

Guardian



THE VOICE OF THE HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION VOL. 17 NO 1 JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1999



PROJECTING ANGER

B.C. projectionists at Famous Players and Cineplex Odeon theatres are fighting a proposed 60 per cent wage rollback with pickets and solidarity from other unions.

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VITAL MEASURES

Have a look at an alternative federal budget.

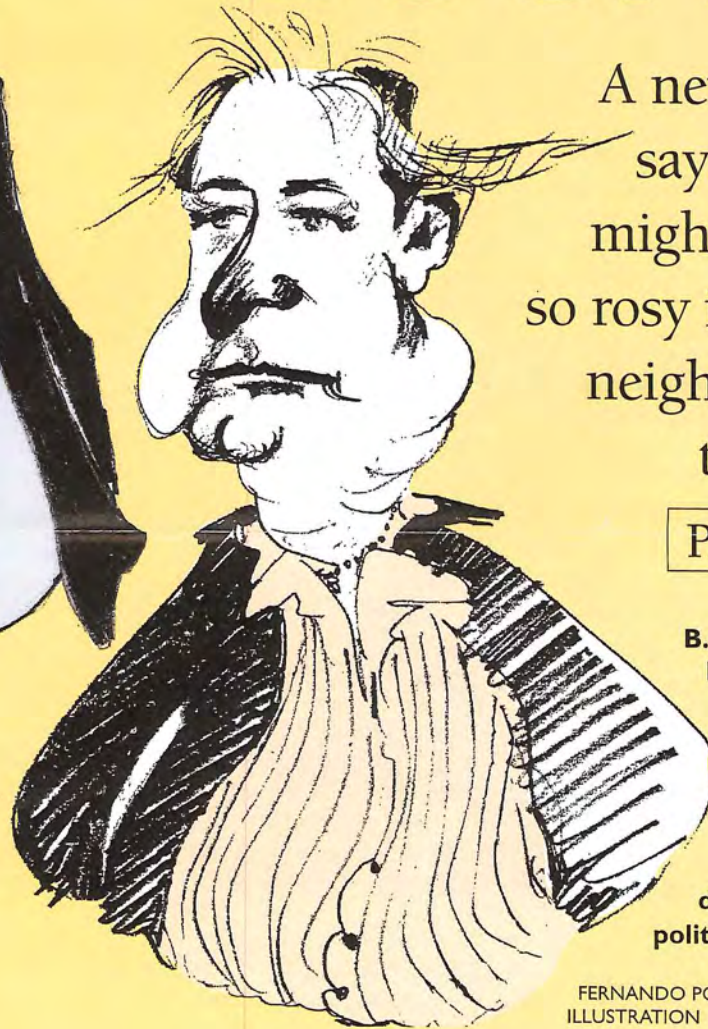
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IS IT GOOD TO BE ALBERTA BOUND?

A new study says things might not be so rosy in B.C.'s neighbour to the east.

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B.C. New Democratic Premier Glen Clark and Alberta Conservative chief Ralph Klein (right) offer vastly different social and political visions.

FERNANDO PORTALES ILLUSTRATION

march 8
women
around the
globe
unite!
international
women's day

HEU marks International Women's Day

ACTION PLANNED

Cliff Andstein (BCGEU), Barry O'Neill (CUPE), Marilyn Rust (HEU) and Sheila Vataiki (HSA) announce March 8 job action by community social service workers.

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MARGI BLAMEY PHOTO

COMMENT

The fight for bread and roses in community social services

by Chris Allnutt

BREAD AND ROSES, jobs and justice – as more than 800 HEU community social services members, mostly women, fight for a fair collective agreement, their battle reminds us that the goals of International Women's Day – the goals of jobs and justice, are still out of reach for too many of our sisters.

They're our community social services members. They provide critical care and support to some of the most vulnerable and marginalized members of our society. And their work is undervalued in a sector that is chronically underfunded.

Community social services workers earn less in wages and benefits than health sector workers who do similar work – as much as \$4 to \$8 an hour less than their health sector counterparts. Others who work 24-hour, live-in shifts, make less than minimum wage. And they have inferior vacation and health benefits and no pension plans.



The government relies on contracted community social services agencies, both non-profit and for-profit, to provide critical care services in our communities. But the contracts don't include employment security or successorship rights. So when a group home is sold or closed, or a contract changes hands, care-providers lose their jobs, and clients lose their access to consistent care. Collective agreements are out the window.

Despite repeated commitments from Victoria to close the wage gap for women in this sector, we're still a long way from a fair settlement at the bargaining table.

That's why we've chosen March 8, International Women's Day, as a focal point for action to support community social services members' bargaining demands for fairness.

And we have reason for optimism. For the very first time, the sector's four unions are united in their demands.

HEU, CUPE, HSA and the BCGEU, together representing 10,000 community social services workers, have announced coordinated job action, including a first-ever, province-wide strike if negotiations remain stalled. And all the unions have recorded overwhelming strike mandates to support this action – HEU members lead the way with a 97 per cent strike mandate.

The strike deadline? March 8.

Finally, there's a disturbing rumour circulating that Victoria is going to hand over big bucks to pacify doctors – the province's highest-paid health professionals. If that turns out to be true, and the situation in community social services remains unresolved, frustration and anger could boil over.

So, as time marches toward International Women's Day, HEU, along with our union partners, will continue the fight for bread and roses, for jobs and justice, to win a fair collective agreement for our community social services sisters and brothers.

'We've chosen March 8, International Women's Day, as a focal point for action'

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.

Thank you HEU

On behalf of the nurses' bargaining committee, and the council and membership of the B.C. Nurses' Union, I want to extend my utmost thanks and appreciation to the members of HEU for the support you gave us during our recent job action.

Your understanding about our need to take the action we did, the support you demonstrated about the issues we raised, the messages of solidarity we received from your members on picket lines, in the media and in private conversation were all crucial factors in what we were able to achieve at the bargaining table.

We appreciate that many of you incurred some financial losses in respecting our picket lines while many of our members were required by essential services agreements to go into work. Many of the difficulties that arose during

our job actions simply highlighted the problems besetting our health care facilities – increased acuity levels, crushing workload, staff shortages – problems our bargaining and our job action were attempting to address.

I believe the efforts of both HEU and BCNU in this bargaining year have produced some significant results toward alleviating some of these problems, to the benefit both of our patients and of our members.

Please be assured that the next time HEU members need our support in any future job action, the members of the B.C. Nurses' Union will be there without reservation.

CATHY FERGUSON,
President,
B.C. Nurses' Union

Perfusionist protests

I would like to respond to the misinformation being spread by HEU regarding the request by perfusionists to be represented by HSA.

The perfusionists made application to the

LRB to be recognized as paramedical professionals in early 1997.

The HEU opposed this application (with very weak arguments) knowing that such recognition would mean perfusionists would become members of HSA.

After much stalling by the HEU and after passage of the Health Authorities Amendment Act in August 1997, HEU reversed its position and agreed that perfusionists were indeed paramedical professionals.

HSA is now seeking to establish its right to represent perfusionists by virtue of the legal rights acquired at the time of the perfusionists' original application to the LRB. HSA had no part in this original application which was an initiative of the perfusionists of B.C. through the B.C. Society of Clinical Perfusion.

Perfusionists in B.C. know that they are and have always been paramedical professionals who have historically been misclassified in HEU rather than the paramedical professional union (HSA).

FILIPPO BERNA,
Clinical Perfusionist,
Vancouver General Hospital

Pat on the back

I chaired our local of the BCGEU and had the good fortune to receive your paper a few times. Wonderful work, wonderful people. So many nice things I can say about the contents.

Keep up the good work!

ANNE STRECHUK,
Retired LTC,
Crescent Valley

Appreciated the help

HEU was required to reopen parts of the essential services levels and did so very successfully with the help of brother Dave Williams from the Victoria HEU office.

Dave had a difficult time as did the committee because the employer was not forthcoming in supplying the proper information to HEU and then claimed that HEU had made a deal prior to any negotiations with the committee.

Dave fixed that flat in the face of the human resource officer who then had to backtrack and right the wrongs created by incompetence.

Dave went on to negotiate the essential services levels agreement at Nanaimo Regional General Hospital.

We thank Dave and the many others who have worked on behalf of HEU members at Nanaimo local, the struggle is far from over – solidarity!

BARBARA RIDDY,
Nanaimo

So did I

I just want to write a letter thanking Kathy Dinning and the rest of the staff at HEU who work on WCB files.

I won my recent appeal with their help, and I just want to let other members know that if they are in the middle of a fight with WCB, there is hope! Again, thanks.

DORISSE METCALFE,
Sechelt

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Guardian

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

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What we're up to

March 8 is IWD

Textile workers, all women, went on strike in New York on March 8, 1857, protesting their 12 to 14-hour workday and low wages and demanding the right to vote. It ended in a violent struggle with police.

