEU staffer Libby Davies is the new member of Parliament for Vancouver East. With a decisive margin of 1,800 votes, Davies toppled Liberal incumbent Anna Terrana 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 organizing efforts in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver and among the urban aboriginal community.

"The feedback 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 NDP caucus that 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 Bockrill, a secretary at a drug dependency facility, is one of a new breed of NDP MPs. A member of the provincial government employees' union, Bockrill knocked off health minister David Dingwall in the Cape Breton riding of Bras d'Or.



DAVIES

## Community talks at critical stage for parity deal

AS THE *Guardian* goes to press, significant progress has been achieved for 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 Bosancic.

HEU's community bargaining spokesperson, Bosancic 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 BCGEU and HEU voted more than 80 per cent in favour of strike action in late May 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 \$7 an hour less than their counterparts who do the same work in acute and long term care.

Bosancic says the parties have achieved an understanding on the first step to address the wage gap,



**BROAD SUPPORT** Achieving fairness in the community sector is an important priority for HEU members who work in hospitals and long-term care.

which would provide significant wage boosts 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 boosts, caregivers would gain access to benefits like medical and dental, and pensions for the first time.

But, according to Bosancic, the critical outstanding wage issue is to win adjustments 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, retraining initiatives, and human resource planning, across the entire community sector remains a crucial outstanding issue. Bosancic said the union's bargaining hotline and special bulletins will keep members up to date on the progress of talks.

## MacPhail severs CEO handshakes

Health minister Joy MacPhail has introduced legislation which will begin to address excessive severance settlements and "double dipping" across the public sector highlighted by last year's release by HEU on the details of a \$500,000 golden handshake for ex-hospital boss Ron Mulchey.

"Finally, we have legislation that will make health employers accountable for their abuse of public funds," said HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt.

Bill 20 allows 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.

## 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, Toronto-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 Allnutt. "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.

"It's not on," says Allnutt. "We will strongly oppose any involvement by MDS in the our 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 shelved lab outreach initiatives that would have cushioned the impact of restructuring on lab workers in the region's hospital labs.

According to MDS bigwigs, their company is in top level negotiations with Martin on a deal that would significantly expand their role.



## WHAT WE'RE UP TO

continued from page 3

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

Love says that a similar management ploy at Lion's Manor and Rosewood – which will soon be amalgamating with Richmond Hospital under 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 June 21 as the labour movement celebrated 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 (particularly union leader Ginger Goodwin, who was murdered in 1918 for organizing workers), is also designed to advocate for proper health and safety in the workplace.

"This year's celebrations are particularly significant for HEU members," said HEU president Fred Muzin, who lay a traditional wreath on the grave of Joe Naylor, the miner featured in this year's observance. "Our industry is the worst for injuries in B.C."

Darlene Logan, chair of HEU's Ginger Goodwin 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

**AWARD**  
CANADIAN ASSOCIATION  
**CALM**  
OF LABOUR MEDIA  
**WINNER**



paper won the honours in a category that includes other B.C. unions like the BCNU, HSA, BCGEU, and others like the Ontario Public Sector Employees' Union.

"We're pleased," says union secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt, "that our commitment to communications with our members is recognized through an award like this."

"A lot of people share in it," he said, "from our communications staff to members whose faces and stories are the backbone of each issue of the paper."

The *Guardian* also won in a second category – best photograph – for a picture of an AIDS rally by freelance photographer Kim Stalknecht which was part of a feature on the world

AIDS conference held in Vancouver last year.

### Successor rights for Napier/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 HEU's favour.

The original LRB ruling from November 1996, granted successor rights to workers at Napier Lodge in Vancouver, whose work was transferred to

Renfrew Care, a new facility also owned by the Napier employer.

At the 1996 hearing, HEU argued that the Napier/Renfrew employer was undermining the collective agreement by transferring patients to the new facility without transferring staff and that the two facilities, owned by the same private company, were in fact common employers.

On March 31, 1997 Napier closed, and the employees lost their jobs. However, on April 2, the LRB issued an interim order for the employees to be reinstated 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 lost by the workers will be paid out by the employer.



**HANDS UP!** The equity conference ends on a positive note after two days of meeting and strategizing.

## Caucus members forge links

by Daniel Gawthrop

Long-range planning and inter-caucus solidarity were the major themes at HEU's third equity conference, reports equity officer Raymond Liens.

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 biennial convention.

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

says Liens. Because some lesbians and gay men also belong to First Nations and some people with disabilities are also ethnically diverse, there was a "crossover effect" among delegates.

As a result of the final plenary, 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 enshrined in the Constitution, there's more of a long-range view," says Liens. "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 in 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 paramedical 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.

## Big WCB wins for HEU members

*The Guardian played a major role in these victories*

**T**WO HEU members have won sizeable 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 benefits until she remarried. When her second husband died of a job-related illness in 1986, 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 illness 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 latex sensitivity working as a care aide at Cottonwoods long-term care facility in Kelowna, she could no longer work. Any contact with latex brought on

an attack. Her home had to be rendered latex free, and she had to take antihistamines before going outside.

When her compensation was discontinued after one month, she began to research latex sensitivity. It became clear to her it would always affect her ability to work; moreover, it had been caused by her work. 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 Vancouver. 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. "That doctor gained some firsthand knowledge, and I was sent home," she said. In April 1997 the WCB awarded Beavers \$250,000, and she is happy with that.

Meanwhile, Cottonwoods 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.



Mary Ellen Beavers worked hard for her award.



