



What we'll be doing next

As this issue of the *Guardian* goes to press, your bargaining committee is deep into negotiating new contracts for 95 per cent of HEU members. The facility sector negotiations began on Jan. 15, while community sector bargaining began on Feb. 10. Bargaining will soon begin for HEU and the other health care unions at the nurses, paramedics and social services tables.

All HEU communications resources are going to be dedicated to bargaining support in the immediate future, so this will be the last issue of the *Guardian* for awhile. But you can stay up to date with what is happening in a variety of ways: phone the hotline (see

page S4), read the regular bargaining bulletins or, you can surf the Internet and find us – and all our latest updates – at <http://www.heu.org>.

There will be bargaining in the workplace events, focussing on individual bargaining demands as negotiations progress. For example, on Feb. 12 we highlighted the issue of winning better benefits for our members on long-term disability. The silhouettes of heads symbolizing our disabled workers were an in-your-face reminder, as our members staged rallies and other events around the province, holding the silhouettes or “planting” them in the ground in front of their workplaces.

As in the past rounds of bargaining, HEU is producing a theatre performance to support bargaining. The show, which brings to the stage our bargaining issues and our workplace realities, will tour the province from March 13 through April 17, hitting as many locals as possible. Watch for details in your local and in our communications. If you get a chance to go and see this thoroughly entertaining, but informative, production, by all means, do so. And bring your family and friends. The public needs to know what we are up against, too!

Hopefully, with the next issue, we'll be back on your doorstep with an in-depth report on your new contract.

Guardian



HEALTH WORKERS
THE heart
OF HEALTH CARE

THE VOICE OF THE HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

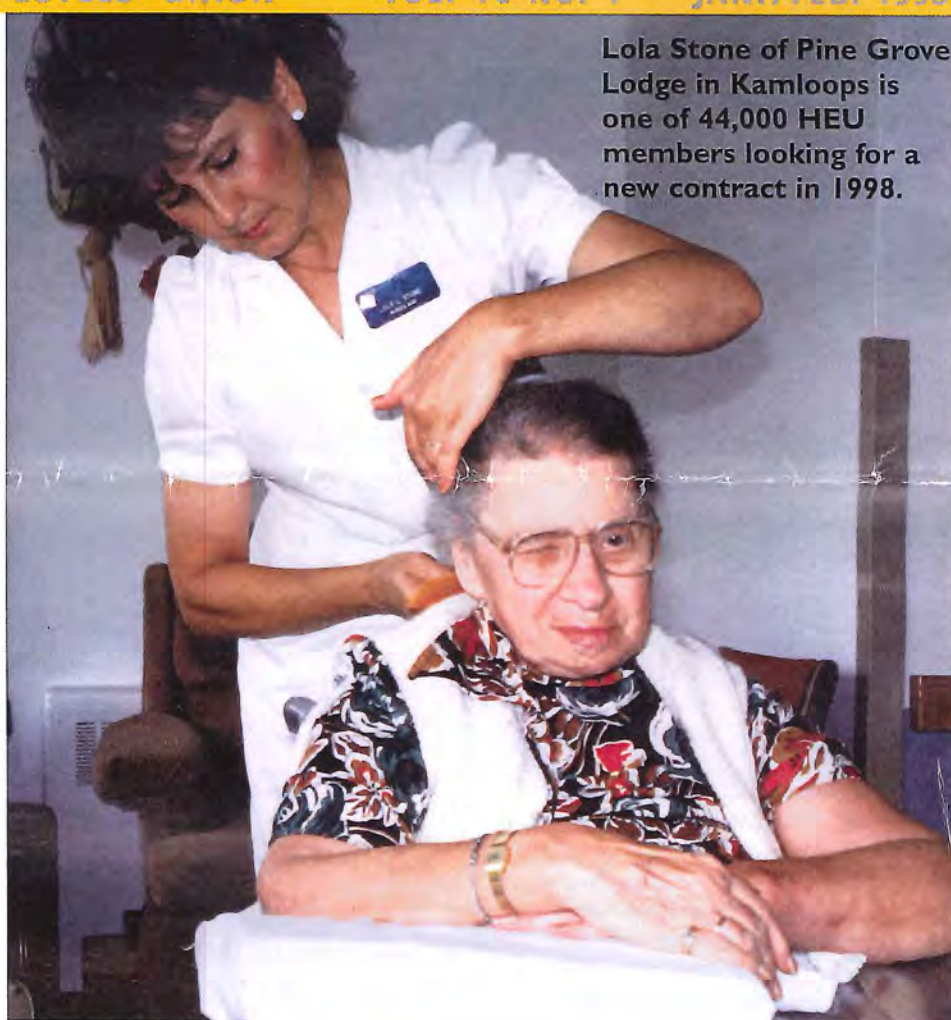
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We're at the table

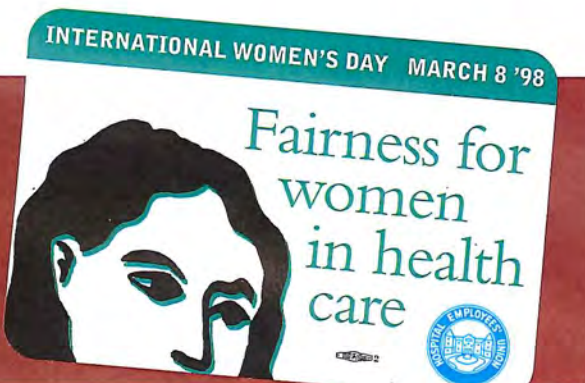
HEU headed to the facilities bargaining table on Jan. 15, and then to the community table on Feb. 10. HEU members will be represented for the first time at the paramedical and nurses' tables.

SPECIAL BARGAINING SUPPLEMENT INSIDE



Lola Stone of Pine Grove Lodge in Kamloops is one of 44,000 HEU members looking for a new contract in 1998.

International Women's Day has its roots deep in the last century. PAGE 3



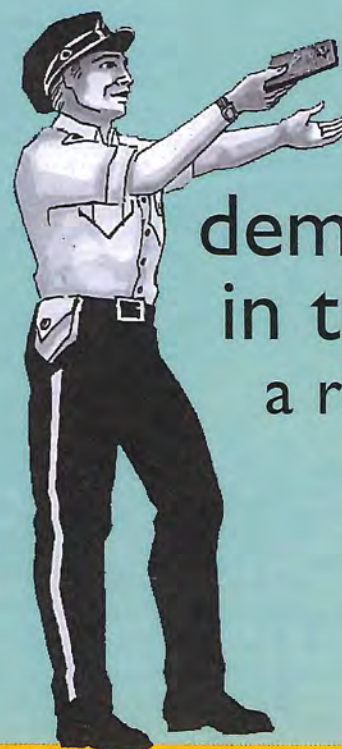
DALE FULLER PHOTO



'Oh no, not the banks!'

Thousands of students across Canada protested the high cost of education and their crippling debts.

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democracy in trouble: a report on the MAI

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COMMENT

Employers' old habits die hard

IT'S AT A CRITICAL crossroads for B.C.'s health care system that we find ourselves once again, across the bargaining table from the Health Employers Association of B.C. In this round, it was our hope that the employer would be up to the task we have set for ourselves – bargain collective agreements that strengthen Medicare and facilitate progressive health care reform.

Our bargaining proposals support these goals by dealing head on with the effects of health care restructuring and regionalization while at the same time looking out for the interests of our members. While others, like the B.C. Medical Association and the Fraser Institute, foment crises in the health care system, we aim to construct solutions at the bargaining table that improve the quality of the health care services our members deliver.

The HEABC, which now represents regional health boards and community health councils, should have an interest in developing a common bargaining agenda based on a shared desire to make health care reform work.

Regretably, it appears the employers' approach has not evolved in a manner that addresses the bigger health care picture. Instead, HEABC has tabled proposals more in keeping with the Jurassic tendencies of their HLRA, CCERA and Pricare ancestors.

The first sign that old habits die hard came at the community sector table Feb. 10 with HEABC tabling proposals that would entrench



this sector.

Then on Feb. 16, HEABC reinforced its concessions agenda by tabling a focussed set of takeaway proposals. Under the misleading heading of *Commitment to Health Care Reform* the employer proposes to restrict bumping rights, penalize casual workers when they're not available for work, increase the job vacancy period and keep certain discipline on personnel files forever.

And under the mislabelled heading *Refocus Priorities for Patients, Residents and Clients*, HEABC has outlined a series of concessions

'The HEABC should have an interest in developing a common bargaining agenda to make health care reform work'

that reduce benefits for injured workers, restrict special leave, reduce vacation time for long-time workers and freeze wages.

HEABC's first moves are disappointing but

they only increase our resolve to achieve fairness in health care by building unity between community and facility caregivers from all the health care unions.

HEABC's opening positions also give us reason to redouble our efforts to reach out to those progressive health care employers around the province whose views are not being reflected in HEABC's bargaining proposals.

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.

He says health care reform is bad medicine

The union suffers from contradictory policies. On the one hand policy from the last convention opposes corporate incursions into health care. On the other it supports the health care "reform," in my view a corporate plan to privatize public health care.

The Commission on Health Care and Costs was set up by the Social Credit government. Its key recommendation was the downsizing of acute care because doctors were abusing the system.

So the NDP government decided to slowly dismantle acute care facilities and create an amorphous community network.

Such a network might be a fine addition to our existing system, if publicly owned, democratically controlled, and unionized.

Continued cutbacks in acute care

have laid the groundwork for private companies to move in and offer care for profit.

The Shaughnessy Hospital closure was the opening shot in the "restructuring" process. The Accord protected most of the Shaughnessy workers and health workers generally across the province from downsizing effects.

But Shaughnessy is now 80 to 90 per cent occupied by Children's and Women's Health Centre and renovations have not stopped since the closure. The NDP government stopped the plan when they realized the buildings could be used.

The government is still hell-bent on this "reform." The union is supporting the overall plan because of the Accord and because the NDP is implementing it.

Admittedly the Reform and Liberal parties are likely to push "reform" harder without an Accord.

Even health care boards' restructuring, which is being endorsed by the health care unions, are virtually no different than the previous boards. They are

corporate dominated, especially where it counts like in Vancouver-Richmond. Union representation on those appointed boards is pure tokenism.

The union's support for the so-called "reform" is not in our interest. The policy is bankrupt on almost all counts through more staff cutbacks, restraint, and increased workload. It will lead to the destruction of the public system and corporate takeover for profit.