In 1907, the strike was commemorated with women demanding a 10-hour work day. Three years later at the International Socialist Conference, labour leader Clara Zetkin proposed March 8

become International Women's Day. In 1977, UNESCO proclaimed it as the day to celebrate IWD around the world.

This year's theme for IWD is *Equality Through Global Solidarity*, a theme which HEU's women's committee shows in their IWD sticker this year.

There will be celebrations around the province – watch for news in your community.



Langley backs fired care aide

Forty HEU members at Langley Memorial Hospital took part in a spontaneous job action on Jan. 4 in support of a fired co-worker. The care aide, who worked in the facility's extended care unit, was fired after the family of a resident accused her of abuse. This union sister is held in very high regard by her co-workers.

The new head nurse who fired the care aide is standing by her decision. It is going to arbitration in April.

After the Christmas holidays, the care aide's co-workers began hearing conflicting stories about the accusation. Peter James, chief shop steward at the local, said this, coupled with their disbelief she could have committed the abuse, prompted them to hold a demonstration outside the facility.

Participants were either on days

off or took part immediately preceding or following their shift. The employer held a meeting with the demonstrators, but offered no satisfactory resolution, stating that they still upheld the dismissal of the worker.

The arbitration is still set for April.

Guardian on the 'net

HEU's newspaper, the *Guardian*, started life as a newsletter in 1950.

It was christened the *Hospital Guardian* in 1957 and changed to a newspaper format the next year.

Since that time it has gone through many metamorphoses, changing with the membership and design styles.

Technology too had a hand

in the look, feel and production of the *Guardian*. The first newsletter was run off on a mimeograph machine. Today the layout is done in-house by a professional desktopper. That was a giant technological leap.

In January 1999 the *Guardian* went onto the internet, a step which would have been unimaginable even 10 years ago. From now on (until there is another

change which we cannot imagine) you can find the *Guardian* on the HEU website at www.heu.org by clicking on the *Guardian* graphic. Presently online are issues from July/August 1998 to the present. Look for the next *Guardian* – both on- and off-line – in Mid-May.

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ONLINE EDITION

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Registered nurses have agreement

Registered nurses voted 71 per cent in favour of ratifying the proposed contract on Jan. 26, with a 63 per cent turnout.

HEU members were out on the picket line to support BCNU job action in late November and early December 1998.

BCNU president Cathy Ferguson said that the support of the HEU members on and off the picket line was crucial to the resolution of the registered nurses' dispute with the Health Employers Association of B.C. (see Letters, page two).

The new agreement provides \$50 million to hire 1,000 new full-time registered nurses over the next two years. BCNU will be working in the months ahead to implement these provisions.

HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt says that HEU also looks forward to working with BCNU to lobby for more care aides and LPNs for the nursing team.

"We all know that that would go a long way towards alleviating everyone's workload problems," he said.

The HEABC ratified the agreement by 90 per cent on Feb. 4.



STICKING TOGETHER
"Any job action we undertake is not a step taken lightly," HEU bargaining chairperson Marilynn Rust (second from right) told reporters at the Feb. 10 news conference. Rust is flanked by BCGEU's Cliff Andstein, CUPE's Barry O'Neill and HSA's Sheila Vataiki.

Unions issue strike warning Employer votes 100 per cent to lock out HEU

REPRESENTATIVES FROM HEU, HSA, CUPE and BCGEU stood in solidarity at a news conference Feb. 10 and warned that B.C. may be on the verge of its first-ever province-wide strike in community social services. The four unions also called on government negotiators to return to the bargaining table in an effort to head off job action set to begin March 8, International Women's Day. All four unions are currently bargaining for separate contracts with the Community Social Services Employers' Association and are cooper-

ating on a global job action strategy. "Together we are stronger," said HEU community social services bargaining committee chairperson and group home care-provider Marilynn Rust. "We are united. We are determined."

In January, community social services employers voted 100 per cent in favour of locking out HEU care-providers at their work sites in the Lower Mainland, Fraser Valley, Kootenays and Vancouver Island. At press time employers had still not announced a lockout date.

"Social services employers would rather lock us out than sit down and bargain a fair collective agreement,"

said Rust. "It's past time for Victoria to give CSSEA a mandate to close the wage and benefit gap rather than allowing them to sandbag negotiations."

"We'll be working hard to publicly unmask the employers' lockout strategy, and to dispel employers' claims that fair treatment for our members comes at the expense of their clients," said HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt. "Nothing could be further from the truth."

In mid-December, the 700 HEU care-providers directly impacted by these negotiations voted a resounding 97 per cent in favour of possible job action.

Foley's report flawed for HEU paramedicals

HEU's Provincial Executive and Provincial Bargaining Committee are recommending rejection of Brian Foley's proposed terms of settlement between the paramedical bargaining association and the Health Employers Association of B.C.

The bargaining association, with HSA as the lead union, is recommending acceptance, but all the other mem-

bers of the association – HEU, CUPE, BCGEU, UFCW and PEA – are not, because some provisions would reduce take home pay and undermine disability benefits for its members.

"As it stands, Foley's report shaves 1.75 per cent off parameds' take-home pay to pay for an LTD plan that's on shaky ground," says HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt. Curr-

ently HEU paramedicals are covered by an employer-paid LTD plan.

"Our best information is that the LTD plan is badly underfunded," says Allnutt. "That undermines the ability of the trust to guarantee future disability benefits and may put the union in a position of liability for shortfalls in its financing."

HEU has joined with BCGEU, CUPE

and PEA in seeking expert opinion on the possible illegality of the proposal.

On another issue, language in the report would enable employers to reduce benefits for injured workers.

"This concession is sure to be front and centre at facilities sector bargaining in 2001 if it becomes part of the paramedical collective agreement now," says Allnutt.

WHAT WE'RE UP TO



Retired HEU member Grace McDuff and 16-year resident Mildred Fisher at the Valentine's Day Tea which was held in support of May Bennett Home. The event, held at the facility, attracted about 100 members of the public, staff, residents and their families.

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Heart-felt campaign

The future of May Bennett Home in Kelowna is uncertain, and the community is not about to accept that. This is evident from letters to the editor, radio talk shows, etc. There is no doubt that there is a need for more intermediate care beds in Kelowna, but people are worried about the possibility that private interests may

win a contract to build a new facility. The union and the community want the regional health board to keep it public and to build any new facility on land adjacent to May Bennett.

Allan Claridge, spokesman for the Friends of May Bennett Home, said, "We want the province to construct and operate an intermediate care facility at the present location and nothing short of this meets the needs of people in this region."

In Terrace – insult and injury

In protest against increasing workloads, housekeeping staff at Mills Memorial Hospital staged a five-hour sit-in Dec. 14.

Sixteen members of the housekeeping staff, including injured workers, participated in the protest sparked by management plans to cut weekend shifts. The protest ended as management initiated a back-to-work order and after promising a joint committee to review scheduling issues.

As a result of those meetings, housekeeping staff are getting some weekend relief but are still facing a heavy and dangerous workload. Twenty per cent of Mills Memorial housekeeping staff are currently off-the-job on WCB or LTD claims.

"But at the most recent meeting," says HEU local chair Mary Nicholls "management said the committee wasn't working and

shouldn't meet. Our members walked out."

And to add insult to injury rates, 15 of the protesting housekeeping staff were disciplined and those scheduled to work the day of the protest have been threatened with three-day suspensions.

"Even the ones on LTD and WCB received discipline letters if you can imagine," says Nicholls.

The union is grieving the disciplinary action.

May equity conference

HEU's fourth Equity Conference will be held on May 12 and 13 at the Richmond Inn.

Members of the First Nations, Ethnic Diversity, People with DisAbilities and Lesbian and Gay standing committees are invited to apply to attend. Application forms are available from your local's secretary-treasurer or by calling the

Provincial Office at toll-free 1-800-663-5813 or 734-3431 in the Lower Mainland. Application deadline is March 26.

LPNs on the campaign trail

Licensed practical nurses around the province are under attack. Cutbacks on LPN staff are threatened in Princeton, Nelson and New Westminster, and they're fighting back.

On Nov. 25 Princeton Hospital LPNs April Rykers, Cathy Bedard and Colleen Lueke stood up at the Okanagan/Similkameen Regional Health Board meeting and answered questions regarding the future of LPNs at their facility. They wanted to know how any proposal would affect delivery of health services in their community. They blitzed local newspapers and radio stations and even visited a kindergarten to talk about what LPNs do. They gave

Her criticism's constructive

Without a secure place to live, people will not have access to good health care and education

by Dale Fuller

JUDY GAYTON rides her motor scooter through the streets of Nelson, where she is well-known for her outspoken advocacy for the underdog. But housing is her abiding passion.