## WHAT WE'RE UP TO

### CUPE National launches new web site

Internet users can now surf the new CUPE National site on the worldwide web. The site's homepage will have new feature articles each month. Look for topical information on the federal political scene and union actions like rallies, protests and campaigns. Meet CUPE's leaders. Read up on issues like user fees and the fight against Ontario's workfare program. Find out about other CUPE web sites. Browse the new site at <http://www.cupe.ca>.

### Levelling training sessions held

Hundreds of union activists attended a series of regional one-day educational conferences on levelling wage rates in the facilities sector contract in June, as HEU facilities not previously under the Master

Collective Agreement prepared to be brought into the classification system.

"This is an extremely important project," said secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt. Levelling to the Master is especially welcome news for the old CCERA and Pricare locals, whose members have struggled for years to achieve benchmarks.

The levelling affects 125 long-term and extended care facilities that were not previously under the Master. Jobs in these facilities must now be matched to the benchmarks and wage rates of the Master Collective Agreement.

### National day of mourning celebrated

Ceremonies were held across Canada on April 28 to commemorate the Day of Mourning for workers killed or injured on the job. In the Lower Mainland, the ceremony – which HEU par-

ticipated in – was co-sponsored by the B.C. Federation of Labour and the Vancouver and District Labour Council.

The first National Day of Mourning was proclaimed by the Canadian Labour Congress in 1984. Since then 70 countries have joined Canada in observing this day of remembrance of those workers who have been killed or injured on the job.

### Activists visit South Africa for privatization exchange

HEU is continuing ongoing anti-privatization work with our sister union in South Africa with a three week tour and information exchange to the African country.

Robert Dunn (Crossroads local), Ruby Hardwick (Kimberley Special Care), Maddie Singh (Three Links) – and union communications director Stephen Howard – are



HEU activists celebrated nursing team week May 5 to 9 at a number of facilities. The goal was to highlight the under recognized role of care aides and LPNs in patient care. Above, VGH activists from left Marina Rivas, Brent Morriss and Margenita Hamilton use an information table to hand out special information packages.

in South Africa meeting with activists and staff of the 160,000 member National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union (NEHAWU) and sharing HEU's lessons and expertise in combatting private

sector expansion in health care.

Watch for a feature on the exchange, which is jointly funded by HEU and CUPE's international solidarity fund, Union Aid, in the next issues of the *Guardian*.

# Top honour to Stony Creek elder

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

by Mike Old

**W**HEN MARY JOHN got a job in housekeeping at St. John Hospital in Vanderhoof, 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 why Mary John's story resonates so strongly with so many, biographer and friend Bridget Moran 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 in B.C., Mary John was sent to residential schools – first to the Mission School near Ft. St. James and then to Lejac 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



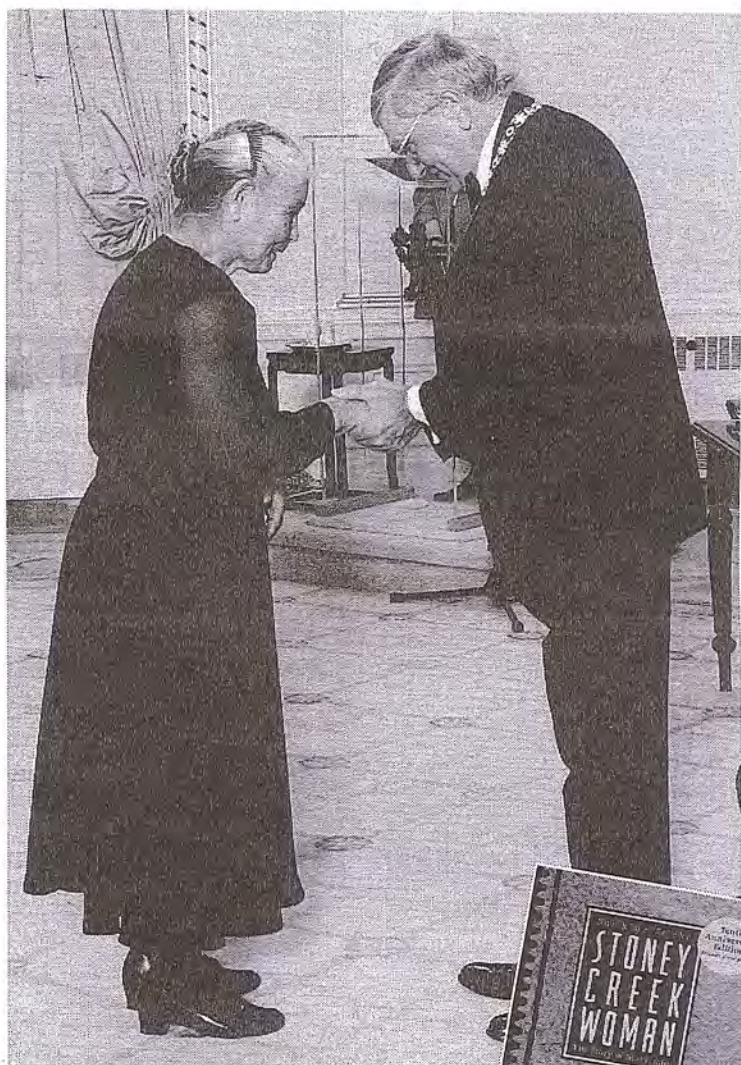
### IT ALL

In her published oral history, *Stoney Creek Woman*, Mary John describes how it first felt having to work side by side with white people.

"I would take my tea and sandwich and sit outside, or slip into the laundry room. I was ashamed even to drink tea in the same room with them – I felt as if they would hear the tea as it went down into my stomach. It took a very long time before I was able to go into that room with white people all around me, and eat my sandwich and drink my tea with any feeling of ease."