PETER MARCUS,
Transportation Attendant,
Children's Local

No kudos from LPN

I just read some of the kudos in the *Guardian*. I for one don't have any.

In 1975 when I joined Cariboo Memorial Hospital as an LPN, there were at least 15 LPNs on surgery, medical beds, OPD and maternity. Gradually we were left only on surgical and medical.

Less than two years ago there were five full-time and two part-time LPNs on medical. Low and behold there were further cutbacks to only two full-time and one part-time LPN on med-surgery.

There was a token effort on HEU executive's part to "save" our jobs. Instead there should have been walkouts and other more aggressive protests – not just token whimpers.

I had over three months medical leave because I was so devastated to be losing work I wanted to do. I was too traumatized to fight, too demoralized. At that time I had no

moral support from my local union.

I opted to go into laundry – the least drop of pay. I did my best to adjust, but mental and verbal harassment by a few made that difficult.

I have persevered. I am bitter and disappointed. Now we have only one LPN on day shift.

Perhaps HEU could better spend our high union dues to save our jobs instead of buying new buildings and other pet projects.

OLLIE MARTENS,
LPN/Laundry Aide,
Cariboo Memorial Hospital

Protect my privacy, but ...

Regarding the article in the November/December issue, *LTD Alert*, and a member being videotaped, I am strongly in favour of privacy and will protect my rights for same.

However, with abuse of sick time, WCB, LTD, etc., I will continue to be in support of any insurance company videotaping a person on LTD or WCB injury.

At one hospital where I worked, a person was on LTD for back injury and he was videotaped roofing a house. I see no violation of a person's rights in this instance.

J.B. LATHAM,
Housekeeping Aide,
Surrey Memorial Hospital

• Letters from our readers are welcome. They may be edited for brevity and clarity. You can send them by mail, e-mail, or fax to 604-739-1526.

Guardian

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

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What we're up to

International Women's Day

The B.C. Federation of Labour will hold its regional women's conference called Union Women: Visions of Equality, starting on the evening of March 5. It will finish on March 7, joining other community organizations for the traditional march and rally at Robson Square. There will be celebrations all across the province and the country, but those were not firmed up at publication time.

The first IWD march was held on March 8, 1907 in New York City, where women presented a list of demands, some of which have been honoured and some of which women are still fighting for: an end to the practice of child labour, improvements in dangerous working conditions in the sweatshops, a fair day's pay, an end to pay inequities, and the right to vote.

Women from 17 countries passed a resolution at the 2nd International Conference of Socialist Women, held in Germany in 1910, to officially mark March 8 as IWD. It didn't catch on in North America until the 1960s.

In 1977 the United Nations resolved to celebrate a day of "women's rights and international peace," without naming a specific day. March 8 was already a de facto IWD, so most nations now observe it on this day.



The presentation of the cheque was an important event in the community, and José Monzón, Dr. Noel Rodríguez, and Dr. Vila Bany Reyes were surrounded by neighbours of the clinic.

Our man in Guatemala

Recently Tilbury maintenance worker José Monzón traveled to his native Guatemala. While there he visited the Clínica Médica San José in Mazatenango to deliver a cheque for \$3,792.67 from the brothers and sisters of HEU.

Doctor Vila Bany Reyes was very proud to show Monzón the work done thanks to the previous contribution in 1992, which had been delivered by brother Bill Macdonald. With it they built a bedroom for their resident nurse and water and electricity systems for the clinic.

"It was a very emotional moment when we saw José, because for many years we did not receive any information from you," Dr. Reyes wrote to HEU financial secretary Mary LaPlante.

"With this new money we are going to see how we can bring some medical supplies and some beds to our clinic because we really need more equipment."

Port Alberni doesn't forget its own

The week of Nov. 17 to 21 was staff appreciation day at West Coast General Hospital in Port Alberni.

At a staff dinner, long term staff members received pins for 10, 15 and 20 years of service. In the case of 25-year employees, a watch or a clock was presented.

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Boss' \$10 million LTD raid is unjust

A PRE-BARGAINING raid by health employers of \$10 million from the surplus in the health care long-term disability plan has been sharply criticized by HEU. "It's nothing short of immoral," says HEU bargaining spokesperson Chris Allnutt.

Allnutt says the surplus — achieved through strong 1997 returns in LTD fund investments — should have gone towards improving the benefits paid to the 3,000 disabled health workers who are on LTD, 2,200 of whom are HEU members. Employers will siphon off the \$10 million by giving themselves a LTD premium holiday for three months.

'It's nothing short of immoral'

LTD recipients receive two-thirds of their income at the time of their disability, and under the existing contract language don't receive any increase over their monthly payments.

"Hundreds of disabled workers are locked into benefit levels that leave them living below the poverty line," says Allnutt, who notes that the LTD plan covering senior health bosses pays much higher benefit levels and is fully indexed to inflation.

In a warning to the health employers' body, Allnutt pledged "this is an injustice we're going to end in bargaining."



TWO THOUSAND STRONG Students marched through downtown Vancouver as part of the Jan. 28 National Day of Action. Along the way, they stopped at the Royal Bank and deposited "Notices of Bankruptcy." Inset: Darryl Flasch of Dogwood Lodge, a student at Douglas College, and a recipient of the health care scholarship, was a marshal at the event.

Increase health funding, says poll

by Stephen Howard

Amid growing concern over the state of Medicare in B.C., an HEU-commissioned opinion poll shows there's strong public support for increased health funding, and approval for a raise for caregivers, even if it means Victoria has to back out of its balanced budget plan.

The poll — completed Jan. 19 by the Vancouver

firm of McIntyre and Mustel — found eight out of 10 British Columbians fear Medicare is in danger. That concern translated into high levels of support for increased health funding, with two out of every three British Columbians agreeing more funding should take priority over the NDP's balanced budget commitment.

On the wage front, while opinion was evenly divided over whether health care workers would be able to achieve a pay boost in 1998 bargaining. But when asked what would be the fair thing to happen, 71 per cent said caregivers' wages should increase. And, 62 per cent of the public feels wage boosts should take priority over deficit reduction.

"We're definitely pleased with both the funding and wage increase results," says HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt. "It's a sign of the respect that health workers have earned as they keep Medicare going through some tough times. Victoria lacks support for a continued wage freeze."

Allnutt says the poll sends a strong message. "British Columbians' first priority is to maintain strong social programs like health and education," he said. "They don't want our social deficit to increase just to solve the fiscal one."

Doctors threaten work stoppage

Claiming that the Medical Services Plan is underfunded, the B.C. Medical Association has announced plans to withdraw services for three days in March. But the HEU says the doctors' organization is out of touch with most British Columbians.

The BCMA threat coincides with a Medical Services Commission recommendation of a hefty 3.7 per cent fee increase for doctors in 1998/99, and the eve of withdrawal of services by 22 northern doctors.

An HEU-sponsored poll conducted in January shows that four out of five British Columbians believe that doctors need to present a more moderate voice and provide concrete solutions to health care issues.

And according to the poll, over half of the public's opinions of the BCMA have fallen as a result of their support for two-tiered health care.

The B.C. Ministry of Health says public spending on doctors through the MSP has risen 18 per cent since 1992 to \$1.4 billion.

WHAT WE'RE UP TO



Peer counsellors offer health care workers who are facing changes in their work life the opportunity to discuss their work situation, training and educational needs and employment goals. Peer counsellors Kate Marleau, Vivian Smith and Patricia Charter, pictured here at the 1997 Wage Policy Conference, received their training from HLAA in September, and are now qualified to counsel their co-workers.

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In keeping with the spirit of things, the HEU local decided to recognize those members who are off on long-term disability benefits, and no longer at the workplace.

"There are a lot of people who have been on LTD for years," said Gay Sopow, local chair. "Many of the people who are relatively new don't even know who these people are."

So, the local made up a pamphlet to acknowledge those people. Along with their names, the pamphlet outlines some of the struggles that people on LTD encounter.

"As we all are just one accident or illness away from being in similar circumstances, it is imperative that the membership strongly supports the union's demands on long-term disability issues during the upcoming round of bargaining," states the

pamphlet, which was handed out by payroll staff, along with pay stubs.

Rachlis to help unions map out 'third way'

Concerned by the direction regional health board reviews

of acute care services are taking, the HEU, BCNU, and HSA have hired health reform expert Dr. Michael Rachlis to help develop progressive proposals for new integrated delivery models that combine the best care features of acute care with those of the community.

The Toronto-based author of two best selling books, Rachlis met with activists, staff, and elected leaders of the three unions at a day-long seminar

Jan. 27 to map out preliminary plans.

He'll return later in February to meet with the same group to refine proposals for what's called the "third way" of delivering services that meets the challenge of integrating community and acute services.

The three unions have embarked on the initiative because of concern over a number of regional health board reviews of acute care services that are narrowly focussed on significant reductions of hospital beds and

ignore how the public's changing health care needs will be met.

"Sometimes I think it's 'health deform,'" says Rachlis of restructuring trends across Canada.



RACHLIS

Quilts with a message

Clear meanings and hidden symbolism are both part of the art of quilt making

by Dale Fuller

JOANNE URSINO is a maker of quilts. At first glance, you would say that her quilts are not traditional — they deliver a clear political message. However, it is her contention that women have been using quilts to express their point of view for centuries.

During the Civil War in the United States, women sewed quilts showing what side they were on in the conflict. When women could not vote in an election, and especially when the Suffragette movement was in full swing, women produced quilts which said "I would vote that way, if I could vote," etc.

Ursino also says that African American women were beautiful quilters, but not many examples of their work survived. "This is simply because they used their quilts. They weren't put on display or in a hope chest, which was so often the case with others," says Ursino.

So, when Ursino began to work on quilts with a political message, she felt that she was carrying on a tradition, rather than coming up with a new idea.

She began quilting after a personal tragedy. "I needed time to put things together again. I took a quilting course where I met a lot of wonderful women. But mostly I discovered that it was a place of peace for me," she says. She loved working with the colours and designs, and has been quilting ever since.

Ursino moved to B.C. about a year-and-a-half ago from Ottawa. She is a regional employment equity consultant for Human Resources Development Canada. She helps employers who do work for the federal government to set up their employment equity programs: making sure they will be able to comply with the government's requirements in hiring women, people with disabilities, First Nations people, people of colour, etc.

She is a union activist in the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC). When the federal government was ordered to implement employment equity itself, she took time off her job in 1995, and periodically between 1993 and 1996, to help her union put together its demands on employment equity.