"I first became involved as a co-op housing consultant in Regina in about 1980 and have been a kind of housing missionary ever since," she says. "When I figured out the importance of housing to economic development and health and welfare and every other aspect of our society, I became kind of a kook on the subject."

Gayton is a consultant and advocate for non-profit rental housing for those whose needs are not being met in the marketplace: the frail and low income families and singles, folks who have mental challenges or mental illness.

Rental housing is critical to those who probably never will be in a position to own their own homes. For all intents and purposes, she says, there is nothing being built now. It's a lousy investment.

And the housing market is inequitable. Homes are bought and sold over and over again at ever escalating prices after the initial construction costs have been paid.

"The money goes in the front door of a bank and out the back – right to the bottom line of some investor. It's not being used to pay for teachers, violin lessons; it sucks the life blood right out of the community," Gayton says.

Her view is that the federal government needs to reinvest in non-profit housing. It saves money down the line and also generates benefits in health and welfare. She favours a capital gains tax on profits made on residential accommodation, to stop the spiraling cost of home ownership.

When she moved to Nelson 10 years ago, she jumped right into community activism. She's a city councillor but finds it frustrating. She is so involved with the housing issue that she often cannot vote on what is most important to her. It would be considered a conflict of interest. So, she has to do some deep thinking before deciding whether or not to run in the next election.

She gained a certain amount of notoriety recently when she resigned from her position on the community health council after a dispute over the issue of turning over Mount St. Francis Hospital to a public-private partnership.

She considers the health council to be almost a secret society. They say they want community input but use tactics



MARIELLA CUMMINGS PHOTO

TIME OUT Judy Gayton relaxes on the beach with ecologist and nature writer husband Don Gayton, on a well deserved rest from her myriad commitments.

like announcing meeting times and then changing them to in-camera sessions with no advance notice.

"Della McLeod, the labour rep from HEU on the health council, is trying to get a resolution passed that meeting times cannot be changed without plenty of prior notice," she says.

Gayton just became too frustrated with the level of debate on the council – she could tolerate it no longer.

"When I was arguing against public-private-partnerships, they used this analogy: you're married to a guy who gives you no money to buy shoes, so you go out and buy your own."

Gayton says. "Better to say it's your money, not his. What you do is send your child out to buy the shoes (*read health, education and welfare*) and when he comes back with a comic book (*read a rickety old sawmill*), you send him back to buy what you asked for in the first place."

She felt she would be more useful outside the council than dealing with people who use that sort of analogy to justify privatizing hospitals.

Gayton served on the hospital and intermediate care boards (the predeces-

sors to the community health council) for years prior to being appointed, and feels she has an in-depth understanding of health care issues. After asking for

eight months if the budget would be balanced, and being told many times that yes, it would be, it turned out not to be true. "I would fire someone over

that, but they said, 'what's for dessert?'" Since resigning from the council, she attends all the meetings as a member of the public and skewers them with her questions.

Her day job "to support her housing habit" is as a career counsellor. She runs a poverty workshop for the Ministry of Human Resources and sees about 150 people a week who need to go on welfare benefits. "I hear so many sad stories," she says.

One of her housing projects for at-risk youth will open in May.

She lives with her husband and five children, three of whom are special needs children she and her husband have adopted.

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

BALANCING



IT ALL

WHAT WE'RE UP TO

the kids stickers saying "licensed practical nurse in training."

More recently, Royal Columbian LPNs began their own campaign when they got wind of possible cutbacks. A visit to a health board meeting attracted coverage in the local television media. In Nelson, LPN Anna Koochin made a presentation to the health board on the role of LPNs. Thanks to HEU members, health boards are certainly getting an education on how LPNs fit into the nursing team!

Nisga'a negotiations moving forward

Negotiations for a first collective agreement to cover the 50 members in the Nisga'a Health Centre local opened last Dec. 10 and 11 between HEU and the Nisga'a Valley Health Board.

This comes after a protracted struggle to maintain union certification, something the NVHB had challenged through the

Canadian Labour Relations Board. Now, the union hopes to move forward and build upon the commitment Nisga'a tribal council president Joseph Gosnell made at HEU's 21st biennial convention in October 1998 regarding fair wages, benefits and working conditions for health care providers working on the reserve. Gosnell said he would support any organization working for pay equity for First Nations people.

HEU members at this local deliver programs and services including those for newborns and children, pregnant and new mothers, youth and elders. Talks reconvene March 4 to 5.

P3s uncorked in Nelson

A coalition of union and community activists is campaigning against the Nelson and Area Health Council's consideration of a public-private partnership



Ho Ho Ho. Santa Claus paid an early call to children of HEU members at Broadway Pentecostal local on Dec. 6. Some of the older kids thought Santa bore a striking resemblance to Ralph Johnston of maintenance, but the younger ones said it was definitely the real McCoy. Kids and adults had a great time.

to replace the Mount St. Francis long-term care facility. And they've racked up a string of victories along the way.

Under pressure from the coalition, health council members agreed in December that a privately operated facility replacing the Mount was unacceptable. In early January, local MLA and cabinet minister Corky

Evans also declared his opposition to a privately operated facility. But like many health council members, he is less clear about an arrangement where the private sector would build and then lease back the facility to the health council.

"I think he's confused," says Eleanor Schmidt, an HEU activist and anti-P3 campaigner

who met with Evans in early January. "He has no problem with private money holding the mortgage, but I don't think he sees all the consequences."

Schmidt says the community coalition will try to change his mind. They've launched a petition with the goal of collecting 3500 signatures. And they're already half way there.

WCB report tips the scale for employers

Recommendations contained in the final installment of the WCB Royal Commission's report would reward employers who are injuring health care workers in increasing numbers.

"There is a shocking lack of balance in the recommendations of the Royal Commission," says HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt. "While recognizing the barriers faced by injured workers in their pursuit of WCB benefits, the Royal Commission report's concrete recommendations take clear aim at injured workers' benefit levels."

Allnutt says the Royal Commission's proposal to reduce WCB compensation rates from 75 per cent of gross earnings to 90 per cent of net earnings is completely unjustified in the face of a 7.5 per cent increase in injury rates in health care workplaces, B.C.'s most dangerous for on-the-job injuries.

"This scheme would reward health employers who have failed to provide safe workplaces while at the same time slashing benefits to injured health care workers," says Allnutt.

HEU is also opposed to a proposed offset of WCB compensation by amounts received from the Canada Pension Plan. "There is no justification for a raid by negligent employers on the pension plan contributions of workers and employers who've provided safe workplaces," says Allnutt.

And while the Royal Commission has recommended steps to reduce the red tape workers face in the appeal process, Allnutt says the Royal Commission's proposal to streamline appeals may actually deprive workers of their right to a fair hearing. Allnutt says HEU will work hard to make sure that any changes to WCB legislation promote safer workplaces and protect benefits to injured workers.

According to WCB statistics, health care injury claims increased by over eight per cent between 1997 and 1998.

ON JAN. 26 VGH nursing unit clerks called an emergency meeting to talk about workplace stress and to listen to a sister from medical records talk about how the restructuring in her department has resulted in staff cutbacks and why it has had a direct impact on unit clerks' workload.



DALE FULLER PHOTO

Priddy orders PCIS review

Public-private partnership at VGH is in trouble

by Mike Old

HEALTH Minister Penny Priddy has directed the Vancouver/Richmond Health Board to review a public-private partnership that front-line workers say undermines patient care at the province's biggest hospital.

Priddy's action comes after a string of front page stories highlighted problems at Vancouver Hospital and Health Sciences Centre's laboratory – the most recent revelation being that a new computer system failed to direct anatomical pathology reports to some patient charts.

And though the hospital and the Ministry of Health investigated that incident within days, HEU called on Priddy to carry out a broader audit of VHHSC's Patient Care Information System (PCIS) – a \$117 million public-private partnership between the hospital, B.C. Tel and the U.S. software firm Phamis Inc. with financing from the Royal Bank.

"For years our union has been questioning the cost savings hospital managers projected as a result of PCIS implementation," says HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt. "And we've been especially concerned that the project's narrow focus on cost recovery through staff reductions would undermine quality assurance and patient care."

Now, as PCIS implementation enters its fifth year, those front-line staff in the lab and health records who've survived the cuts are reeling from increasing workload demands.

And while problems in the lab have had a high public profile, the crisis in health records is just as serious.

A study just completed by HEU documents how PCIS-driven staffing and service cuts, and ill-conceived changes in work processes have led to misplaced, missing and incomplete charts, backlogs in meeting requests for patient

information, thousands of unfiled loose reports and general disarray.

The situation in health records deteriorated so badly that staff walked off the job in October 1998.

"Priddy's direction for a review of

PCIS validates the concerns expressed by our members in health records," says Allnutt.