Mary John knew the Carrier language and ways that were lost to younger generations. In 1972, she was approached by the local priest and asked to teach Carrier language and culture to young people at the school. "So there I was, Mary John, formerly a student at Lejac, now a teacher of the Carrier language and songs and dances in a Catholic school. Isn't life strange?"

Strange but true. Mary John's tireless efforts to rekindle knowledge of Carrier language and ways among young people have kept her busy, even at the



**STONEY CREEK ELDER** Mary John receives the Order of Canada from Governor General Romeo LeBlanc during a ceremony in Ottawa April 16. Inset, a tenth anniversary edition of her story will be released in July.

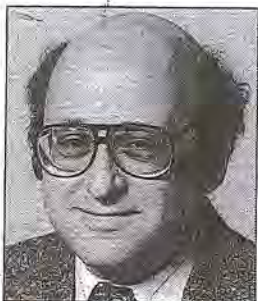
age of 84. And it's these efforts for which she was awarded the Order of Canada.

Mary John continues to live in her log house by the lake on the Stony Creek Reserve, about nine miles outside of Vanderhoof. She has long-time friends at St. John Hospital with whom she shares a cup of tea now and then.

• *Stoney Creek Woman: The Story of Mary John* is written by Prince George author Bridget Moran and published by Arsenal Pulp Press. An updated tenth anniversary edition of this Canadian bestseller will be available in July.



## PRESIDENT'S DESK



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

by Fred Muzin

**W**HEN 210 HEU members arrive at HEU's summer school this year, 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 as front-line workers included at the planning stages of health care reform, to develop alternatives to the right wing program.

Students in 1995 were awaiting the results of the Dorsey Commission that would deal with a new bargaining structure for the health care sector. We could not predict Bill 48 and the subsequent interference by the Labour Relations Board that would threaten to move thousands of our members out of our union and into the paramedical 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 no-concessions facilities collective agreement without a strike, despite HEABC'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 to design a better medicare system.

Our activists have creative ideas and the knowledge about what can work. Our guiding principles include social justice, quality public services and an appreciation of working people.

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 bargain in partnership with, presentations on equity, an evening with the Provincial Executive and social events.

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



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

## Capturing Charlotte's beauty

by Daniel Gawthrop

Lea Olsen is a bit overwhelmed by all the attention she's received lately.

The local HEU chair for Queen Charlotte Hospital, Olsen is also an artist who was recently commissioned by Parks 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 quilt 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 take 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 Bessie. Also contributing to the design and sewing were IWA logscaler Betsy Cardel, retired forestry worker Dolores Davis and former playschool teacher Helen McPhee.

Rich in colour and wildlife imagery, the quilt is a "fabric frieze" with a con-

tinuing scene of outdoor life, all worked into Haida design. A forest of spruce and alder with ravens and woodpeckers gives way to an ocean with seagulls, 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 renaissance woman. Before arriving at Charlotte Hospital in 1990, 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 Jensen's *Salt Water Women*.

When the rental fees 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 unionized 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 pundits 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 aching from 3½ years of chopping health and social program transfer 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 1998/99, 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 where transfer payment cuts have hit hardest. In Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, victorious NDP candidate Wendy Lill said it was unacceptable that women have to choose between paying a fee for pap tests for cervical cancer and feeding their children.

On Cape Breton Island, health care worker and NDP candidate Michelle Bockrill retired health minister David Dingwall at the ballot box. She says that the Liberal betrayal of their 1993 jobs promise



#### 'The Liberals' credibility gap on health care came home to roost'

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 drowned out by Reform's controversial attack ads 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 new 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 Lill, Bockrill and HEU's own Libby Davies in a strengthened-NDP caucus, health care workers and other allies of universal health care can exploit the Liberal's 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.



# Labour

NOTEWORTHY NEWS ABOUT ISSUES AFFECTING WORKING PEOPLE HERE AND ABROAD

## 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 Gawthrop

**T**ONY BLAIR'S honeymoon period as Britain's new Labour 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 Rodney 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 Worker's 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 got back in, by now they would have announced the privatization of all social services," said Bickerstaff.

Instead, "new" Labour Prime Minister Blair wasted no time announcing his plan to establish a statutory minimum wage – the first in British history – 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 tightfisted approach. Apart from the moratorium on London hospital closures, he plans 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 building," 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. And according to Bickerstaff, the trade union share of votes at national party conventions – already reduced to 50 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. "But Blair wants to dispel the appearance that Labour is in the pocket of the unions. Over the next 10 years I suspect that trade unions 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

**'On their campaign literature, you could cross out 'New Labour' and put New Democrat'**

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 Camosun College political science instructor and former aide to NDP Premier Mike Harcourt and previous NDP leader Bob Skelly.

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



FRONT AND CENTRE HEU activists turned out in force for a Day of Justice rally May 3 in Victoria, joining workers, anti-poverty activists, students and retirees and others from across the country.

## 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 Shymko, 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 rid the Bay of discriminatory practices like assignments based on youth and beauty. "Department store workers are not models," says Shymko. "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 toll-free hotline: 1-800-229-8792. 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 2G2.



## Photographer depicts danger at work

Gallery 1199 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.



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

It's the first major examination of B.C.'s workers' compensation system in more than 30 years, and 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 working people 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 carnage. But employers are working 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 Sihota late 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. Its near completion of public hearings in communities across B.C.

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," Alhnut told royal commission members' judge Gurnall Gill, business representative Oksana Exell and former IWA-Canada president Gerry Soney.