Her activism and her quilting came together during the PSAC strike in 1991. Ursino and the other women designed and made a banner based on a theme of respect and equity which they were emphasizing in their demands. They carried it to Parliament

Hill, and when the strike was over, they hung it over the entry to their workplace and passed under it to go back to work.

"That was the first big banner I made, and these quilts are like big banners, really," says Ursino.

She has three quilting projects on the go at the moment. All of them are works in progress.

The first is a quilt commemorating the PSAC regional and national women's conferences. "We have conferences in each region which lead up to the national conference," she says. The project started at the 1996 conferences. Women, provided with a square of fabric, wrote something of importance or interest to them. Over 700 women participated at the regional level. Afterwards, the women attending the national conference signed what would become the side borders of the quilt, bringing the total to 900 women. This quilt is the nearest to completion and will measure nine feet by 11 by the time it is finished.

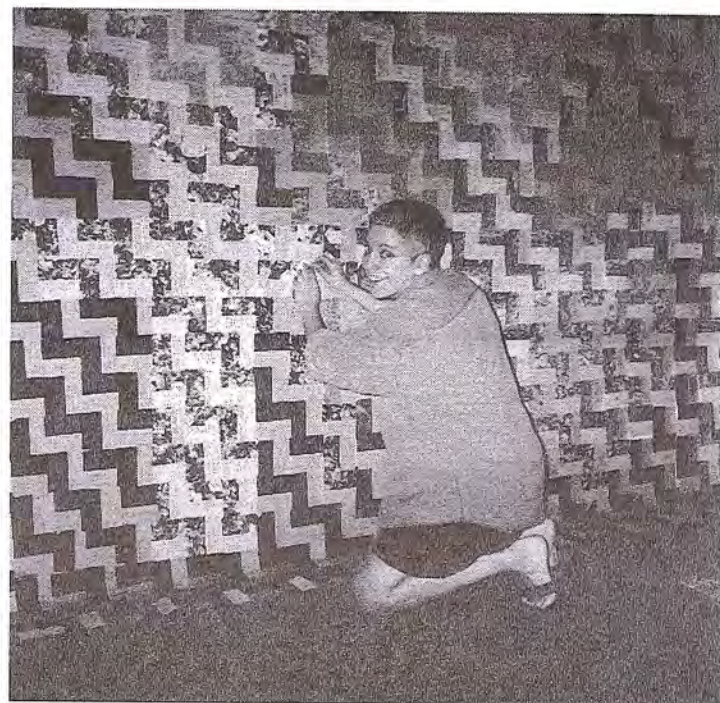
The second quilt celebrates the National Women's March on Poverty in 1996.

Ursino is doing this quilt in collaboration with Alice Olsen Williams, a First Nations quilter from Curve Lake in On-

BALANCING



IT ALL



AGAINST THE WALL The pieces are arranged by Ursino on a large piece of flannel before being sewn together.

tario. There are "signature patches" which were gathered from the women at the completion of the march on June 14, 1996, and there are photographs taken along the way on the march.

The third quilt is in honour of the first national conference for gay and lesbian trade unionists. This unusual quilt will be in the shape of a triangle. The colour scheme is based on the rainbow, the symbol of the gay and lesbian movement. Some of the triangle patches will have signatures of participants in the

conference, and some will record the history of the movement.

She sees the quilts as perfect illustrations of how little bits and pieces of people's lives, when put together, make up the "big picture." Besides, she says, what is nice about quilts is that they are warm and comforting — she likes that.

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



THE THREE WOMEN'S SYMBOLS in this quilt commemorating the PSAC women's conferences are evident when seen from a distance.

WHAT WE'RE UP TO



Vancouver Lodge food service workers lost their jobs Jan. 1 because of weak successorship provisions in the labour code.

Labour code fails workers

The committee charged with reviewing B.C.'s labour legislation won't recommend strengthened successorship rights for food service, janitorial and security workers. HEU is calling on Victoria to instruct

the committee to revisit the issue before it reports Feb. 20. "It's a slap in the face for B.C.'s most vulnerable workers," says HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt. "The committee has identified job security for contract workers as a major problem but they have

taken the employers' side on successorship rights."

The plight of 10 long-time employees at the Canadian Cancer Society's Vancouver Lodge underscored the need for stronger successorship provisions. On Jan. 1, their jobs vanished when Versa Services lost its contract to provide food services. None of the employees were offered jobs with the new contractor even though many had worked at Vancouver Lodge for more than 15 years. "These workers paid with their jobs for the government's failure to act," says Allnutt.

Unity panel

HEU president Fred Muzin told the B.C. Unity panel Dec. 17 that critical issues were missing from the national unity debate.

"How do you hold a country together when the national government is shedding its

responsibility for the very social programs that give definition to Canada's federal system?" Muzin asked the panel.

Muzin warned that the MAI also threatened national unity. "It expands the rights and powers of transnational corporations in our country without any obligation to respect the fundamental social, economic, cultural or environmental rights of Canadians," he said adding that the treaty fundamentally threatens Medicare.

The panel, which includes former HEU member and sitting MLA Erda Walsh and HEU Kootenay director Emil Shumey, is expected to report in the next few weeks.

Seasonal celebrations

HEU locals shared the joy of the holiday season with co-workers and loved ones around the province.

HEU president Fred Muzin dropped in at the celebrations at the Royal Jubilee Hospital, Kamloops and VGH locals.

The *Guardian's* intrepid camera was there to catch the joy on a little girl's face as Santa dropped in on the children's party thrown by the members at Royal Columbian Hospital in New Westminster. Organizers Janine Brooker and Scarlett Scheibel were happy with the party, attended by 180 children of staff members.



MacPhail's action plan for health

HEALTH MINISTER Joy MacPhail has made public the details of a six point strategy that she says will build on the government's commitment to protect Medicare. In her Jan. 27 announcement, MacPhail said the government intends to increase funding in priority areas including hospitals and patient services but she stopped short of announcing an overall increase in health care spending.

"Ensuring the right mix of acute and community health services is a delicate balancing act," said MacPhail. "It's my job as minister to get it right."

HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt gave qualified support to the government's health care strategy but warned that it would fail if the proper resources aren't committed in the upcoming provincial budget.

"If the rumours of a health care budget freeze are true, the minister's health care strategy is in peril," said Allnutt, adding that HEU delivered the same message to finance minister Andrew Petter in a pre-budget meeting held Jan. 30.

The government's 1998 health care priorities include previously announced initiatives for continuing care and mental health services.

Allnutt praised MacPhail for her plans to develop a long-term strategy for seniors' care over the next six months but he questioned plans to expand the role of private operators in providing this care.

"It's ill-advised," says Allnutt, "considering that serious quality-of-care problems have emerged at private-for-profit facilities, including staffing levels as low as 60 per cent of provincial guidelines."

"Quality care and the profit motive aren't compatible concepts."

Allnutt gave MacPhail full marks for a new provincial mental health plan that includes more housing and improved access to care.

"It means better care for those with mental health problems," says Allnutt. "And in the long term it will relieve pressure on acute care beds and hospital emergency rooms."

Ministry of Health 1998 strategy:

- protecting and improving access to critical care;
- managing waiting lists;
- spending smarter and managing better;
- improving care for the elderly;
- improving care for people with mental illness;
- expanding prevention and self care.

HOUSING CRISIS
Cordova House worker Michael Carney and neighbourhood activist Kathleen Boyes say Vancouver's core can't afford to lose any special needs housing through their conversion to condos and tourist hotels.



Facility crucial to community

Plans to close Cordova House on Vancouver's Downtown Eastside are being resisted by front-line workers and community groups who say the need for the facility is critical given the neighbourhood's short supply of special needs housing. It has been home to downtown residents with special needs for more than 20 years, but the society that operates the facility says it will close it down this November.

HEU members persuaded the Vancouver/Richmond Health Board to stop the transfer of residents from Cordova House to other care facilities in the Lower Mainland. The V/RHB also agreed to develop a strategy that would keep the Cordova House beds open, but local HEU chair Ross McKenzie says the V/RHB and the City Centre Care Society are just stalling for time.

"The V/RHB committed itself to a process of consultation which would include Cordova House residents and staff," says McKenzie. "But as far as I can tell, they

still intend to close Cordova."

"We can't afford to lose the 66 beds at Cordova House, particularly during the worst housing crisis in decades," says Main and Hastings Community Development Society's Kathleen Boyes. Her group is actively opposing conversion of residential hotels into tourist hotels and condos. "If we lose Cordova House, five per cent of the special needs spaces in the downtown core are gone," says Boyes. "It completely undermines the health board's plans to improve health outcomes in this community."

But the staff aren't giving up. They've met their local MLA, Jenny Kwan, and with other housing providers and community groups working in the Downtown Eastside and have received broad support for keeping Cordova House open. The local is planning a public meeting in the neighbourhood for Feb. 22 and will continue their fight at the next meeting of the V/RHB scheduled for Feb. 26.

'But the staff aren't giving up ...'

Government sides with drug giants – again

In a move that has angered health care advocates, Ottawa has refused to eliminate a drug patent regulation that extends brand name drug companies' patent protection beyond the 20 years already guaranteed under Bill C-91.

Last year, the Liberals flip-flopped on the patent law which they opposed when it was brought into effect by Mulroney's Tories in 1993.

But they left the door open to eliminating an additional regulation that gave brand name drug giants 30 months of extra patent protection for simply accusing a generic drug company of patent infringement. On Jan. 21, industry minister John Manley announced a reduction in the extra protection to 24 months, but critics like B.C. seniors' advocate Ben Swankey says the regulation increases health care costs by keeping generic drugs off the market.

"Manley's partisanship for the drug multinationals is a threat to Medicare in Canada," says Swankey.

PRESIDENT'S DESK



Code affects us – big time

by Fred Muzin

THE LABOUR CODE is not something that members generally think about as they start each day. We may glance at the newspaper headlines, as we turn to the Olympics coverage, all the while wolfing down a quick breakfast and preparing our children for school or day care.

Although we understand that this important legislation regulates how employers and unions conduct themselves, our focus is dealing with the immediate pressures of workload and delivering the best health care possible. To most, the Labour Code only seems relevant when we are taking a strike vote, designating essential services or combating unfair management action.

For our nutrition services members at the Vancouver Lodge, who lost their jobs Jan. 1, Bill 44 suddenly became alive. The Canadian Cancer Society re-tendered the contract for food service that was held by Versa Foods and accepted a lower bid by Restauronics Services. No protection was provided for our 10 members, many of whom had worked at the lodge, a residence for cancer patients awaiting treatment,

'... this important legislation regulates how employers and unions conduct themselves'

for 16 years. Their year started with non-unionized employees replacing them at \$9 to \$12/hour, as much as a \$6/hour cut.