"Finally, the clerical and technical staff who actually do the work will be consulted about changes

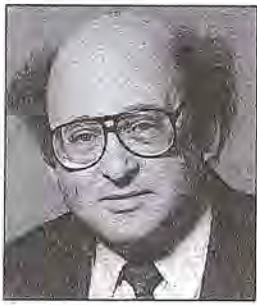
to the hospital's information systems.

"At the same time, the review will give the broader health care community in the region an opportunity to assess the real costs of PCIS on patient care. It's in everybody's interests to head off future crises at the hospital resulting from a failure to revisit PCIS implementation."

Allnutt says the review will help restore public confidence in one of Canada's leading teaching and research hospitals.

'Problems in the lab have had a high public profile'

PRESIDENT'S DESK



Democracy is more than just voting

by Fred Muzin

AT THIS YEAR'S Harrison Winter School, Canadian Labour Congress president Bob White talked about how building a labour movement means setting aside egos and transcending the considerable pride and commitment we each feel for our individual unions. No one affiliate, whether public or private sector, can do it alone.

Similarly, at a local level, the daily pressures of enforcing our contractual rights focuses us internally on servicing. We often neglect to strengthen our merged locals, to educate our members, to make our structures more inclusive and to network with community groups and activists.

For the most part, local elections have now been completed and we have our leadership for 1999. As members, our responsibility doesn't end when we cast a ballot. What is equally important is for us to remain involved – to set the vision

'We need to support each others' issues and grow'

and strategic direction of our local and to work with its officers and stewards to achieve success.

The lack of a quorum at meetings erodes democracy. It is simply not good enough to elect leaders, expect them to make the best possible guess at what we want, and then target them with criticism when they don't achieve what we never articulated. Democracy is hard work.

Now that most of our members are covered by three-year contracts, we have the opportunity and the resources to educate, re-energize, reach out to each other and define our agenda.

Grass roots members must understand that a corporate plan that demands the privatization of everything from health care, education, workers' compensation to even the supply of fresh water will prevent people from attaining economic justice and dignity. Governments that prefer tax reductions for the rich while child poverty and homelessness are rampant, that steal billions of dollars from unemployed workers and their communities, that prefer free trade to free people are morally bankrupt. Members need to realize that, on the ground, the success of a conservative ideology ultimately means losing grievances.

It is time that the initiatives adopted by our convention delegates to make us more inclusive become better reflected in our worksites. We complain that the demands of union activism are extreme, yet our members from equity groups such as the Ethnic Diversity, People with DisAbilities, First Nations and Lesbians and Gay standing committees remain a tremendous source of untapped strength. Last year our disAbled members were instrumental in helping the bargaining committee achieve improved LTD benefits for all. Lobbying by our members in the Lesbian and Gay standing committee resulted in improved access to adoption and pension rights. We need to support each others' issues and grow.

We should consider opening up our local meetings to seniors' groups, students, environmental advocates, the poor, our spouses/partners, our children and others. Our union should never be allowed to become an exclusive club or a secret society.

Our strength and ability to effect progressive change is rooted in the fundamental concept of solidarity at many levels. Each of us gains when we are united.



PROUD DAY It took two years for Laura Muzin to earn her Master Gardener's Certificate – two years of intensive lectures and many hours of volunteer work around the Lower Mainland.

Green thumb helps others

by Dale Fuller

Laura Muzin, a medical transcriptionist at Vancouver General Hospital, became interested in horticultural therapy when she was off work because of an injury. Not too long before she began a return-to-work program, she had enrolled in the Master Gardener's course at Van Dusen Botanical Gardens.

"I grew up in a house where my mom did all the gardening. All I did was mow the lawn," Muzin chuckles.

She didn't begin gardening on her own until she moved into a house with a yard. Friends gave her some bulbs to plant, and lo and behold, she discovered she had a true green thumb.

"I enjoy it. By the time I found out about the course at Van Dusen I was really passionate about gardening," she says.

Then she discovered horticultural therapy. She is quick to differentiate between that and gardening as therapy. "People like to garden because it makes them relax, feel good about their accomplishment," says Muzin.

But horticultural therapy uses gardening or plant-related activities to try to help people either physiologically – by restoring movement to hands or fingers – or to reach them if they are suf-

fering psychologically, for example from depression.

Muzin's injury left her with a chronic condition, and she can only work part-time in the hospital job now.

"There are not a lot of jobs around in this field [horticultural therapy], but I need to move on and I really believe in this – so I am going to do it," she says determinedly. She is enrolled at Langara College, which is just starting a program to train horticultural therapists (Malaspina College has a more fully developed one).

She does volunteer work at Banfield, the VGH extended care facility. A typical day there will see her helping residents plan a garden for the spring, looking at seed catalogues, helping them tend a potted plant if they are bedridden.

"It tends to stimulate memories of the gardens they used to have, and that is very satisfying," says Muzin.

She speaks fondly of one Alzheimer patient who was a professional gardener and can no longer communicate very well. "But as soon as his hands get in the dirt, he remembers instinctively how to do things," she says.

Banfield has a horticultural therapist on staff – a new HEU position. That is thanks to a very progressive recreational therapist, but Muzin says she hopes it opens the door to others.

AFTER



THE SHIFT

NOTEBOOK

P3s bad medicine for seniors

by Mike Old

There's a critical need to provide more residential care beds for our growing seniors' population. Unfortunately, the NDP's cure could do more harm than good.

Here's the problem: two years ago, a review of capital spending carried out by Victoria concluded that public-private partnerships should be used to provide long-term care beds. Under these P3 schemes, a private company could build a facility and lease it back to a regional health authority who would operate it.

Alternatively, the private "partner" could actually build and operate the facility – recouping their capital costs and padding their profit margin through operating subsidies from the public purse, diverting resources from direct patient care.

In either case, the attraction for debt-conscious governments is that the capital costs of construction are no longer on the books. But it's a penny-wise, pound foolish approach that increases the long term costs to taxpayers. That's because government can borrow at significantly lower rates and pay this capital debt over a



'It's a penny-wise, pound foolish approach'

shorter period than the private sector. Under a P3 arrangement, government will cover the higher capital costs of the private company through lease fees or operating subsidies.

It's also a policy that imperils the characteristically public and non-profit nature of our continuing care system. In the Simon Fraser Health Region, for example, 75 per cent of residential care beds are public or non-profit and 25 per cent are in private, contracted facilities. If the government's P3 policy is applied to those facilities most desperately in need of upgrading or replacement – the proportion would shift to 51 per cent private.

That would be a sad epitaph for an NDP government that prides itself as a defender of Medicare.

But cracks are starting to show in the P3 policy.

In Nelson, an anti-P3 coalition has won declarations from local health council members and Agriculture Minister Corky Evans that a "build and operate" P3 is an unacceptable option for replacing the Mount St. Francis long-term care facility. And in Kelowna and Nanaimo, regional health boards have only recently – and one must assume reluctantly – sought expressions of interest for provision of residential care facilities under the P3 policy. That's a year after former health minister Joy MacPhail first announced these initiatives.

It's time for a new strategy to provide long-term care beds – one that empowers regional health authorities to more closely integrate care for seniors rather than forcing them to abandon ownership and control of residential care to the private sector.

Labour

NOTEWORTHY NEWS ABOUT ISSUES AFFECTING WORKING PEOPLE HERE AND ABROAD

Greed tops bill

by Margi Blamey

ON DEC. 5, 1998, Cineplex Odeon (Sony) and Famous Players (Viacom) began locking out their 71 unionized projectionists, members of the B.C. Projectionists Union, Local 348 of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE).

By Dec. 18 every theatre had locked out and picket lines were up at 30 sites

Dispute history

- 1984 – independent arbitrator sets hourly rate of \$32.50 for a single projectionist operating a six-screen theatre
- 1985 – provincial Socred government ends government licensing of projectionists
- 1986 – coroner's jury, examining circumstances of an on-the-job death, recommends re-instatement of projectionist licences
- 1989 – Cineplex and Famous Players lock out unionized projectionists for three months, demanding 50 per cent wage cuts; settlement contains 20 per cent concessions
- 1995 – Cineplex and Famous Players threaten lockout and demand 60 per cent wage cuts; union settles for 25 per cent roll-back
- 1998 – Cineplex Odeon and Famous Players demand 60 per cent wage rollbacks over three-year contract, no overtime and no guarantee of hours; union rejects proposal
- Employers lockout all 30 sites throughout B.C. by Dec. 18

throughout B.C. in Victoria, Saanich, Prince Rupert, Prince George, Kelowna, Vernon, Kamloops, Clearbrook, Surrey, Langley, Delta, Richmond, Coquitlam, Burnaby, North Vancouver and Vancouver.

These two highly profitable corporations are demanding a 60 per cent wage cut among other concessions from the B.C. projectionists.

Sony, the parent company of Cineplex Odeon, earned \$51.2 billion U.S. in the year ending March 1998, and Viacom, the owner of Famous Players, earned \$13.2 billion U.S. in 1997.