"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 Alhnut, the commission heard from more than 35 HEU activists who made presentations at public



SOFT TISSUE injuries could be reduced if tougher prevention regulations mandated more mechanical lifts, above, so that caregivers didn't have to lift alone, right.

Alhnut said, noting that the present Workers' Compensation Act addresses health and safety in 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;
- enshrine individual and collective rights to refuse unsafe work.

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

The hearings across the province. The hearings started in April and will end later in July. Many more activists 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 mistreated by the WCB, of being in financial ruin before their claim was finally accepted.

Together with other CUPE municipal, school board, and library locals, CUPEHEU made by far the most commission presentations of any union.

"There's no question the Royal Commission was a priority for our union," Alhnut said. "We need to drive home the point about health and safety because the provincial government's performance on WCB issues during the last six years has been frankly quite poor."

A constant theme of HEU presentations was the need to enshrine health and safety regulations in law to exert legal pressure on employers to make workplaces safer.

"Workers in B.C. don't have the same legal health and safety protection as workers in other provinces,"

### Commission is first WCB review in 30 years

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.

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

Provincial court judge Gurnall S. Singh was appointed by then-labour minister Moe Sihota to head up the Royal Commission. He's joined by business rep Oksana Exell, and Gerry Soney, 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.

### '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 Alhnut 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 per cent 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 stricken 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

SHARPS have been one of the health and safety issues raised by HEU members.



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Yet, Alhnut points out, statistics show that the WCB prevention department received only two per cent of the board's budget in 1995.

In 1994, Alhnut acknowledged that inspection and enforcement activity in health care improved somewhat, which up until then had been practically nonexistent. But two years later, enforcement measures have been reduced and health care, with more than 10 per cent of all short term claims, receives only three per cent of all WCB inspection time.

He was also quite critical of the board's refusal to recognize workload as a health and safety issue.

"Health care workers — mostly women — are being injured because they're working short staffed," he said. "But the board tells us that patient/staff ratios are not a

### WHAT HEU ACTIVISTS ARE SAYING

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"In 1970, my father was taken away from me in a serious industrial accident. I don't remember too much of my childhood, but I do remember the day of my father's death ... 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."	TERESSA PRENTICE Queen's Park Local	"Although I finally received financial assistance, I feel I was subjected to unreasonable delay in the adjudication of my claim. I feel such an extent that I faced eviction from my apartment due to lack of funds. I was lied to and misled and [was] never told that the reason for my problem was that my employer opposed my claim."	EVA NEMETH Summerland Local
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health and safety problems. "If patients and their needs were an assembly line, the board would have shut down the factory a long time ago."

Trying to make a bad situation worse is the best way to describe the approach of employers to WCB reform. And the Health Employers' Association of B.C., the provincial body of government funded health facility employers, has played a leading role in the business community's mounting attack on the WCB that started with a campaign to deep-six ergonomics regulations two years ago.

Now employers have targeted the whole WCB for some significant rollbacks. Employers argue the board should not have a role in prevention and enforcement. Instead, the board should help employers educate workers about safety, with employers being self-regulated.

On the compensation front, employers are demanding that payment rates to injured workers be cut significantly. They claim that the current payment structure serves as a "disincentive" for injured workers to return to work. If the lower rates don't get injured workers back on the job faster, then the employers' proposal for a mandatory and employer-run return to work program would.

Some employers have even tried to shift responsibility



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### The boss makes her blood boil

Yvonne Stephens' blood was boiling in the Coast town of the North.

She'd just endured her employer's pitch to WCB royal commissioners in Prince George that outlined the boss' standard attack: reduced benefits, a waiting period before benefits start, reduced enforcement and penalties for workers who 'violate' regulations.

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

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 115 bed facility.

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

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# Prevention is the cure

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REPETITIVE strain injuries among HEU members is rampant.



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#### WORK ALONE IS UNSAFE

"Another cause of stress is having to work alone on night shift. We have casuals 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 broke out? There are industries that would never permit anyone to work alone, so why should care aides be any different? EVA NEMETH Summerland Local

#### YO-YO 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 physiotherapy." It's ironic that those who care for the sick and injured are the ones who get injured the most. MARGARET FEHR Burns Lake Local

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Some employers have even tried to shift responsibil-

ty for unsafe workplaces on to the backs of their employees.

"What employers are saying to the commission," says HEU's Allnutt, "is that to remain globally 'competitive' we need to gut our health and safety protections for workers."

"There's no question that the employers' agenda is part of the 'race to the bottom' mentality that's emerged under free trade."

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MIKE OLD PHOTO

**IF THE SHOE FITS** While Cicik Sikaesih, seen here at far left addressing the May 3 Day of Justice rally in Vancouver, suffers the consequences of speaking out for decent working conditions and pay at the Nike factory where she worked, Michael Jordan rakes in big bucks for spending a couple of days under hot camera lights extolling the virtues of Nike products. To be fair to Jordan, he is forced to wear Nike running shoes when he appears on TV.

## No fair, Nike!

*Indonesian Nike worker tours Canada to decry Nike labour practices abroad*

**C**ICIK SIKAESIH 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 Sikaesih so she could tell her story and garner support for a boycott of Nike products.

She speaks no English, but her presentation is sprinkled with words any Canadian worker would recognize: overtime, quota, target, subcontractor, mask. Listening to Sikaesih'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 — at a cost — lunch and living quarters. The shift was 10½ hours, with mandatory overtime. The U.S. \$2.10 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 two hours a day for a workforce of 6,000.