Bill 44, last summer's proposed amendments to the B.C. Labour Code, could have prevented such disregard for employees by providing successorship rights for janitorial, security guard and food services workers. The government, as a result of hysteria from the business community, withdrew the legislation in favour of additional consultation, leaving these contracted employees vulnerable.

Many of the other recommendations from the labour law reform panel cause great concern. All indications are that successorship for contracted employees will not be revisited by our government this spring.

Anti-sab provisions must not be weakened by allowing employers to transfer management personnel from any of their sites to work behind a picket line at a struck facility. In the case of health care disputes, chaos can result if essential service levels are constantly being readjusted by this type of employer behaviour.

The best way for workers to escape poverty and for women to achieve pay equity is to organize. Yet the review panel calls for further research and thoughtful discussion with employers rather than exploring methods to improve the situation now, especially in smaller workplaces where unscrupulous bosses have ample opportunity to intimidate.

Health care desperately needs meaningful consultation and creativity as it undergoes massive restructuring. Ask our 28 members at Eagle Park who recently staged a sit-in rather than "collaborating" when their employer laid them all off. At Kiwanis Lynn our members sat-in when their boss unilaterally changed their shifts, days before consultation meetings were scheduled. At both Burnaby and Vancouver General locals, third party awards clearly indicate that our employers just don't get it when it comes to acknowledging the valuable input of front-line workers.

We need labour code reform that addresses workers' reality and advances society towards justice and dignity.



FROM ON HIGH two cats at the Meow-Aid shelter survey the territory while the other enjoys a cuddle from Butcher.

TLC for cats at Meow-Aid

by Dale Fuller

Mandy Butcher, an 18-year employee at St. Paul's Hospital, brooks no sentimentality when it comes to animals in general and cats in particular. She simply sees what other people don't see – that there are thousands of cats wandering around without a home, often sick and frightened.

A few years ago Butcher acquired a cat for the first time in her life. A year and a half later, when it was killed by an automobile, Butcher was shocked at the depth of her grieving.

"I hadn't realized how much this cat had affected me," Butcher says.

She started to volunteer at the SPCA, and it was there that she came face to face with the gruesome consequences of people not getting their pets spayed and neutered.

"I started helping with cat adoptions. You knew that if they weren't adopted out by Saturday afternoon, that was it," she says. She began to take hard-to-adopt cats into her home, and has never looked back. She gives them a home in her basement, tries to adopt them out, and if no one wants them, they just stay. Her shelter, Meow-Aid, has a no-kill policy; so cats are put down only if they are terminally ill.

She has a small core of volunteers working with her, and relies on the dedicated services of veterinarian Dr. Bhullar of the Atlas Animal Hospital. "He doesn't bear wings or fly, but to Meow-Aid, he is an angel," wrote

Butcher in her twice yearly *Newsletter*.

In the wee hours of the morning, Rogers Cable TV runs photos and descriptions of cats up for adoption.

"I do not have time to spend on fund-raising," says Butcher, but she does take donations and is always grateful for anything

that makes its way to Box 318, 101-1184 Denman St., Vancouver V6G 2M9.

Butcher has been working for about six years on the housekeeping staff in the palliative care ward at St. Paul's. She has cut her work week to two days so she can care for the cats, but she loves her work at the hospital and sees a link there.

"My work in both places deals with serious illness," she asserts. "And I transfer that experience from one place to the other."

Butcher also says that many people on the ward are cat owners, and sometimes they give their cats over into her care, knowing they will find a loving home.



NOTEBOOK

Our 'poke in the eye' wins backhanded praise

by Stephen Howard

It's not often that you get a compliment – even a backhanded one – from the boss. But HEABC chief Gary Moser did just that in a January radio interview aired by B.C.'s biggest station. Quizzed about the Jan. 15 opening of facility sector talks and the widespread media attention HEU captured on the employers' \$10 million raid on the long-term disability plan surplus, Moser muttered it was just like HEU. Paraphrasing, he said, "first they poke you in the eye, then they come to the bargaining table and say let's do some business."

His comments are a sign of grudging respect for the commitment of HEU members and recognition of the importance that the union places on a communications plan to achieve our bargaining agenda. From a communications standpoint, this round of bargaining will be no different. HEU's Provincial Executive has approved a comprehensive communications plan and resources to keep members fully informed and part of bargaining developments, and to win public support for our objectives.

Some elements of the strategy began last year when local leaders were given training to be effective spokespeople on bargaining



'Our ad campaign highlighted the injury carnage that makes our workplaces the most dangerous'

issues in their community media. And, in what may have been a shock to most British Columbians, our late December radio ad campaign highlighted a dirty secret about health care: the injury rate carnage that makes our workplaces the most dangerous in B.C.

Other parts of the plan have just been put to bed. Our colourful bargaining stickers and *Heart of Health Care* buttons have been sent to all locals and more are available. We've set up a new HEU web page (www.heu.org) to make bargaining information available to members on the Internet. So now you can keep informed by surfing, phoning the bargaining hotline or by reading the regular bargaining bulletins.

We've also completed a poll to test public opinion on a number of health care and bargaining issues. The extremely positive results show strong support for increased health funding and wage increases for health care workers taking precedence over the government sticking to its deficit reduction plan.

There's more still more to be done. We're mapping out a number of advertising campaigns to backstop key elements of our bargaining agenda. And once again we're turning to culture to win understanding for our demands, with a new theatre production that's set to premier March 13. It will tour communities across B.C. until April 17, so watch for performance details for your region.

With all our resources focussed on bargaining support, this is the last issue of the *Guardian* you'll receive until later in the year, when – if all goes well – we'll report in-depth on contract settlements.

fighting for fairness, fighting for health care

Bargaining

HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION



Bulletin

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THE
heart
OF HEALTH
CARE



bargaining '98

**Our goal? Win better
conditions for caregivers
and protect Medicare!**

timeline

Here are some of the important events in our bargaining agenda.

February 10-11 community talks begin	February 24-26 community sector bargaining resumes	March 3 International Women's Day	March 30-April 4 facility sector bargaining resumes; HEU bargaining in the workplace
February 12 facility sector bargaining resumes; HEU bargaining in the workplace; campaign LTD improvements	March 2-6 facility, community sector bargaining resumes; HEU bargaining in the workplace; campaign recognition in workplaces; nursing team protests; all technical issues	March 10 registered nurses' negotiations get underway	March 31 facility/registered nurses' parastrike contract expires
February 16-20 facility sector bargaining resumes		March 13 HEU theatre performance begins	April 2 community sector agreement expires; Contracting out

where do you fit in?

Here's a quick road map on where HEU members fit in to the different health care bargaining tables. See page S4 for more detailed information.

Community Social Services Employers' Association.

- If you're a paramedical professional, or one of the small number of registered nurses now part of HEU, we'll represent you at the paramedical and registered nurses tables.
- If you work at a private, non-funded facility outside central bargaining, your negotiations are determined by the expiry date of your contract.

- For 40,000 HEU members working in hospitals and publicly funded long-term care, your issues will be addressed at the facility sector table.
- If you're one of the 1,500 union members who provide community health services, HEU will bargain for you at the community sector table.
- If you provide health services in programs funded by the Ministry of Children and Families, your issues will be dealt with at what's hoped will be the first central table involving HEU and the

our bargaining plan . . . to make Medicare better

Here's the eight point program that will guide talks for a new facility sector contract, which covers 42,000 HEU members. Our goal? To win better conditions for caregivers, improve the quality of health care services we deliver, and win parity for the community!



GEORGETTI

Public sector unions pledge to coordinate bargaining efforts

With some 200,000 public sector workers involved in contract talks this spring, the unions that represent them pledged Feb. 6 to coordinate bargaining issues and efforts to improve conditions for their members and improve the quality of public services that are an important part of every British Columbian's daily life.

"Public services and the workers who provide them are central to our well-being in this province," said B.C. Federation of Labour president Ken Georgetti at a press conference attended by leaders of the six main public sector unions, including HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt.

In a move that's a first in B.C., public sector bargaining, the unions — which include HEU, the BCGEU, the B.C. Teachers' Federation, HSA, CUPE and the College Institute Educators Association — have agreed to pull together in contract talks, and identify common bargaining issues that all unions will press for at the table. Those issues include:

- protecting quality public services, including adequate staffing levels, safer

- workplaces and limits on privatization of services;
- maintaining jobs and expanding employment opportunities to build strong families and communities;
- a fair wage increase, pay equity and parity for lower paid workers in health care and social services;
- better benefits and pensions;
- measures to improve bad public sector management.

"Public services are one of the great equalizers in our society," say the unions, "where access doesn't depend

'why increase our social deficit in order to solve our fiscal one?'

on personal wealth. In a world increasingly divided into haves and have-nots, public services are one of the few democratic traditions that all Canadians can share."

Acknowledging that B.C. faces some economic challenges, the unions argue that cutting public services to balance the budget is the wrong approach. "We ask, why increase our social deficit in order to solve our fiscal one?"

1. Eliminate inequities for all health and support workers

How? Support the efforts of the community sector bargaining association to achieve parity for community caregivers. Complete the levelling process under the facilities agreement which includes the classification process and full benefits coverage for all.

2. Respond to health care restructuring

How? Strengthen the public health system and protect health workers in changing times. Tackle privatization by bringing contracted out services back into the public sector. Stronger enforcement of consultation provisions. Use the skills and expertise of health workers through a new posting process. Create 1,500 new full-time jobs through limits on overtime and a reduced work week. Improve the fairness of access to work opportunities and expand opportunities for casuals.

3. Win recognition in the workplace: changing requirements, the nursing team, and professional and technical issues

How? A major new commitment to retraining to help health care workers prepare for change, including guaranteed funding, and expanded education leave and in-service opportunities. A comprehensive plan for full utilization of the nursing team within facilities and the community. A regular ongoing review of the classification system to reflect new technologies, training and responsibilities.

4. Meet the needs of members in crisis, fairness in benefits and leaves

How? Significant improvements in the long-term disability plan including increased payment percentage and annual indexing, LTD plan-paid health and welfare benefits, and

special adjustments for long-time disabled workers. Improve compassionate and special leave and sick leave provisions. Parity with the employer in the coverage, scope and life time limits in a number of benefit plans like extended. Better benefit coverage for casuals.