The concession demands are unnecessary, the only reason for them is uncontrolled corporate greed.

With so few members spread across the province, maintaining effective picket lines is impossible. Many theatres are open 12 or more hours a day, seven days a week.

"Only with the support of other unions will we be successful," said Local 348 president Damon Faulkner. "No one wants to see any employer get away with a 60 per cent wage cut. This is totally discretionary spending; it's a private corporation that makes a lot of profit."

Many sisters and brothers have thrown their support behind the projectionists since the first lockout. Most visible has been the turnout at three January rallies, called by the B.C. Federation of Labour, held on busy Friday and Saturday nights at Famous Players Silver City theatres in Richmond, Surrey and Coquitlam.

More targeted-theatre picket lines, bolstered by members from other unions, have been scheduled on high attendance days and on a rotating basis



DALE FULLER PHOTO

TALKING IT UP Taliesin Smith of CUPE local 3338 (Simon Fraser University) asks theatre patron to respect the picket line at Coquitlam's Famous Players Silver City theatre complex on Jan. 16.

into March. When you go, make the labour solidarity clear – take your union support signs.

A mass "Rally Against Corporate Greed" is in the works for Feb. 27 in the Lower Mainland, with details to be announced closer to that time.

Support continues to grow as more people recognize the threat that the indefensible concession demands of Goliaths Cineplex Odeon and Famous Players pose to all working people.

Forcing rollbacks in wages, benefits and working conditions to the lowest common denominator possible is what the projectionists are fighting and could happen to anyone anywhere at any

time. HEU members can support the B.C. projectionists in their fight for fairness against Cineplex Odeon (Sony) and Famous Players (Viacom).

First of all, honour their picket lines and then walk with them.

Contact Cineplex Odeon and Famous Players and register your disgust over the lockouts and the concession demands.

Tell them you won't buy Sony products or patronize Blockbuster Video (Viacom).

• For further information about these actions and others, contact the B.C. Projectionists Union Local 348 in Vancouver at phone number (604) 685-0007 or fax number (604) 685-9554, or check their web site at www.bcprojectionists.com.

'The concession demands are unnecessary'

MORE THAN 1,000 members of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, and their families and supporters turned out for a massive, Vancouver port-side rally Feb. 3 to protest contracting-out of their work to non-union firms. The ILWU is currently in contentious, waterfront-wide contract talks with the employers' association.



MARGI BLAMEY PHOTO

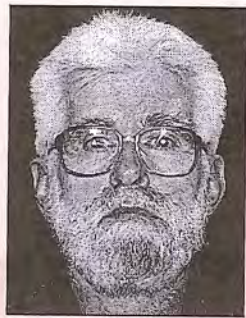
Anaesthetists strike in Poland

In early January the Polish government rejected demands of unionized anaesthetists whose protests over health care reform have resulted in the closure of operating rooms across the country.

The anaesthetists' union reported approximately 1,800 of Poland's 2,700 specialists had resigned, although the government claims the number is much less. The mass resignations underscore the difficulty the government faces in pushing through changes to the medical system by introducing free market elements.

The anaesthetists are angry over the government's refusal to allow them to sign contracts directly with regional health funds [zones] which are being set up under a sweeping reform program that began Jan. 1, 1999.

Youth and experience combine on new executive



David Ridley (1st Vice-President), Colleen Fitzpatrick (2nd Vice-President) and Leo Bibo (3rd Vice-President) are all veteran executive members.

HEU's newly elected Provincial Executive will take the union into the next century. They all share a vision to get members more involved and make themselves accessible.

President

Fred Muzin returns for a third full term as president and one of the union's three full-time officers. A biomedical electronics technologist from St. Paul's Hospital since 1977, Muzin was on his local executive for 11 years and was first elected to the PE and provincial bargaining committee in 1986, serving as 3rd vice-president for two terms until he was elected 1st vice-president in 1990. He is currently HEU's officer at the B.C. Federation of Labour and sits on the national executive boards of CUPE and the Canadian Health Coalition. Muzin's priorities this term are to help develop the Provincial Executive as an accountable and accessible leadership force out in the locals, to revitalize the membership in the never ending struggle for social justice and one contract for HEU members.

Secretary-Business Manager

Chris Allnutt was confirmed for this position for the second time at the 1998 convention. He originally assumed office when Carmela Allevato stepped down in 1996. Before that he was HEU's assistant secretary-business manager for six years and a senior research analyst for one year. He came to HEU after working as a researcher for the B.C. Nurses' Union, the Management and Professional Employees' Society and the Trade Union Research Bureau. He started young as a student activist in his university days. "I'll be working with others within the union to make it stronger and more effective, more responsive to members' needs and addressing concerns that members have, including making the workplace safer," Allnutt says.

Financial Secretary

Mary LaPlante begins her 15th year managing HEU's finances. She hails from Prince Rupert, where she was a clerical worker with Prince Rupert Regional Hospital and chair of that local from 1981 to 1984. First elected to the Provincial Executive as a regional vice-president from the North in 1982, she became financial secretary two years later. "My focus for this term is to continue to organize new members, spend time with our membership, assist in local building and offer support to local executives. As collective bargaining is almost complete, we have many other tasks and challenges to face in the

Delegates to HEU's recent convention chose six newcomers to join the incumbents on the union's executive council



The newcomers are Julie Amendt, Sandra Gray, Tony Gomes, Mary Nicholls, Donisa Bernardo and Laura Neil.



coming year," said LaPlante. "It would be my hope that we look to our future, work on our short-comings and make the necessary changes to make our union stronger."

Vice-Presidents

David Ridley returns for a third term as 1st vice-president. A bio-medical technologist at Victoria's Royal Jubilee Hospital, Ridley has held several positions in his own local and is the union appointee to the Capital Health Regional Board. His priorities for the next two years are to encourage locals to resist the increasing pressure by employers to form public-private partnerships, to ensure all of our members achieve a fair collective agreement and work with our staff to provide a challenging and fulfilling employment environment within HEU.

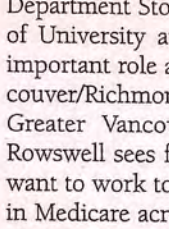
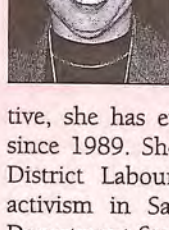
Colleen Fitzpatrick, an accounting clerk at Prince Rupert Regional Hospital, is 2nd vice-president for the second time. By the time she was elected to the last PE, she had already logged on a few years as senior trustee and senior trustee elect and was on the 1988 to 1990 bargaining committee. She served her local as chair, warden, shop steward and vice-chair, and was a Prince Rupert Labour Council delegate. She is the labour rep on the region's community health council. A new group which prepares women to run for city council is another activity which claims some of her time. During the next two years Fitzpatrick sees her work on the PE as building on the union's strengths as well as addressing its weaknesses for a better tomorrow while meeting today's challenges.

VGH maintenance supervisor Leo Bibo returns to the PE as 3rd vice-president after serving one term as regional vice-president for the Lower Mainland. He has been active in his local since the late 1970s, serving as vice-chair, trustee, warden, conductor, shop steward and chair. He graduated from HEU's first-ever summer school and besides holding office in his local, he sat on many committees over the years. Bibo is a firm believer in grass roots activism and as such, was recently elected to the post of vice-chair from which he says he can be there to help VGH local's new chair.

Nanaimo long-term care aide Dan Hingley jumps from 2nd member-at-large to 4th vice-president in his second term on the PE. He has been a local activist since 1993 as secretary-treasurer, a rep on the OH&S committee and a shop steward – and is currently chair. He's the union rep on the Central Vancouver Island Regional Health Board, and serves on its finance committee. Dear to his heart is an organization called Bladerunners, a BC21 provincial government initiative which helps prepare disenfranchised youth for employment by partnering them with construction companies. He works with them as an advisor. He also advocates for housing through his membership in the Nanaimo Affordable



Housing Society. "The union will be facing many challenges," says Hingley. "Our locals and activists must continue to be united and work towards future security for ourselves and other working people."



Fifth vice-president Sheila Rowsell works in G.F. Strong's spinal cord injury program as a clerical worker. She served as 3rd vice-president and as member of the *Guardian* editorial and women's committees in the last PE. She continues her work on the women's committee and has been the chair of the regionalization and restructuring committee. Serving now as chair of her local executive, she has either been an officer or shop steward since 1989. She became active in the Vancouver and District Labour Council in 1988, but started her activism in Saskatchewan in the Retail Wholesale Department Store Union and later in B.C.'s Association of University and College Employees. She fulfills an important role as the labour representative on the Vancouver/Richmond Health Board and also sits on the Greater Vancouver Mental Health Services Board. Rowsell sees fighting privatization to be a priority. "I want to work to reduce the role of private corporations in Medicare across the country and to build a working class spirit among our members," she says.