"After awhile we noticed that no matter what you went to see the doctor about, he would prescribe the same pills," said Sikaesih. If a worker was sick and went to see her own doctor, her pay would be docked. Perhaps even worse, the worker would be paraded 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.

### 'Nike's slogan 'Just Do It,' takes on sinister overtones'

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 sub-contractors to pay the annual wages of the company's 160,000 workers in Indonesia.

The factory where Sikaesih 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 Sikaesih and the 23 other workers were fired. She has not worked since.

An Indonesian court ordered the Nike contractor to reinstate Sikaesih and the other fired activists with back-pay, but it has refused to comply, and Nike has given it no direction to do so. The Supreme Court of Indonesia will review the case, and Nike is content 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.



Trim Bissell, chair of the Campaign for Labour Rights which also sponsored the tour, said, "Other companies are not necessarily better than Nike in their off-shore labour practices. But right now we are concentrating on Nike."

In November, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) group will meet at the University of British Columbia. Leaders from many countries, including Indonesia, will attend the conference. So will Canadian political bigwigs. A coalition of labour groups and non-governmental organizations will hold an alternative conference, the People's Summit on APEC, Nov. 17 to 24, to bring to light labour and human rights abuses of some of the countries attending the APEC conference.

## 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 recommended charges increased from 56 per cent in 1992 to 74 per cent 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, services to 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 women 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.

• For a copy of the Survey of Spousal Assaults Reported to Police in British Columbia 1993-1994, call Victoria (250) 356-9696 or Vancouver (604) 660-2604.

## Homophobic bigotry condemned

*HEU has condemned homophobic hatermongering in two recent cases of high-profile bigotry*

**O**N MAY 2, four members of the Simon Fraser Lodge local and HEU regional staff joined a crowd of 100 in Prince George for a candle-light vigil to protest an anti-gay conference organized by the ultra-right Citizen's Research Institute.

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

"[The vigil] was very positive," said long-term care aide Elizabeth Luthi, an ethnic diversity delegate to this

year's HEU equity conference. "I hope this will encourage our gay and lesbian members to come out and join the [equity] caucus."

Meanwhile, the Surrey school board's recent decision to ban three children's books about same-sex parents drew strong criticism from HEU president Fred Muzin.

"When official bodies such as yours do not proactively oppose discrimination, it permits and even encourages individual bias and systemic hatred," wrote Muzin, in a May 12 letter urging the board to reverse its decision. "Your vote will only lead to an increase in gay bashing and harassment."



## 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 unions' representative on the Thompson Regional Health Board. Her observations spurred Heather Pockett, a Kamloops LPN, to pen a response which appeared May 21 in the Kamloops Daily News, and which is excerpted here.

Cathy Ferguson states that the BCNU is concerned they are losing jobs to "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 intelligence. I do not consider myself a "lower-skilled worker," nor should anyone else within my profession. We are all qualified as LPNs and perform our skills within our scope of practice and code of ethics.

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



POCKETT

**'I am a licensed practical nurse by choice'**

Licensed practical nursing jobs have increased only slightly throughout the province, and I recognize this as regaining lost ground rather than replacing RNs with LPNs.

Licensed practical nurses are well trained to care for patients' medical and physical needs. We are responsible and liable for our actions and do not need to be supervised in carrying out these functions.

LPNs have not been permitted in most hospitals in B.C. to function at their highest capacity of skills. Now that some of those skills are being introduced in some hospitals, many RNs feel we are taking work away from them. This is not so, but in reality hospital policies are changing, permitting the LPN to perform skills she/he is trained for.

A comment Cathy Ferguson made was, "When a nurse does a menial task, for example a bed bath, she makes 100 assessments from mental to physical about that patient." The LPN does not consider a bed bath a "menial task," but feels it is a very important portion of daily care for every patient's well-being and recovery while in hospital.

We too make assessments of our patients while giving this care and it is our responsibility to report to the registered nurse any changes there might be.

Doctors and registered nurses have shared skills, as do registered nurses and licensed practical nurses. We are a team of health care workers, working together. I think BCNU, through local spokesperson Cathy Ferguson, should stop bashing the other health care workers they work side by side with and unite to form a stronger teamwork atmosphere in our forever changing health care system.

## Cathy Ferguson's answer

Regarding a letter to the editor by Heather Pockett:

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 li-

censed 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 was 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 under-

stand why licensed practical nurse Heather Pockett interpreted BCNU's campaign as "bashing 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.

Regrettably, the condensed version

does not accurately represent my views.

During my 22-year career as a registered nurse, I have always had the highest regard for licensed practical nurses. Likewise, 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 value or worth of any health care worker.

CATHY FERGUSON, RN,  
Kamloops, B.C.

## Four locals merge on Vancouver Island

Four Vancouver locals have merged to form a new local, 533 members strong. The new Juan de Fuca local incorporates the former Aberdeen, Glengarry, Mt. Tolmie and Priory locals.

Since the early '80s, when the employer amalgamated the four sites under the Juan de Fuca Society, the locals had a single certification, but remained separate, each with its own executive.

There were advantages and disadvantages in this arrangement. For example, the four locals could file a grievance together, and the employer was more likely to capitulate against such a united front.

"This was a good tactic for a

while," says Mike Davey, the chair of the newly merged local. "If there was a grievance meeting with the employer, people from all four locals would show up."

Good communication was fundamental for this to be effective, but often this broke down, sometimes right in the middle of grievance meetings.

According to Davey, "Of the four locals, there was always one that was dysfunctional. Sometimes the entire executive would resign."

Discussions began about a possible merger two years ago. But, says Davey, it wasn't "politically doable" at the time.