5. Safe work, safe workloads

How? Concrete proposals to reduce the health workplace injury carnage. Full replacement of staff to improve care quality and reduce injury rates. An enforceable and comprehensive ergonomics program. Protection from verbal and physical abuse from aggressive patients/residents and the public. A more effective OH&S process.

6. Compensation improvements

How? A minimum \$1.00 an hour increase in each year of a two year agreement, plus a cost of living allowance to keep pace with inflation. Full implementation of the agreed upon pay equity rates by the end of the two year agreement, instead of the next millennium. Improved weekend, shift, on-call and call-back provisions.

7. Workers' rights

How? A joint committee with HEABC to deal with equity issues in the workplace. Create a union-run, employer paid international solidarity fund. Protections from electronic surveillance. Pay cheques/pay stubs to be available at the work site and will show seniority.

8. Union rights and recognition

How? Improve the disputes resolution process by extending the time line on grievances, and put the onus on the employer for written reasons for denial. A union/peer counselling program, with employer-paid training for union counsellors.

public opinion

Public opinion is solidly behind improved Medicare and a halt to the cuts that threaten to erode a public funded system.

Public support strong for health workers and our issues

Here are some of the highlights of a recent HEU-sponsored opinion poll on health issues and 1998 bargaining. The public believes:

We need to do more to reduce the on-the-job injury rate in health care

90% AGREE

Health workers in the community should be paid the same

76% AGREE

Health workers should be more involved in decisions regarding changes to the system

92% AGREE

Pay boosts for health care workers should take priority over additional increases for physicians

75% AGREE

We need to protect our investment in the skills of our health care workers

95% AGREE

Source: HEU/McIntyre and Musrel poll, January 1998

timeline

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february 10-11
community talks begin

february 12
facility sector bargaining resumes. HEU bargaining in the workplace campaign: LTD improvements

february 16-20
facility sector bargaining resumes

february 24-26
community sector bargaining resumes

march 2-6
facility, community sector bargaining resumes. HEU bargaining in the workplace campaign: recognition in workplace, nursing team, professional/technical issues

march 8
International Women's Day

march 10
registered nurses negotiations get underway

march 13
HEU theatre performances begin

march 23-27
HEU bargaining in the workplace campaign: Contracting out

march 30-april 4
facility sector bargaining resumes. HEU bargaining in the workplace campaign: workload

march 31
facility/registered nurses/paramedical contracts expire

april 2
community sector agreement expires

where

our bargaining plan

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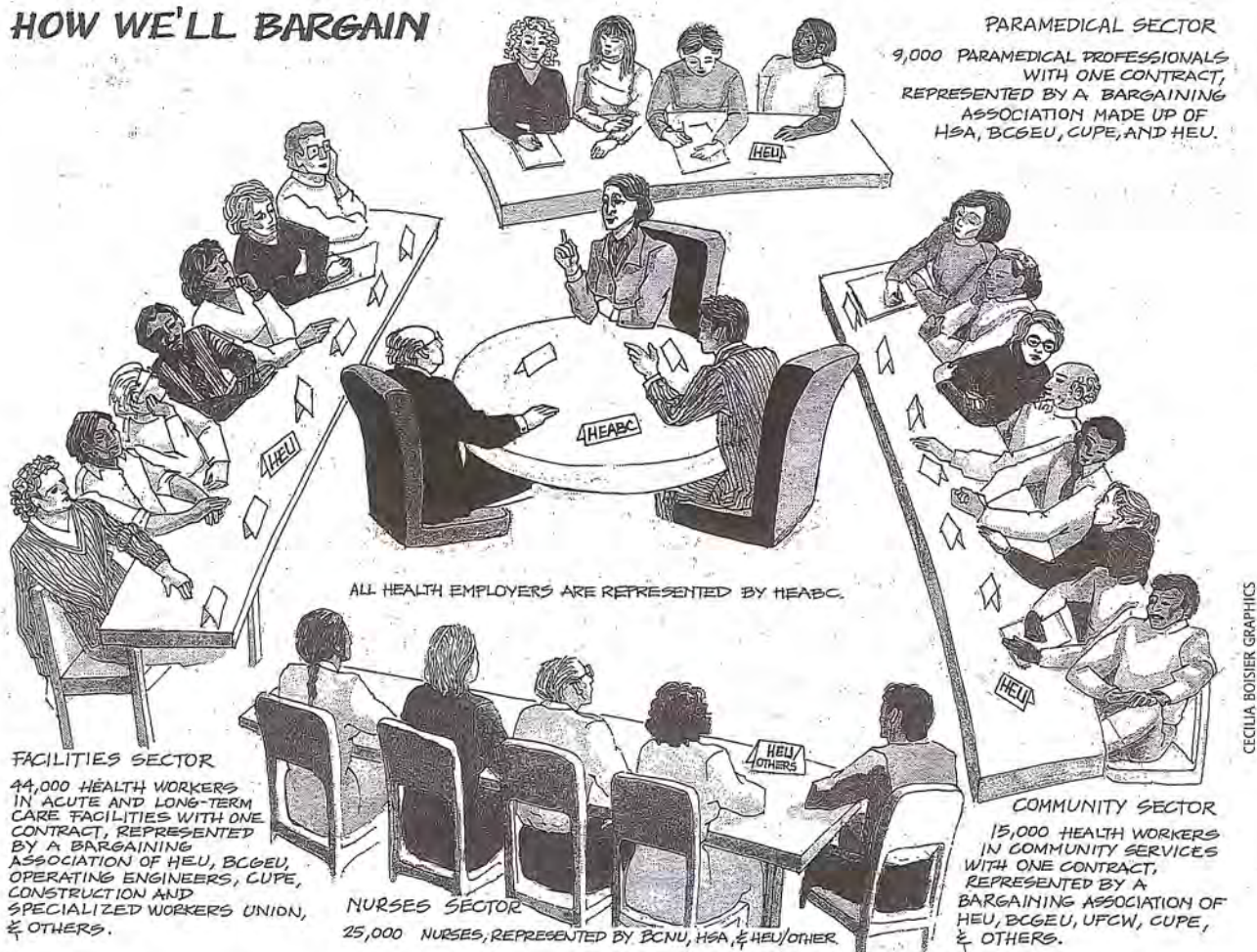
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95% AGREE

Source: HEU/McIntyre and Mustel poll, January 1998

make Medicare better

HOW WE'LL BARGAIN



AT THE TABLE: A LOOK AT THE PLAYERS

There's a new look to 1998 contract talks in health care, as HEU heads into bargaining under new rules, with new bargaining partners and with the union represented at new tables. The changes stem from amendments Victoria adopted in 1997 that revamp the health labour relations structure set up in 1995 through Bill 48. It means that HEU will be represented at the paramedical table for the first time, and — thanks to organizing gains that have resulted in the union representing a handful of RNs — at the registered nurses table as well.

The government's changes also mean many smaller unions who represent caregivers will be back at the table after the original legislation removed their bargaining rights.

Talks in the facility sector will cover 42,000 HEU members. Like 1996, HEU — the lead union in the sector — will be bargaining beside the BCGEU and the International Union of Operating Engineers. But this time, the union has new bargaining partners including the Construction and Specialized Workers' Union, the Building Trades, B.C. Nurses' Union, and the Steelworkers, which altogether represent a small number of facility sector workers. Key bargaining issues in the sector are outlined on page 2 and 3 of the bargaining supplement.

At the community table, unions will press to build on the gains of last year's settlement for a new master contract covering 14,000 community caregivers, including 1,500 HEU members. BCGEU is the lead union in these talks, which will focus on issues like full parity with the facility sector, employment security and coverage by labour adjustment

programs; a complete classification system; wage boosts; better benefits and health and safety improvements. There are also priority demands to address concerns of home support workers on issues like seniority and creation of more regular jobs. One of the most hotly debated issues behind the scenes in facility and community bargaining will be the matter of the labour relations line that divides community sector workers from their facility counterparts.

"HEU has always argued that the wall between community and facility must come down," says the union's chief spokesperson Chris Allnutt, "and we'll continue to push to do so in 1998 talks."

The ghetto-like conditions in the community sector also extend to health programs funded by the provincial Ministry of Children and Families, a field in which HEU represents more than 750 caregivers. Here, HEU will be bargaining with the Community Social Services Employers' Association, hopefully at a central table to press for full parity for workers in this sector.

The Health Sciences Association will be the lead union at the paramedical table, where HEU will be represented for the first time. Key issues here are expected to be classifications, job security, and a wage increase. BCGEU and CUPE will also be part of these talks.

HEU will also play a role in the registered nurses table, where it will join BCNU, the lead union, and HSA. BCNU's critical issues for registered nurses include increasing the number of RN positions "to protect quality care," health and welfare benefit improvements, pay equity and a pay boost.

On the road again for HEU

The Hospital Employees' Union theatre troupe is at it again!

Following on the heels of the successes of *The Heart of Health Care* and *Begin the Healing* in 1994 and 1996, the as-yet-unnamed play will begin a five-week tour of the province on Friday, March 13.

The show coincides with contract talks and will promote an awareness of HEU's position at the bargaining table.

The play is based on the workplace experiences of HEU members.

"This theatre piece tells our members' stories with music, a little comedy and a little pathos," said HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt. "And this is a way for the union to get its message to the public in a creative way."

As the *Guardian* goes to press, the details of the tour are still being ironed out, but the premiere performance will be in the Lower Mainland, head off to Courtenay and Nanaimo, and then swing up to Prince Rupert, Terrace, Kitimat, Prince George and Kamloops.



DARLENE BROOKS and friend in HEU's 1996 production, *Begin the Healing*.

Then the theatrical troupe will present the play in the Lower Mainland and/or the Victoria area, before going to Kelowna, Penticton, Castlegar and Nelson.

The last week of the tour will be in the Lower Mainland, and possibly Victoria, before it winds up in Vancouver on April 17.

Want to know more? Here's what you can do:

Contact your local shop steward or the HEU office in your region. You can also call our hotline and reach us on the web.

1.800.663.5813

local 515 and 516 (24 hours)

<http://www.heu.org>

Labour

NOTEWORTHY NEWS ABOUT ISSUES AFFECTING WORKING PEOPLE HERE AND ABROAD

Steelworkers' fund helps Mexican workers fight back

The Steelworkers' union has forged an agreement with the Mexican Frente Auténtico del Trabajo which will provide hundreds of thousands of dollars of income support to Mexican workers who lose wages or are fired as a result of their participation in key labour battles.