Trustees

Housekeeping aide Linda Hargreaves steps into the position of senior trustee elect to replace Della McLeod. She has been on the PE since 1992, serving as regional vice-president for Vancouver Island for two terms. She sits on the pay equity, comparability steering, and the international solidarity committees, the latter of which she was chair during her last term in office. She is vice-president of the Trade Union Group (TUG), which also deals with international solidarity issues. Hargreaves was first elected to office in the Cumberland Health Centre local in 1983 and has served as secretary-treasurer, vice-chair, warden and chief shop steward. She is currently assistant secretary-treasurer and shop steward. She is also on the union's political action committee. From 1988 to 1995 Hargreaves was treasurer for the Campbell River, Courtenay and District Labour Council and is now trustee of that body. She was a councillor in the village of Cumberland from 1990 to 1996 and president of the Comox Valley NDP constituency. Interested in the past of her community, she is a director of the Cumberland Historical Society and a Miners' Memorial Day organizer. She wants to see the PE changing the way it does business by talking more to the membership.

Surrey Memorial accounting clerk Julie Amendt is the new senior trustee-elect on the PE. This is not her first time in that position – she served from 1988 to 1992



Chris Allnutt, Mary LaPlante and Fred Muzin remain at the helm of the union.

and 1994 in the same office. She was not on the last PE, but she has also been regional vice-president for the Lower Mainland (twice). She has also served on three provincial bargaining committees. Amendt was first elected to her local executive in 1976. She has been conductor, vice-chair, secretary-treasurer, trustee and shop steward and sat on the political action and women's committees. She says her 13-year-old son keeps her very active in the community, where she is involved in the municipal coalition and school board activities.



HINGLEY



ROWSWELL



HARGREAVES



SMITH

From the position of 5th vice-president, **Maurice Smith** goes to being the PE's trustee. He works at Burnaby Hospital as a stores worker and is a veteran of the PE. Since 1978 he has served as financial secretary, member-at-large, and 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th vice-presidents. He was chair of his local for 20 years, and also was its vice-chair, trustee and warden and represented HEU on the Action Canada Network, a coalition of unions and community groups fighting attacks on social programs. "We must take from convention the mandate to organize the organized and to create a much stronger and socially-conscious union," says Smith.

Members-At-Large

A bed booking clerk at Children's and Women's Hospital, **Louise Hutchinson** was a trustee on the last PE, and she will serve for the next two years as a member-at-large. She began her activism at the local level in 1989 and has been vice-chair, chief shop steward, trustee, secretary-treasurer and OH&S representative. She designed and instructed the course "Healing Your Activist Heart" for the B.C. Federation of Labour/Simon Fraser Labour Studies program. Hutchinson is one of the founders of HEU's gay and lesbian caucus.

Kelowna General Hospital cook **Ken Robinson** was also on the last PE in another position – regional vice-president for the Okanagan. Now a member-at-large, he was first elected to his local executive in 1992 on which he served as assistant secretary-treasurer, senior trustee and vice-chair. He has served as recording secretary of the Okanagan and District Labour Council. Robinson thinks that it is vitally important that the PE and all HEU members work to preserve the quality of our national Medicare system.

Regional Vice-Presidents

Iris Reamsbottom is beginning her second term on the PE as regional vice-president for the Fraser Valley. She is a medical imaging clerk at Maple Ridge/Ridge Meadows Hospital. As chair of HEU's political action committee, she was also the union's representative on the B.C. Federation of Labour political action committee. And she is on HEU's women's committee. Her

involvement at the local level goes back many years. She served as chair for eight years and as secretary, shop steward and as a member or officer of the labour adjustment, OH&S and tri-union labour adjustment committees. She was recently elected for the two-year position of trustee. An active member of her community as well, Reamsbottom is a school trustee in District 42, sits on the Maple Ridge Social Planning Advisory Committee and the Maple Ridge Advisory Committee on Accessibility Issues. She is also on the NDP's Women's Rights Executive. Reamsbottom looks forward to serving on the new PE and says, "As we move towards the year 2000, I want to work with the union to promote our social, political and economic policies that will benefit our communities."

Sandra Gray, regional vice president for the Kootenays, is a licensed practical nurse who works as a care aide at FW Green in Cranbrook. A first time PE member, she has been a member of HEU for five years. She started out as a union activist – CUPE – in Fernie, where she worked in long-term care. She says she has been on the local executive for four years and has held every position except secretary-treasurer and currently holds the double positions of chair and chief shop steward. Gray has also been on the labour adjustment, labour management and grievance committees. And she is soon to become part of the OH&S committee at FW Green. She wants to have as much contact as possible with HEU members while she is on the executive. "I want the membership to be able to put a face to the names and titles," she says. "We need to go to our PE meetings, but we need to be out there where people can see us and talk to us."

Don Allen works as an attendant in the transportation department at Burnaby Hospital and is returning to a second term as vice-president for the Centennial region. He served his first term on the PE from 1992 to 1994, when employment security provisions were first brought into the collective agreement. Allen has been a member of the provincial bargaining committee twice, first in 1986 and again in 1998. He has been an activist since 1980 when he was a shop steward of the Burnaby local, and has since served in every position on the local executive. He also sat on many committees of the local. He is on the New Westminster and District Labour Council executive as member-at-large and sits on the B.C. Union Label Trades Council executive. In his community, he assisted in the creation of his neighbourhood CHC and attends the Vancouver/Richmond and Simon Fraser Health Board meetings. At Carnegie Centre he assists an HIV/AIDS support group. Allen



HUTCHINSON



ROBINSON

hopes to be accessible to HEU members in the Centennial region. "I want to especially assist them in building stronger, more organized locals," he says.

First time PE member **Tony Gomes** is an accounting supervisor at Holy Family Hospital and he is the new regional vice-president for the Lower Mainland Central region. He has been chair and trustee of his local as well as serving on the labour adjustment committee. He was on the resolutions committee for the 1998 convention and attended the Harrison Hot Springs winter school in 1998. His goal on the PE is to ensure that the membership's voice is heard at the PE level.

Cleaner **Kelly Knox** begins his second term as Lower Mainland Coastal vice-president. He comes from the St. Paul's local, where he currently serves as vice-chair. First elected to the local executive in 1991, he has also been chief shop steward, harassment advisor and conductor. Other union-related work includes OH&S and Vancouver and District Labour Council. Knox sees a lot of work needing to be done to get the new OH&S agency up and running. He says, "I hope that HEU's provincial OH&S committee can get information out to our members so we can really use and access that agency."

Mills Memorial Hospital LPN and activity worker **Mary Nicholls** is the new regional vice-president for the North. This is her first time on the PE. She is in her second term as the chair of her local and third term as shop steward. Nicholls has been on the labour adjustment and union management committees at her facility for three terms. A strong advocate for LPNs in her local, she is also a director of the College of LPNs and is on a committee at her facility to improve nursing team use. She volunteers at the Salvation Army and used to be an executive member of Terrace minor baseball and hockey. Providing grass roots activists with the resources they need is what she would like to see happen while she is on the PE.

Royal Inland Hospital pharmacy technician **Donisa Bernardo** is sitting for the first time on the PE as the regional vice-president for the Okanagan. She has been chair of her local since 1992 and was elected for the first time to her executive in 1991. She has also served as chief shop steward and the HEU regional liaison for the Thompson region (1994). Bernardo is 1st vice-president for the Kamloops and District Labour Council. She extends her activism to the community and is in the fight against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment and APEC. And to top it all off she is an avid Kamloops Blazers fan! Bernardo wants to see more openness in the PE. "By that I mean more inclusiveness for all union members. Membership on the committees is a start and we have to continue that. Accountability, too, meaning that the PE must be seen to be working alongside other members, not separately," she said.



REAMSBOTTOM



KNOX



ALLEN

CUPE women fight to keep services public

by Louise Hutchinson

In mid-November approximately 400 CUPE activists gathered in Ottawa for the fifth CUPE National Women's Conference, the first in six years.

The goal of the conference was to share our experiences and formulate an action plan putting women and equality issues at the forefront of CUPE's fightback campaign against privatization.

Women discussed the impact of cuts to public sector jobs and the devastation families feel at the loss of public services.

More often than not, women pick up the extra burden at home as health care, education and social services are cut in their communities.

There is more stress at work due to loss of hours, layoffs and privatization. Judy Darcy, CUPE National president, reminded participants that 60 per cent of CUPE members are women.

Twelve HEU women attended the conference. They all return to their locals with information on how restructuring affects women's paid work, globalization, historical gains in the union movement, strategies for organizing women workers, anti-privatization campaigns, organizing the organized, fostering women's leadership and on how to set up a women's committee in the workplace.

Participants marched to Finance Minister Paul Martin's office and attempted to serve him with a \$4 billion bill on behalf of CUPE and PSAC sisters who are not receiving their pay equity money.