Eventually, the change was voted in. They drew up a memorandum of understanding detailing the terms for the merger and sent it to the Provincial Executive, which approved the merger on April 24, 1997.

Meanwhile, the merger of other locals is proceeding apace.

Some new locals that have been formed by mergers are: McBride/Valemount Local (McBride and Valemount); Mid-Island Care Givers Local (Bieringer Home, O'Connor, and J. Garnon Williams); Shuswap Local (Salmon Arm and Bastion); and Maple Park Local (Parkridge and Maple Ridge Intermediate).

### New local has homepage

The new Juan de Fuca Local #6067 has set up its own communications committee and has a homepage on the World Wide Web.

Call [www.bcl.com/users/heu](http://www.bcl.com/users/heu) and you'll find HEU's logo, the local executive, collective agreement and local bulletins.

The homepage was designed mostly by local executive member Jerry Bell.

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

Many HEU members were upset and angered by the flashy BCNU media advertising blitz that included slick newspaper inserts and television spots rumoured to have cost more than \$500,000.

In a measured response to the BCNU May 22, HEU's secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt called on the registered nurses' union to pull the plug on the campaign, which has insulted 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, Allnutt points out, by the nurses' union's own admission, it's also to expand the roles 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 Allnutt in the letter, "but inaccurate, and all health workers including RNs know that."

"At this very crucial time, when medicare is under attack and when

health care workers should be working together and building alliances, this kind of campaign is standing in the way," he said.

Allnutt 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 issues.

**'Together, we have a window of opportunity here in B.C.'**

"Together, we have a window of opportunity here in B.C. to redesign nursing and patient care staff ratios in acute and long-term care, where rising acuity levels and understaffing persist," Allnutt says.

"We can expand the role of RNs to perform tasks now the domain of physicians, let LPNs work to the full scope of practice, provide skills-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*

**D**ESPITE rosy 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/Richmond Health Board, medical health 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 sharing 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 gutted 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.

## Kamloops members are coping with multi-skilling plan

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

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 wanted guarantees of no job losses and new skills training opportunities for employees.

Management argued that by combining the distribution, housekeeping, food and nutrition departments, 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 33 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 Bernardo. "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.



**NOT EXACTLY MOUTH-WATERING** Since shutting down their own kitchen and entering into a joint cook-chill agreement with Burnaby Hospital, Lions Gate Hospital food service quality has plummeted while costs have soared by 26 per cent.

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

- "During my stays in hospital, the medical services and staff remain excellent, but the food has declined to a level which is almost intolerable."

- "... toast, soggy and limp; french toast, like foam rubber; cream of wheat 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 tastebuds toe tapping, does it? Sounds more like an ailment peculiar to kitchen staff."



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

## 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 at 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 Mabbott. "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 piloted 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 seconded 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.



## Maalox Marriott dishes up indigestion for future 'associates'

by Don Payzant

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-hood, Marriott style.

Yes Marriott, the U.S. hotel giant with a lowly management services division operating in prisons, schools and all too many publicly-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 gristle and wilted lettuce.

Despite a huge infrastructure and alleged experience running hospital kitchens, Marriott is short on specific policies and procedures 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 working 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. Fire 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 supposedly 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'**

- Inefficiency increases. Both senior employees and new employees are under added stress while contract managers build a case for further contracting out because of inefficiencies they helped create.

For union reps, expect delays, foot dragging, cancelled meetings, and lots of unreturned phone calls. One particular renovation never stated in any Marriott contract is the installation of a revolving door on the director's office. Marriott uses frequent staff turnovers to delay grievances and renege on agreements, while treating public hospitals as training centres for their greener management colleagues.

If they can't lay you off, they make sure not as many of you work every day. LOA and EDO day present an opportunity to double up, compress, recombine, or otherwise keep all of you Marriott associates overworked. Sick time increases. If senior employees quit, it relieves the hospital of more expensive benefits. They also try to create as many part-time jobs as possible, contributing to a rise in staff turnover, one of many ways employers weaken unions.

Mix equal parts nonexistent policies, under-training, short staffing and poor labour relations. Shake vigorously and pour generously on the shop floor and you have a serious rise in injuries. Health and safety hazards are frequently delayed or ignored unless ongoing pressure from the union forces Marriott to act.

Cheap food for patients, expensive food for sale to staff and visitors, and cheap supplies that tear easier and become more diluted over time.

Why this trail of destruction doesn't make it into Marriott sales presentations isn't surprising. Why so many hospital administrators are suddenly inflicted with dialling finger paralysis and can't reach Marriott's unsatisfied customers is an awfully strange coincidence.

Why Marriott managers are not required to hand out free Maalox to their current "associates" is a shame.

• Payzant is a Children's Local member.

## Starbucks battle brews

STARBUCKS' once-proud reputation for progressive politics – already suffering from a nasty contract dispute with CAW 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.

HEU is resisting a management proposal by Richmond Hospital to have Starbucks run a kiosk in a new building at the public facility. The idea was apparently proposed by private contractor Marriott, whose contract with the hospital allows it to "manage" food services. The hospital now claims that the Starbucks workers would be Marriott employees.

"I am 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 29 letter to hospital board chair John Furlong. "Although the union does not approve of Marriott as management in the hospital... we do not dispute the hospital's right to hire such a company to manage. We do, however, dispute their right to hire employees that are not our union members to do our bargaining unit work."