FAT has challenged the dominance of the official unions supported by the Mexican government and has recently been involved in high profile organizing drives including one at the Hyundai-connected Han Young factory in Tijuana.

Workers at the Han Young factory became the first in the *maquiladora* zone to reject their government-controlled union in favour of a FAT-affiliated union. They're still fighting for a collective agreement and expect a hearing of their grievances under the terms of NAFTA's labour side agreement in mid-February.

Lawrence McBrearty, Steelworkers' national director, says the agreement with FAT is key to responding to "the extreme abuse of workers' rights in a profoundly corrupt system which injures workers in Mexico and undermines the rights of workers throughout the hemisphere."

The agreement is sponsored by the Steelworkers' Humanity Fund which is funded through a bargained wage deduction of one cent an hour in Steelworker collective agreements.

Last September, HEU wage policy delegates passed a resolution supporting the establishment of a similar fund in HEU collective agreements.

\$700 for stapler, but no pay equity yet

Auditor General Denis Desautels opened the government books again and found enough strange expense claims to make us wonder whether anyone on Parliament Hill has been to a discount store lately.

Desautels' annual examination of federal expenditures uncovered many payouts for bizarre expenses in 1996-97, including such outrageously priced items as a missing \$700 defense department stapler and \$2,500 paid in compensation to a farmer for a bull that died while grazing on Crown-owned land.

The amount tallied in unexpected government expenses is a whopping \$44 million.

But the legitimate claim of the pay equity settlement owed to 200,000 federal public service workers and former workers remains unpaid.

The government appears to have no problem shelling out \$4,000 for a golden notebook in Alberta and \$34,916 for a stolen pair of night-vision goggles – not to mention the dead bull. So why the 14-year delay to pay workers in the federal public service equally for work of equal value?

"Affected, low-waged workers, most of them women, have been owed this money for 13 years now. Their money amounts to a subsidy to the government so it can fight its own employees and break its own law," says Public Service Alliance of Canada activist Kay Sinclair.

"It's outrageous and we're tired of waiting – just give us our money."

The federal Treasury Board pulled out of negotiations to resolve the issue of outstanding pay equity monies in December leaving the matter to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. A ruling is expected this spring.



ON THE WATERFRONT ILWU Local 500 president Rick Rondpre (left), retired docker and waterfront activist Leland Jantzen and ILWU Canadian area president Tom Dufresne – local dockers supported the Liverpool strikers.

Liverpool dockers end dispute

Canadian longshoremen were part of international solidarity effort, but lack of support at home forced them off the picket line

ON JAN. 26, a group of Liverpool dockers called off their 28-month dispute with the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company in what some activists are calling round one in a renewed fight back by waterfront workers against increasingly concentrated global shipping interests.

The 500 dockworkers were fired in the fall of 1995 after refusing to cross a picket line of young dockers who were opposing attempts to casualize dock work. Many of the fired dockworkers had worked for over 30 years on the Liverpool docks, the last of the unionized ports in England.

The Liverpool dockers say they couldn't maintain the strike given a lack of support from their national union and from the British Labour government. But their struggle received widespread international support and underscored increasing pressures at ports around the world to deregulate shipping, bust unions, gut health and safety regulations and privatize port authorities.

The strikers also received support from many members of the British cultural community and even from Liverpool soccer player Robbie Fowler who was fined by European soccer authorities. After scoring a goal against a Norwegian team last March, the Liverpool striker pulled up his jersey to reveal a T-shirt that read, "Support the 500 sacked dockers."

And in a sign that international labour solidarity has really hit the information shipping lanes, the strike was extensively publicized and documented on the Internet.

In Canada and the U.S., locals of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union actively supported the Liverpool strikers with financial assistance and by supporting international actions targeting shipping lines that loaded at the MDHC-operated facility in Liverpool.

This past October, dockworkers along the U.S. coast and in Vancouver refused to cross picket lines set up by supporters of the striking dockers. As a result, cargo loaded on the Neptune Jade by scab labour in Liverpool remained on board. When the vessel reached the Japanese port of Yokohama it received the same treatment from dockworkers there.

A month earlier, actions during an international day of solidarity with the Liverpool dockers closed ports around the world including those in Halifax and along the British Columbia coast.

Canadian ILWU president Tom Dufresne says local dockworkers can empathize with the Liverpool strikers. "We've been feeling the pressure from shipping companies," says Dufresne. "They are not shy about contributing to election campaigns."

The payoff, he says, can be found in the divesting of facilities by Ports Canada and the lack of enforcement of health and safety regulations on the docks.

The Liverpool strikers ended their dispute accepting terms that they overwhelmingly rejected only four months ago. They include up to \$67,000 redundancy pay but no guarantee of future employment.

The settlement might be okay for a docker near retirement, says Dufresne, "but for a young guy who loses his job – it's nothing."

Don't bring home the bacon.



The United Food and Commercial Workers' Union members at Maple Leaf Foods across Canada have been either forced to strike or locked out of their workplaces after this very profitable corporation only offered its workers rollbacks on wages and benefits.

The Canadian Labour Congress has called for a solidarity boycott of Maple Leaf products sold under these names: Olivieri, Venice Bakery, Burns, Maple Leaf, Overlander, Campfire, Prime Poultry, Coorsh, Clover, Bittners, Devon, Parma, Hygrade, Mary Miles, York, Karnes, McGavin's, Tenderflake, KAM, Klik, Swift, Shopsy's, Canada Bread, Dempsters, Country Style and Shur-gain.

Health care front line in the Nass valley

Nisga'a villages deliver a model of integrated health care

by Mike Old

COFFEE BREAK at the Nisga'a Valley Health Board's flagship diagnostic and treatment centre in New Aiyansh is an experience that would make HEU members in the south green with envy.

The "Wilp Wa'ums" or "house of healing" in the Nisga'a language, can claim bragging rights for one of the most dramatic settings in the province. The view from the staff room includes a 250-year old moss-covered lava flow that lies sea-like between glacier-gilted mountains.

The modern facility has expanded to include an eye clinic, dental suite and physiotherapy. There's even talk of adding long-term care beds.

But the centre's dedication plaque reflects on a time when there were no health facilities in the Nass Valley — when decades ago Nisga'a leader James

Gosnell went to Ottawa to argue for buildings to house basic health services. He was asked, "Why don't you use the basement of your church or band hall?"

"Because we don't have those buildings in the Nass Valley," said Gosnell, whose perseverance finally resulted in a small health station. Today's centre bears his name.

For the last two years, HEU local executive member Florence Nisyok has worked as a community health representative in New Aiyansh. "I'm taking care of elders, making sure none are sick," she says.

Nisyok's job is more involved than she lets on. During regular visits to elders in New Aiyansh she monitors blood pressure, temperature and blood sugar levels. CHRs also provide a critical liaison between elders and those health care professionals who don't speak the Nisga'a language.

There's some unique challenges to her job; for instance, monitoring the diet of diabetic seniors. "We still have to work out how many calories there are in sea lion meat," says Nisyok.

Remoteness is another challenge facing health care delivery in the Nass Valley. The road from Terrace, 100 kilometres south, only reached the Nass in the late 1950s. Apart from the main facility in New Aiyansh, the Nisga'a-controlled NVHB operates health centres in the other three villages stretched out along the Nass: Gitwinksihlkw, Greenville and Kincolith. Until last year, Gitwinksihlkw was only accessible by a foot bridge.

This is where Lorna Azak was born and where she now works at the village's health centre as northern native drug and alcohol program counsellor.

The program was started by the federal government but, like most Nisga'a

YAAXUM MEANS YOUTHFUL in the Nisga'a language. It's the name of the boat which provides a vital link to the remote Kincolith health centre. The only other way to Kincolith is by car south to Terrace, west to Prince Rupert and up to Kincolith by float plane or ferry. Walter Nisyok has piloted the boat for the last two years.

health services, is now administered directly by the NVHB.

Azak's work includes counselling, referring clients to psychologists and setting up programs for young people. Many of these programs bring youth and elders together to learn traditional crafts such as embroidery and cedar basket-making. "Being consistently there for the youth," says Azak, is what she particularly likes about her job.

Further down river in Greenville, CHR Karon McKay says that stats show that offering the well-baby and other developmental programs for children and new mothers have had a proven

"I push for the things our people need," she says. "We're proud of our elders and our newborns."

Dr. Isaac Sobol has worked as a physician for the NVHB since 1989. He says the Nisga'a have achieved a level of integration in health care delivery not yet reached in most southern communities. He says the credit goes to the health board's front-line staff.

"There's a sense of camaraderie and commitment to the Nisga'a people and the health board operation which is very positive," says Sobol. "People recognize that they're doing something for their community."



MIKE OLD PHOTOS



'People recognize that they're doing something for their community'

track record in her community.

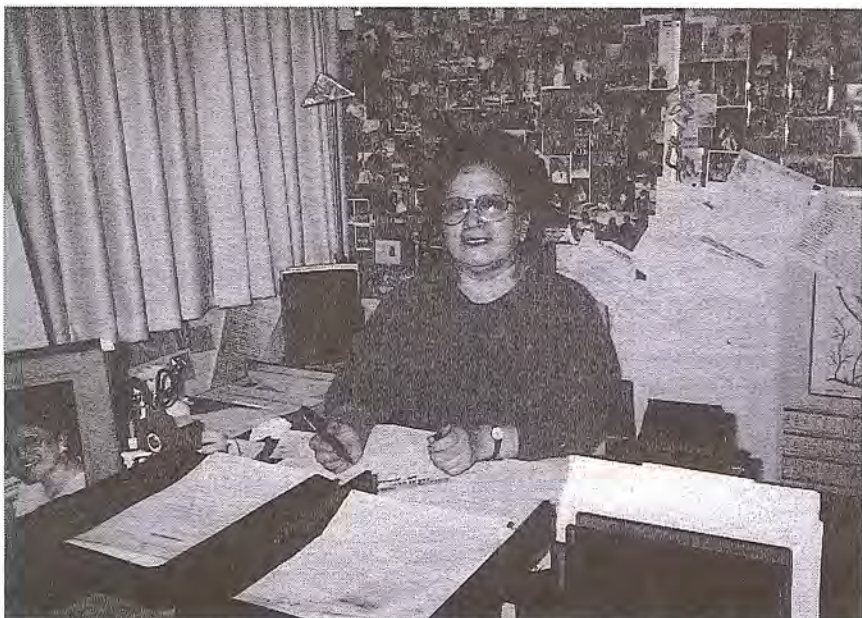
"We don't have as many kids coming back to the clinic," says McKay, who was born in Greenville and has two grandchildren of her own.