• Hutchinson is a member-at-large of the Provincial Executive and co-chair of CUPE National Women's Committee.



DALE FULLER PHOTO

CUPE NATIONAL PRESIDENT Judy Darcy says that Canadians are better off keeping services like health care in the public sector.

Privatization not in Canada's interest, says CUPE report

The country's first-ever annual report on privatization concludes that Canadians pay a hefty price when private corporations gain control of public services.

Hostile Takeover: Annual Report on Privatization documents the devastating effects of the government selloff of public services.

The CUPE report sounds the alarm about quality, safety, access and accountability for Canada's hospitals, schools and water systems.

Darcy came to Vancouver on January 22 on the final stop of a cross-country tour to release the report.

Her tour focused public attention on

the myth that private is better, re-igniting the debate about privatization.

"Look what happens when our services are turned into profit-making corporate ventures. Greedy owners bankrupted three seniors care facilities in the province last year. That interrupted care for vulnerable seniors and robbed caregivers of decent jobs and back wages," said Darcy.

"The government's cut \$57 million from municipal operating budgets. At the same time they've changed the law to allow municipalities to privatize or

contract out services. It's a direct attack on services at the heart of our communities, including road repairs, garbage collection and recycling programs," she said.

'Greedy owners bankrupted three seniors care facilities'

The report cites polling on Canadians' fears about privatization, and shows three quarters of them have grave concerns about it.

People in this country oppose privatized water supplies by a margin of five to one.

• The full report is available at www.cupe.ca.

Anti-poverty groups go to Geneva

The delegation made the trek to expose Canada's shameful treatment of its poor

by Dale Fuller

SOcial justice groups from Canada made the trek to Geneva, Switzerland in December of last year to make presentations to the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on the plight of poor people in this country. The government of Canada made its own presentation.

The committee's mandate is to monitor compliance to the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to which Canada has been a signatory since 1976. The committee's conclusion in the case of Canada was that it falls far short of its obligations.

In fact, Canada's government received its harshest-ever criticism from the committee. It listed its concerns in the 11-page report. The implied question,

"How can there be so much increasing poverty in such a wealthy country as Canada?" was interwoven throughout the report.

Like a schoolteacher scolding an intransigent youngster, the UN committee made some powerful recommendations to Canada on how to confront its problems.

Among them were:

- restore national programs of transfer payments for social programs with universal entitlements and enforceable standards;
- enact the recommendations of the Royal Commission of Aboriginal People, ensuring respect for First Nations' resources so they can sustain their cultures and economies;
- protect poor children by prohibiting provinces from deducting family allowance from social assistance entitlements;
- reform EI to provide enough coverage for an adequate duration for all workers if they lose their jobs;
- recognize homelessness as the national emergency it is by reinstating the federal government's social housing

program, increasing shelter allowances and social assistance to liveable levels and protecting affordable rental housing stock;

- make education more accessible to low-income students;

- pay women equally for work of equal value; and

- address women's and children's poverty by concentrating on affordable day care, women's shelters and legal aid for family matters.

Jacquie Ackerly represented B.C.'s End Legislated Poverty, one of the nine Canadian non-governmental organizations to

make presentations in Geneva. "The committee made it clear that Canada is failing miserably in living up to its international obligations," she said upon her return.

In Ackerly's opinion, Canada must either repair the damage that has been done to its social safety net and therefore regain its place in the world as a defender of universal human rights or admit that it no longer belongs there.

"I believe that, in the end, Canada will choose to save face. And that is why I went to Geneva," she said.



ACKERLY

What the U.N. covenant says

The U.N. Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was approved by the U.N. in New York in 1966 and took effect in 1976. It was signed by 137 countries, including Canada.

Parties to the covenant:

- recognize the right of everyone to earn a living by work freely chosen and then accept and take the appropriate steps to safeguard this right;

- undertake to ensure the right of everyone to form trade unions and join the trade union of her/his choice, for the promotion and protection of her/his economic and social interests; and

- recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living, including food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions.

• From *The Long Haul*, publication of *End Legislated Poverty*.

letters

continued from page 2

Casuals formally object

This letter is directed to all members of the Hospital Employees' Union.

The contract that we recently signed with all health employers across B.C. has taken another swipe at casual workers. However, the damage was not done by the employers, but by our own very esteemed HEU leadership.

Section 16.01 in the new contract states that any and all shifts between one and 60 days, will be filled first by permanent full-time, and then by permanent part-time members. Casuals with more seniority hours will not be called until permanent members have filled these shifts.

Once again casuals have been given the short end of the stick. They pick up the leftovers. Apparently our union leadership has been fighting for 16.01 for years.

At a union meeting Dec. 9 in Kamloops, our regional representative stated that "as casuals we have no commitment to the facilities, therefore our worth to the union is less than permanent members."

As casuals we are already picking up the shifts permanent members don't want. In fact without us, permanent staff wouldn't get time off at all. Casual staff have as much or more commitment to the facilities as permanent staff, and we intend to remind our rep of this in the next elec-

tion. We have always assumed that any elected union leadership (including HEU) had a mandate to look after all its members. All members include casuals.

We suggest to our reps and the rest of our union elected, that instead of worrying about the commitment of its members, that it worry about the commitment to its members.

We urge all brothers and sisters, permanent and casual, to get together to have 16.01 eliminated, and to let our leadership know that all members are equal.

JIM LAMB, SYLVETTE JULIEN,
JUDY ADAMS, CINDY MATTER,
SUZANNE BLOUIN,
Kamloops

• This letter was originally sent to the Kamloops Daily News.

Another angry casual member

I am writing to support Ruth Meyers from the November/December issue of the *Guardian*. To Ruth, and all other unhappy casuals across the province; yes we do have rights.

Right now there are petitions against 16.01 in the *Overlander* and *Ponderosa* facilities in Kamloops.

These petitions could easily be circulated throughout the rest of the province. I say that all the casuals across the province should get together and sign these petitions.

At *Overlander* Extended Care, (where I

work), full-time people as well as casuals are signing this petition, because they realize how unfair 16.01 is.

I urge all members of HEU, permanent and casual, to get together and have 16.01 eliminated.

I also urge members to remind their elected officials of who put them into office. If they don't listen to us, perhaps we can send this whole union executive back to work as casuals themselves.

JIM LAMB,
Overlander Extended Care

Make it a one-pager

Let me first of all wish you and your staff a joyous Christmas and a blessed New Year for 1999.

After examining the November/December 1998 issue of the *Guardian* I notice there was no mention of Christmas – the paper is loaded with NDP propaganda and socialist material.

May I suggest in order to save HEU money and save trees – let us address only the issues dealing with HEU.

I believe that a one-page letter would do it. Take an example from the IBEW. For those interested in world problems such as Brazil, sexual orientation, etc. I am sure that there is enough material on the news stands to keep the individual informed.

A.M. CALDWELL,
Lions Gate

Vote on everything

The words "Democracy in Action" in your coverage of the October convention confuse me, as much as HEU's continued love-affair with the NDP. After listening to Glen Clark and Joe Gosnell, delegates voted obediently and unanimously to support the Nisga'a Treaty process, and reject a provincial referendum on the matter. How very democratic of them! Without polling the local members they purport to represent, (at least in my workplace), these delegates have voted to exclude any public say in the matter which affects us all. No doubt Joe was thrilled, and Glen felt his \$7 million propaganda money well-spent. At a time when we have a \$31 billion provincial debt and the NDP every month spending \$100 million we do not have, should we really applaud an undemocratic expenditure of \$500 million (and probably more) on the first of 50 proposed First Nations land claims?

I say we should not, but then neither Glen Clark nor the HEU convention seems interested in my opinion. As an 11-year member of HEU, I would like to see convention delegates required to poll local members on resolutions to be voted on at convention. As a B.C. citizen, I would like to see a referendum on the Nisga'a deal.

Thank you for this opportunity to express my views.

NEIL A. HARVEY,
*Care Aide,
Beckley Farm Lodge*

Comparability settlement is in our sights

Arbitrator Stephen Kelleher has called for "finality" in the process of determining comparability between HEU members in the facilities sector and BCGEU members who carry out similar work in direct government service. And he's set Feb. 27 as the date when all outstanding issues in the long-standing comparability process will be heard.