Love told the *Guardian* that CAW Local 3000 – which represents the 120 Starbucks employees at eight Lower Mainland outlets and the Burnaby distribution centre – is applying through the Labour Relations Board to get sectoral bargaining rights to all Starbucks outlets in the Lower Mainland. Meanwhile, the B.C. Federation of Labour has called for a Starbucks boycott in the event of a strike.

"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 Furlong, urging the hospital to keep all revenues in the health care sector. Love's point is well-taken. Other hospitals which run their own coffee kiosks make tens thousands of dollars which they are then able to plow back into hospital services.

To resist Starbucks' encroachment on hospital turf, the union has produced a handbill message (We can brew it better) for HEU, HSA and BCNU members to send to Richmond Hospital administration and board. "We got about 1,000 of them signed," said Love. "If they do put it in, we'll pamphlet everyone who buys coffee. The majority of the membership is behind us."

## 20/40/40 is the key

### 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 Seaton Commission recommended that the Ministry of Health require the use of LPNs in acute and long-term care, this recommendation has largely been ignored. The Ministry of Health's Funding Methodology Committee's review on the extended care funding model advocated increased RN staffing, but ignored the role of LPNs.

The 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, psychogeriatric care, geropharmacology and community care. LPNs already spend one-third of their training studying gerontology and doing practicum placements in extended and long-term care facilities.

HEU secretary business manager Chris Allnutt 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



DEBRA ROONEY GRAPHIC

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.

**'The formula is based on a model which has been in use in New Brunswick since 1993'**

HEU argues that the same plan is feasible in B.C., especially since the course of study for care aides is 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 put forth its arguments for the consideration of the 20/40/40 mix in B.C.'s long-term care facilities.



## JULY 1

Canada Day, office closed.

## JULY 2-10

HEU summer school, UBC campus, Vancouver.

## JULY 5-9

Summer Institute for Union Women, SFU campus, Burnaby.

## SEPTEMBER 9/10

HEU intro OH&S course, Northern region, Prince George.

## SEPTEMBER 16/17

HEU intro OH&S course, Kootenay region, Cranbrook.

## SEPTEMBER 22/23

HEU Wage & Policy Conference, Vancouver.

## OCTOBER 7/8

HEU intro OH&S course, Lower Mainland, Vancouver.

## OCTOBER 8/9

HEU bargaining preparation meetings kick off in the Kootenay region, Nelson.

# Fine tuning, American style

by Dale Fuller

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

It was the first of many trips, and after 600 Americans had enjoyed the hospitality of *los cubanos*, it became evident that Clinton's government was not taking the bait.

But the American government hadn't counted on Benjamin Treuhaft, piano tuner.

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

While other tourists on that first trip toured daycare centres and hospitals, Treuhaft cornered the hotel pianist, 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.

Treuhaft 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 thumbing 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 fast food joints in Cuba to the American Office of Foreign Assets 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 sardonic *San Francisco Chronicle* columnist, "Our leaders in Washington now believe they can bring the Cuban people to their knees by forcing them to listen to out-of-tune pianos."

Last summer Treuhaft wrote to Treasury stating that he intended to continue returning to Cuba to check on his project, which now included train-

ing Cubans in the subversive art of piano tuning.

Several other piano tuners had enlisted in the by now international brigade, including five from Canada. This was getting out of hand.

The government issued a cease and desist order and

increased the fine to \$1.3 million.

Shortly afterwards, Treuhaft sent a container-load of pianos which had been donated to his project, now dubbed "Send a Piano to Havana."

In March of this year he was notified by his lawyer that the Treasury Department had offered to settle for \$3,500.

His lawyer recommended that he accept the offer. Treuhaft countered, "Does that mean they pay me \$3,500? Otherwise no deal."

He is waiting to hear back from Treasury and is still tuning "pianos in Havana."



## HEU LESBIANS AND GAYS

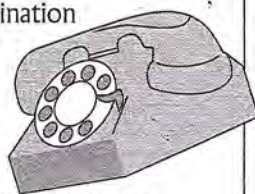
### for support

- afraid of being identified?
- feeling isolated?
- being harassed?
- want to know your rights?

### for information

- same sex benefits
- fighting harassment
- combatting homophobia
- fighting discrimination

CALL! 739-1514 (Lower Mainland)  
1-800-663-5813, local 514



Confidential Service of HEU Lesbian and Gay Caucus

## Welcome to three new locals

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

Columbia Valley Homemakers' Local is a home support non-profit in the community subsector. This local is in Invermere and has 11 members. Discussions on merging with another local are pending.

Parksville's McCarter Local is also a

home support society. It was certified in September 1995, 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 Rest Home in New Westminster. It is a mental health/residential care/group home and consists of 11 new members. It won its union certification in May.

## Coffee break



All stories guaranteed factual.  
Sources this issue: CALM,  
Financial Times, Latin Trade,  
Staff Nurses Assoc. of Alberta,  
Vancouver Sun, Sunday Times

### Longest-serving union member gets 70-year pin

Willie Cossette, 99, of Montreal 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 Cossette joined the union in 1925, he earned \$28 a month, and paid \$1.25 in union dues. At 56 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 1975 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

bears his name have voted to join the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW).

It's not the first time that Tim Horton's employees have unionized. In Sudbury, workers at one site are already under an RWDSU-UFCW contract.

In Saint John, N.B., another UFCW local applied to represent 60 workers at five locations in the city. Twelve of those workers were fired after they were overheard discussing a union. The owner said the firings were just seasonal layoffs. The women workers responded with an unfair dismissal suit and picket lines.