That enthusiasm for prevention is shared by Heather Stevens, a CHR at the Kincolith health centre. Kincolith is near the north end of the Portland Inlet not far from the Alaskan border. She helps keep track of everyone in the village, from newborn to elder, making sure procedures such as immunizations, mammography, screenings and blood pressure monitoring are carried out on schedule.

On display in the health centre are photographs of the year's newborns and of all the elders, on which Stevens keeps a close eye. She takes a special interest in making sure they receive proper health care and housing.



NOTHING BUT SMILES from Julia Adams (left) and Lorna Azak. Adams has been a health worker in Gitwinksihlkw for 27 years. Looking out for elders is Florence Nisyok's task as a community health representative.



ISAAC SOBOL PHOTO

KINCOLITH BABY PHOTOS adorn the wall behind Heather Steven's desk.



IN DISGUISE Charlene Ousey (left), Charlene Morven and Daphne Robinson ham it up on Halloween Day in New Aiyansh.

Be 'keepers of seeds,' urges Barlow

by Dale Fuller

Maude Barlow, chairperson of the Council for Canadians, swung through B.C. on a whirlwind tour in late January, sounding the alarm against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment. Organizers of the tour were heartened by the public response.

Even in small towns, the halls were packed with hundreds of people. In Victoria there were 1,000 people, and at the Vancouver Public Library 400 people filled the meeting room to capacity and 300 more watched a video hookup in the promenade upstairs.

Barlow and the MAI-NOT Network, which organized the tour, see this as evidence of a growing grassroots resistance to the MAI.

"The MAI will have an enormous impact on our country and our ability to maintain any protections for Canadian content, culture, or social programs and will severely limit our ability to protect our natural environment," says Barlow.

Even so, the government is not pursuing a democratic initiative in review-

ing or approving Canada's entry into such a pervasive agreement.

The Liberal government is contending that NAFTA was passed by parliament, and that MAI is just an elaboration of NAFTA. Therefore, it says, debate in parliament is not required.

Barlow is quite certain that if Canadians were aware of what is in the agreement, they would not concur. The Council of Canadians has had the document examined by legal experts, comparing the MAI and the NAFTA. They say there are fundamental differences, and that debate in parliament is a legal requirement.

She sees this as "a teaching moment" in history. A movement is developing from the ground up, and people across the country are incensed that the government is trying to push through an agreement which could have such a devastating effect on our lives — and in such an undemocratic manner.

She urges people to become MAI literate. "Study the deal," she says. "Don't be put off by the jargon. You are perfectly capable of understanding it."

And then, she says, organize at all geographic and sectoral levels. Join the 100,000 other supporters of the Council for Canadians who are fighting against the MAI.

Barlow is especially proud of Canadian youth.

"As evidenced in the recent demonstrations, students know exactly where to direct their anger and frustration now," she says. "And that is at the banks and the stock exchange." She also says their demand to kick corporate CEOs off of the governing boards of colleges and universities is right on target.

Barlow puts a lot of faith in the grassroots. She tells the story of a group of women in a village in India. Responding to the threat of an international agribusiness which was set to file a patent on a strain of rice seed that had been cultivated in the village for eons, the women simply entered the seeds in a local registry. That forthright gesture precluded the company from patenting the seed, which would have forced the villagers to pay royalties to grow their own rice.



BARLOW stresses the importance of stopping the Multilateral Agreement

Barlow spoke of the photos in *The Seed Keepers*, a book written about the Indian women by Dr. Vandana Shiva. The photographs show them standing proudly with their seeds in their hands.

This is what Barlow wants Canadians to be — the keepers of the seeds of democracy.

The MAI: death knell for democracy

by Murray Dobbin



BUREAUCRATS from 29 countries, advised by the world's largest and most powerful transnational corporations, are designing an agreement that will shape their countries for a generation to come.

The Multilateral Agreement on Investment, or the MAI, is due to be signed in late April 1998. It is not an exaggeration to say that we have only until then to defend democracy, if by democracy we mean the right of the majority of citizens to determine their future.

Referring to the MAI, the head of the World Trade Organization stated, "We are writing a constitution for a single world economy." But it is a constitution that makes absolutely no mention of actual citizens, their health, education, human rights or communities. This is a constitution for corporations only.

The MAI involves many more countries and gives corporations even more power than NAFTA does. If a company was even planning to invest in Canada, and Ottawa or Victoria passed legislation that obliged them, say, to use local products or protect the environment, that company could sue, claiming "a lost opportunity to profit from a planned investment."

Even Canadian corporations will be at a disadvantage because the way the agreement is worded, governments can treat foreign corporations more favourably than domestic ones in order to attract investment. It will put forest companies, for example, in the ridiculous situation of having to set up a foreign subsidiary or get a foreign partner, in order to be treated equally with their foreign competitors.

The MAI means that Ottawa and all other levels of government will have to pledge that they will not pass any legislation that contradicts the principle of investment liberalization. More alarming, there are two other clauses in the deal which say that even existing laws that contradict "liberalization" must go over time. Canada will have to gradually revise or eliminate laws such as environmental protection, labour regulation or corporate taxation which "interfere" with the right of corporations to make a return on their investment. And the standard for that return could well be set in countries in the third world which will be pressured to sign on to the MAI once the industrial nations work it out amongst themselves.

In B.C. the implications for communities and workers could be disastrous.

'The implications for communities and workers could be disastrous'

In both forestry and fisheries, laws which now protect those resources for future generations and ensure that B.C. workers and communities benefit from them could be declared illegal.

The Jobs and Timber Accord is one of the best examples. Those analysing the deal claim the Accord would be one of the first things disallowed because it puts conditions on "investors" rights to use a resource as they see fit. The ban on exporting raw logs and restrictions on tree licenses could be gone.

Canada has not listed the fishery in its list of "reservations" — a method by which we can protect some aspects of our economy from the effects of the MAI. This means B.C. might no longer be able to restrict size of fishing fleets or place a moratorium on fishing licenses. This would be seen as an unacceptable restriction on new (foreign) entrants to

the "market." Nothing in Canada's presentations would prevent American fishers from applying for salmon licenses.

This secretive deal opens up whole areas of public policy to incursions by large corporations. Health care, public education, municipal services — all will be threatened by the principle that you can't disadvantage an investor by treating a competitor differently, public or private, in an industry. Giant American health corporations could demand the right to bid on the running of hospitals.

This agreement is not forever, but it might as well be. Canada can give six months notice to get out of NAFTA. With the MAI five years notice is required, and even then the effects of the agreement up to that point remain in place for another 15 years. A whole generation would have grown up just waiting to get out of this terrible straitjacket on democracy. Don't let it happen.

• Murray Dobbin is a Vancouver writer and broadcaster.



FEBRUARY 27

Public Forum on the MAI,
1 p.m., Douglas College,
Rm. 2101, New Westminster.

FEBRUARY 27

Public Forum on the MAI,
7:30 p.m., Ocean Park
Community Hall, Surrey.

MARCH 5-7

B.C. Federation of Labour,
Regional Women's Conference,
'Union Women: Visions of
Equality,' Vancouver.

MARCH 6-8

Provincial NDP Conference,
Vancouver.

MARCH 7

March and rally at Robson
Square in celebration of
International Women's Day,
Vancouver.

MARCH 8

International Women's Day

MARCH 13

Premiere performance of HEU
theatre group, Vancouver.

Focus on domestic violence

by Margi Blamey

WHY DON'T YOU Just Leave? is artist Anne Popperwell's provocative and sensitive examination of domestic violence. Completed in 1996, Popperwell and her collection have toured extensively throughout British Columbia. Comprised of 19 paintings, five drawings and a 26 minute video, *Why Don't You Just Leave?* has inspired local communities and numerous organizations to use the exhibition in varied and creative ways as a means of opening up the subject of violence against women.

"Art is so much more than something over the sofa," commented Popperwell. "Art is a powerful force. It impacts people in so many ways."

In Kitimat, the Tamitik Status of Women built a fundraising event around the collection with proceeds benefiting the local transition house.

Specialized Victim Services in Powell River convinced the local cable manager to produce a program about the exhibit, the issue and services available to women locally; the program was broadcast six times in 1997.

In the Lower Mainland, *Why Don't You Just Leave?* has been used for staff

and public education by many organizations including Vancouver Health Sciences Centre, Vancouver Family Services, the Vancouver Alternative to Violence Program, Emily Carr College of Art and Design, the Surrey Art Gallery, Royal Columbian, Burnaby and Surrey Memorial hospitals and the Hospital Employees' Union.

"People come forward with stories because of the artwork," Popperwell explained. "A nurse told me about a woman in hospital recovering from a heart attack. The patient was instructed to rest and take care of herself when released to go home. However, the woman confided that she would never be allowed to 'rest' — her husband would beat her for her inactivity."

In order to help raise money to continue touring the exhibition, Popperwell has produced a silkscreen print. The cost of *New Doors/Baja* unframed is \$225. Matted and framed, the print sells for \$275. Twenty-five dollars from each sale goes to the B.C. and Yukon Society of Transition Houses.



POPPERWELL shows off her silkscreen print, *New Doors/Baja*.

A numbered edition of *New Doors/Baja* hangs in the lobby of the HEU building in Vancouver. For information about purchasing the print or the exhibition, contact Anne Popperwell at (250) 539-2779.

HEU welcomes new members

HEU continues to make significant inroads in organizing the community health sector, with 160 new members since last summer.

They join us from Argyll Lodge in Surrey, Crossreach Project of Vancouver, Gaumont Residence in the Okanagan, Granville House in Richmond, Hillside Lodge in Surrey, Magnolia House in North Vancouver, New Greenwood Lodge in Surrey, Parkville & District Home Support, Richmond Alcohol & Drug Action Team, the Richmond Manor, South Vancouver Adult Day Centre, the Sunrise Special Care Facility in Abbotsford, and Tudor House in Nanaimo.

There are also new certifications in the facility, CSSEA and independent (private) sectors.

New HEU locals in the social services bargaining sector (CSSEA) are Dysa Services, Go Green Workshops, and Pamela's Home, all on Vancouver Island.

Seventy new members have joined HEU from the independent sector. They work at the Canadian Mental Health Association in Penticton, Kimbelee Lodge in Surrey, the Kiwanis Apartments in North Vancouver, Tamarack House in Vancouver, and two Douglas House sites in Victoria. They also include the kitchen staff at Rideau Manor in Burnaby.