### A bunch of bull

The arrival of Cristina Sanchez in the male world of the bullring has many in Spain poo-pooing the idea of a woman being a matador de toros — a bullfighter. In Burgos, where she is booked to fight at the end of June, she has had trou-



ble getting other star bullfighters, all male, to take part in the same program. One popular male matador, who has a large following among Spanish women, has refused to appear on the same bill as Sanchez.

Last year, when she was first presented in Madrid's Las Ventas bullring, she was heckled, even by the women.

### It's not the call, it's the image

Chilean police cracked down on the use of cell phones by drivers in Santiago's wealthy sub-

urbs only to discover that almost one out of three were fakes.

"I do it just to look cool," said one embarrassed driver. In Chile, you have to have a cell phone to get ahead, said another, who added that using a fake was cheaper than the real thing.

Some cell phone companies, breaking into the market, gave newly-elected congress members their very own model. A senator or deputy with a cell phone glued to his or her ear became a popular symbol of Chile's new democracy.

### Calgary entrepreneur starts Holiday Inn health care

Catering to what its ambitious new managing director Joanne Weninger calls the "post-surgical and post-childbirth market," the Recovery Inn has opened its first privatized health care business in an annex to a Calgary Holiday Inn.



# HEU people

## 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 Barbara, who will be missed.

## Kwan will travel after Barriere retirement

Barriere House attendant Wanda Kwan retired for medical reasons in January.

She includes 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 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 Leida Crick finished work two months earlier and LPN Geraldine Rodger retired on Halloween.

Watzig spent 18½ 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.

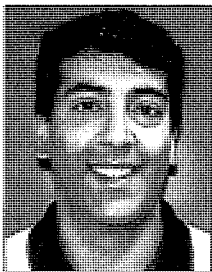
For 14 years Remple worked as a nurses aide and then switched to the hospital laundry in 1992.

Her HEU sisters and brothers congratulate her on 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



GILL



ROSENTHAL

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.

She was the business agent at CUPE Local 2950 for 2½ years. Prior to that Rosenthal was in private practice as a lawyer, specializing in human rights, criminal and immigration law.



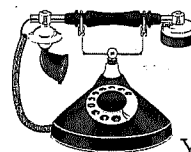
Menno local activists marked the retirement of long-time member Joyce Remple with a special dinner event to wish her the best for the future.

## PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES ... TALK TO US

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

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

HEU  
People with  
Disabilities  
Caucus



## 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  
1-800-663-5813

PROVINCIAL OFFICE  
Abbotsford site  
1-800-404-2020

VANCOUVER ISLAND OFFICE  
Victoria  
1-800-742-8001

NORTHERN OFFICE  
Prince George  
1-800-663-6539

OKANAGAN OFFICE  
Kelowna  
1-800-219-9699

KOOTENAY OFFICE  
Nelson  
1-800-437-9877

Weninger, a former critical care nurse, defends the new concept with a litany of Orwellian euphemisms. "New financial realities and major technological advances in medical care have impacted all health care consumers who are now required to take on more responsibility for their health," she says. "Being functionally connected to a hotel whose core competency is providing a pristine facility, good food, and relaxing atmosphere, makes it a natural partner."

The *Guardian* is willing to wager that Weninger's staff won't be unionized.

## E-mail bullies rage on

More than half of the 1,000 workers polled in a recent survey by Novell UK say they are regular recipients of obnoxious, abusive e-mail – most of it courtesy of their bosses and immediate managers.

The report, *Blaming and Flaming: Miscommunication in the Digital Age*, says that abusive e-mail can lead to stress and loss of productivity. Some respondents even report having lost their jobs because of e-mail bullying by their employer.

## BCTV's Parsons has a distinct anti-union bias

BCTV news anchor Tony Parsons isn't looking forward to delivering his nightly broadcast from a unionized news room.

The province's largest private broadcaster ended a 30-year battle in May by voting 34-21 to join the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union. The station's reporters, editors, researchers and most anchors will join the 130 camera operators and technical staff who are already part of the union.

Parsons, who is part of management, will not join the

union. Ten years ago, he said: "It [a union] doesn't work, it can't work and I could not work under that much frustration."

No doubt Parsons would deny that his anti-union bias affects his news judgement.

## Try surfing for workplace beefs

Workers needing to vent their frustrations now have a web site.

*Disgruntled: The Business Magazine for People Who Work for a Living*, includes a discussion group called "Gripe and Groan," with topics like "Employer/Employee Relations, Revenge Fantasies, The Never-ending Work Day and Ridiculous Company Policies." This month's readers' section includes testimonies like "Roasting Turkey: The Biggest Turkey I Ever Worked For."

Netsurfers can find this U.S. based web site at: [www.disgruntled.com](http://www.disgruntled.com).

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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 \$8,500 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:



## STRAWBERRY CAMPAIGN ENDORSEMENT

### I ENDORSE THE STRAWBERRY WORKERS' RIGHT TO:

- ☐ a living wage
- ☐ toilets in the fields
- ☐ job security
- ☐ health insurance
- ☐ an end to sexual harassment and abuses

### I URGE THE STRAWBERRY INDUSTRY TO RECOGNIZE THE RIGHTS OF STRAWBERRY WORKERS.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Title \_\_\_\_\_  
Organization \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ Prov. \_\_\_\_\_ Code \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

MAIL TO: UFW c/o USWA, 25 Cecil Street, Toronto, Ontario M5T 1N1, Phone: 416.598.4954, Fax: 416.977.9591

# Guardian



VOL. 15 NO 3

THE VOICE OF THE HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

MAY /JUNE 1997

## 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.



PAGE 8

## 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.



PAGE 10

## 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.



PAGE 12

## Cubans stay tuned

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



PAGE 14

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