In the facilities sector there is one new certification: 4 All Seasons Retirement Lodge in Ladysmith with 17 new members.

HEU welcomes all new members and extends a special welcome to the new members at Richmond Manor who will be represented by HEU at the nurses subsector bargaining table in 1998.

HEALTH CARE ON WORKING TV

In March the focus is on women

MARCH 6 — The third of three programs on the 2nd International Women's Conference Against APEC, concentrating on Mexico, China and Bangladesh.

MARCH 13 — International Women's Day.

Working TV's first showings are on Friday at 7:30 p.m., repeated on Monday at 1:30 p.m., and Thursday at 4:00 p.m. on Rogers Community 4 Network for Lower Mainland viewers.

Campbell River — Wednesday, 6:30 p.m. and Monday, 8 p.m. on CRTC 10.

Revelstoke — Wednesday, 9 a.m. and Thursday, 11 a.m.

Call 253-6222 or 1-800-562-1622 if interested in any of the videotapes from WTV for your community.



Coffee break



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

Power to the people

British Conservative Party MP Rupert Allison didn't tip restaurant staff for a meal on election eve. The BBC reported that all 14 staffers decided to vote for his opponent, who won by 12 votes.

Stern warning

"You should have warned me ahead of time," said Howard Stern, upon being informed after his first syndicated Canadian broadcast, on Montreal's CHOM, that the audience was about 65 per cent francophone. During the show, he frequently insulted French-Canadians, the French language, and Celine Dion.

Slick student's reply

Pupils at an elementary school in middle America were asked by their teacher to write 50 words or less on the effect of oil on fish. One 11-year-old

wrote, "Last night, my mother opened a can of sardines. It was full of oil, and all the fish were dead."

Flying bug

"I, for one, am not going to be in an airplane on New Year's Eve in 1999." American attorney Cathleen Judge, warning of problems the "millennium" or "year 2000" bug poses for computer systems controlling everything from bank records to airline guidance and navigation systems.

Poverty's just around the corner

"I have a long way to go before I'm anywhere near being a high-paid executive in Canada. There are 31 others in Canada

ahead of me." — Inco CEO Michael Sopko, who was paid about \$2.5 million in 1996.

shoes," he says in a report in a sports medicine journal.

Knock, knock is a bad joke

English law firm James Beauchamp Solicitors, which discovered the body of one of their lawyers when he failed to appear for work, called police, notified the man's mother that he was dead, then billed the family U.S. \$19,645 for work related to his death, a sum the firm later reduced to \$4,535.

The man's sister said the worst item was \$240 "to knock on my mother's door to tell her her son was dead."

Amateur athletes are suckers when it comes to athletic-shoe advertising — the more they pay for a shoe, the greater their belief in the ability of the shoes to prevent injury, says Dr. Steven Robbins, a Montreal sports-medicine physician.

This ill-founded belief "may explain the 123 per cent higher injury rate frequently associated with more expensive



BIDDLE/CALM GRAPHIC

CRUEL AND UNUSUAL IRONY.

LET'S LOOK AROUND ON THE SIDEWALK, MAYBE WE CAN FIND SOME CHANGE...

HEU people

Promotion

Joan Burgess is the new coordinator of human resources. She has been at HEU since 1991, most recently as manager of support services.

Janet Fairbanks moves from the education rep position to the director of education and occupational health and safety. She was an active HEU member in the Courtenay local for 14 years before coming to the Provincial Office in 1988 as a rep 1.

Sylvia Sioufi is the new servicing rep responsible for education. She moves from her position as research analyst with HEU's communications and research department where she began in June 1992 as a research assistant. Sylvia leaves the HEU annex to relocate to the main building and may be found there after Feb. 9.

Candace Montgomery joins HEU as the new manager of support services. She has been here since January, coming from the Beth Israel Synagogue where she was

operations manager for two years. Prior to that, Candace was with the Vancouver Port Corporation.

Remembering Glen Makahonuk

Glen Makahonuk, general vice president of CUPE, died quietly at his home in Saskatoon on Dec. 10, 1997 at the age of 46.

Fred Muzin was among many representatives of CUPE National's executive council at the funeral service held on Dec. 13 in Saskatoon, who came to pay their respects to a brother and friend.

"There are far too few committed social activists like brother Glen to fight the never-ending struggle for social justice and decency,"

said Muzin. "It was an honour to work alongside him."

HEU'S CONFIDENTIAL HUMAN RIGHTS HARASSMENT PROCESS

COMPLAINTS INVESTIGATORS can help if you are being harassed at work because of:

- sex (including sexual harassment)
- race
- sexual orientation
- disability
- religion

(see Art. 4.03 of the Facilities Sector Agreement)

1-800-310-6886

call for a recorded message about the process

IMPORTANT NOTICE

HEALTH CARE SCHOLARSHIPS

from the Ministry of Education Skills, & Training

These \$3,500 scholarships are for health care workers who are upgrading/retraining within the health care field. As of Nov. 25 HEU members have received these bursaries. Application deadlines are:

- May to August school term: March 15
- September to December school term: July 15
- January to April school term: Nov. 15

Applications can be obtained from your local or at the student financial office of the educational institution where you are enrolled. For more information, call:

660-2610 (in the Lower Mainland)
387-6100 (in Victoria) or **1-800-561-1818**

Two videos focus on breast cancer

by Louise Hutchinson

Jacqueline Davis, a volunteer at the Canadian Cancer Society, is the executive producer of a newly released video entitled *Echoes of the Sisters - First Nations Women: Breast Cancer*. Davis, a Cree woman from the Peguis reserve in Manitoba, is a breast cancer survivor.

While in hospital, she says she asked herself, "Am I the only native woman that gets cancer?"

Deep down inside she knew that wasn't so. Together with her other sisters she formed the First Nations Breast Cancer Society to increase awareness of breast cancer among First Nations women.

Davis and five other First Nations women tell their stories in this video. They speak of how western medicine and aboriginal spiritual healing has helped them in their journeys. They are thankful for the women it has brought into their lives.

Lisa Simen-Falvy made the decision to study herbs and take better care of herself.

"Breast cancer has given me spirituality because I had to look inside myself. I see with different eyes now."

Davis sends us this urgent message: breast cancer is not proud about whom it attacks - it is everyone's disease. It

may affect your mother, sister, aunt, or grandmother.

This video has been distributed to 604 bands across Canada, and a copy is available in our Provincial Office. Copies may be purchased by phoning 604-875-3677.

Breast cancer claims the lives of 6,000 Canadian women every year.

Seventeen thousand are diagnosed during the same time period. It's the most common female cancer - one of every eight women will get breast cancer in her lifetime. The Women's Network on Health

and the Environment has released a video entitled *Exposure - Environmental Links to Breast Cancer* hosted by Olivia Newton-John. Three decades ago, the World Health Organization stated that 80 per cent of cancers were caused by toxic chemicals found in our air, water, and food.

Biologist Rachel Carson, in her 1962 book *Silent Spring*, warned of a coming cancer epidemic if we did not abandon or drastically reduce our use of toxic, long-lasting pesticides, and other synthetic chemicals.

Since the Second World War, 100,000 synthetic sub-

stances have been introduced into the world.

Epidemiologist Dr. Rosalie Bartell advises that many pesticides and herbicides have been "watered down from the military."

They tell us these things are good for our gardens and golf courses when in fact they do

what they were designed to do - kill.

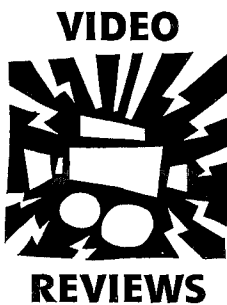
Some, such as DDT, are banned in Canada, but are used elsewhere and kill farm workers. Still others are found in our laundry soaps and plastics.

Dr. Bartell states that most efforts have been focussed on the individual - "Instead of going after the growers of tobacco, we tell people not to smoke."

Do you wait until you have enough dead bodies to take action as was done with smoking and lung cancer?

The women in this video believe we should take preliminary action based on existing evidence.

In Canada alone, from 1994 to 1996, 1.45 billion pounds of toxic chemicals were released into the environment - of which 280 million pounds were known carcinogens.



EQUITY PHONE LINE

1.800.663.5813, ext. 514
Lower Mainland 739.1514

press 1

Ethnic Diversity

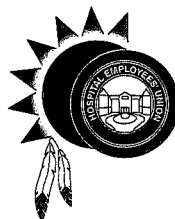
One union, many colours! Working across our differences! To participate, please call and leave us your name!



press 2

First Nations

First Nations members would like to hear from you! Please call if you would like to help educate our union brothers and sisters on issues that affect First Nations people.

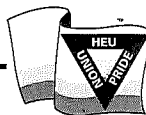


ALL CALLS ARE CONFIDENTIAL

press 3

Lesbians and Gays

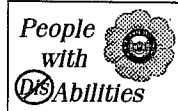
For support: afraid of being identified, feeling isolated, want to know your rights? Call for information on same sex benefits, fighting homophobia and discrimination.



press 4

People with disabilities

We'd like to hear from you, if you are on WCB or LTD. Or if you are invisibly or visibly disabled in the workplace, let us know how the union can better meet your needs.



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

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end LTD poverty for disabled workers



HEU has proposed measures to improve long-term disability at the bargaining table. The union continues to work to restore the \$10 million taken by the employer in its mid-January raid on the LTD fund, siphoning off money that could pay for improvements to health care workers' LTD benefits.



Workers defend community

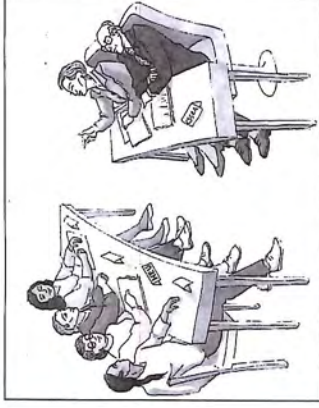
Cordova House members put up a fight to keep their facility in the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood.



PAGE 5

HEU at the table

Special bargaining supplement brings members up to date on all the issues for 1998 bargaining.



PAGE S1

The Nass Valley

Our members in this northern district are committed to health care in their community.



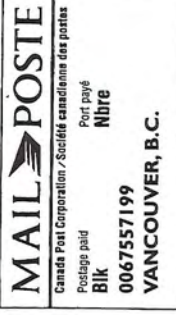
PAGE 8

SOS on the MAI

Murray Dobbin and Maude Barlow sound the alarm on this menacing trade deal.



PAGE 9



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