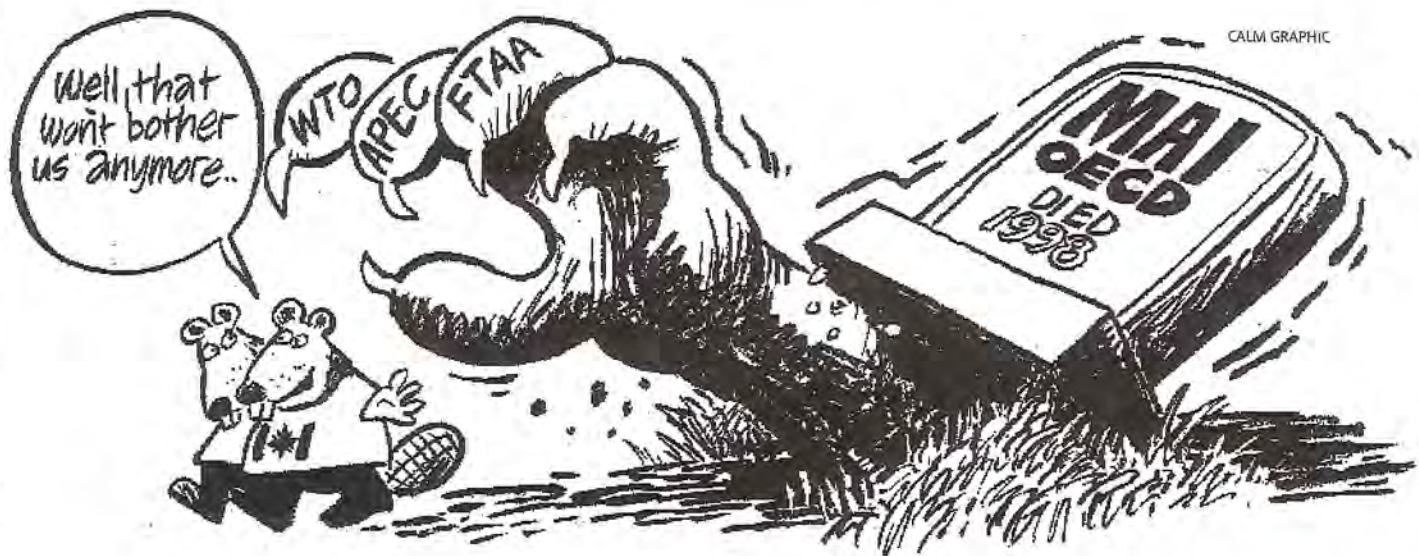
In a ruling handed down Jan. 22, his third on comparability since May 1997, Kelleher again rejected employer efforts to block HEU's claim for comparability payments to members as first set out in the 1991 facilities master agreement. In fact, Kelleher's conclusions on several key comparability issues will assist HEU in obtaining fair compensation for members in the final leg of the comparability process.

Kelleher says that HEU members receiving payments should not bear the cost of the long wait for comparability. He rules that interest should be paid on comparability payments retroactive to July 1, 1996.

And Kelleher ruled against health employers' argument that comparability was limited by government compensation guidelines set out by the Public Sector Employers' Council.

Kelleher has directed the parties to consider the following factors in finalizing comparability: wage differences at April 1, 1996, differences in job security, differences in benefits and differences in working conditions – including hours of work.

"It's been a long wait for our members," said HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt. "But it finally looks like we're coming to the end of our struggle to achieve comparability."



MAI: down but not dead

by Margi Blamey

WHILE the proposed Multilateral Agreement on Investment is down, it's not dead yet. Proponents of globalization have vowed to bring it back, probably through the World Trade Organization (WTO), with few changes but better marketing and public relations.

That's why wide, public debate on the deal must continue and on Feb. 17 the B.C. legislature's special committee on the MAI takes to the road to do just that with phase two of its hearings. The committee will visit 10 cities throughout the province, finishing in Vancouver on March 11.

HEU members are participating as presenters and as observers.

Strong turnouts in every city are important and indicate the high degree of interest people have in the subject, something that British Columbians demonstrated in last Fall's hearings in

Victoria and Vancouver. In October 1998, HEU president Fred Muzin, one of the B.C. Health Coalition's representatives, told the committee the agreement would conflict with the public purpose of Medicare, restrict the ability of governments to regulate private, for-profit and not-for-profit health care providers, and give commercial health care corporations an arsenal of weapons to use against public policy measures.

And, the coalition offered six recommendations, the most significant being that the federal government withdraw from the MAI negotiations.

The others addressed: the content of an alternative investment treaty; changes in the process when negotiating such agreements; resolution of federal/provincial/territorial jurisdictions

before entering into international negotiations; assurance of wide, public scrutiny of trade and investment deals before Canadian government ratification; and adequate federal financial underwriting to maintain and improve our public health care system.

To look at the BCHC's submission, check out HEU's web site at: www.heu.org, under "Newsletters." Refer to the newsletter entitled "MAI hearings tour B.C. beginning in February" dated Jan. 15, 1999; the BCHC's brief is attached.

Forewarned is forearmed – stay up-to-date on the MAI and other globalization tactics like APEC and the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA), and keep the pressure on all levels of government to act in the public, not corporate, interest.

'The agreement would conflict with the public purpose of Medicare'

Stop the presses!

Finance Minister Paul Martin tabled his "health care budget" February 16 and it contains some welcome – if limited – relief for B.C.'s beleaguered health care system. The budget boosts transfer payments for health care by \$2 billion nationally in the first two years and up to \$2.5 billion for the following three years. That could amount to a \$240 million shot in the arm for B.C.'s health care system in the upcoming year.

And while it's positive news, it only begins to make up for the cuts to health care that Martin began in 1995. Under the feds' five-year spending program, B.C. will be receiving the same level of transfer payments in 2004 as in 1995. That level of contribution begins to pale in the face of increasing cost pressures on health care like inflation, a growing and aging population, and increasingly expensive pharmaceuticals and medical technologies.

The fifth Alternative Federal Budget urges the federal government to take

VITAL MEASURES

AS THE GUARDIAN goes to press, federal Finance Minister Paul Martin is putting the finishing touches to his 1999 budget. And while there's indications of new money for health care, will it be enough to take health care off the critical list?

The 1999 Alternative Federal Budget, launched in Vancouver by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and the B.C. Health Coalition, says vital

measures are needed to resuscitate Canada's ailing health care system and improve the social and economic well-being of Canadians.

The AFB proposes an additional public investment in Medicare of \$2 billion in 1999, and \$4 billion per year over the next five years.

The budget also dedicates \$2 billion for a public home care program and \$500 million for the phasing in of a national Pharmacare plan. Based on the current distribution of federal transfer payments, the AFB proposals could inject an additional \$500 million into B.C.'s health care system.

"It's a plan that would relieve the pressure on health care's front lines in B.C.," says HEU president Fred Muzin. "And it's a fiscal commitment that would turn back the threat of a two-tier health care system, while strengthening the authority of the federal government to enforce the principles of the Canada Health Act."

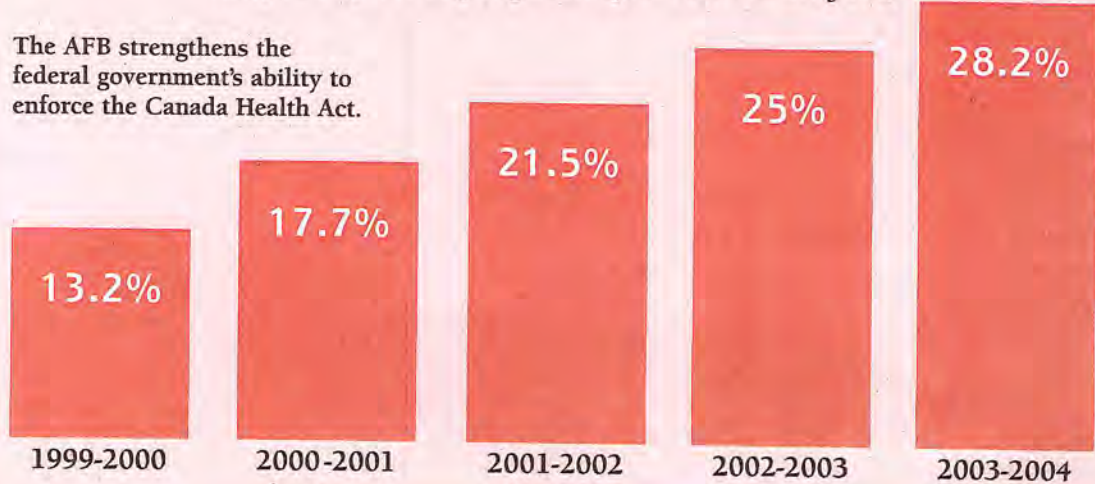
"Our budget will protect and improve the health of Canadians not only by reinvesting in Medicare, but also by addressing the root causes of poor health – unemployment, poverty, inequality, lack of access to education and environmental pollution," said Seth Klein, director of CCPA's B.C. office. "Through measures to fight poverty, provide adequate housing and secure pensions, the AFB would improve the health outcomes of Canadians."

Under the AFB plan, validated by the independent

Federal share of total public/private health spending

(impact of AFB proposals for cash transfers)

The AFB strengthens the federal government's ability to enforce the Canada Health Act.



Source: Canadian Labour Congress



KLEIN

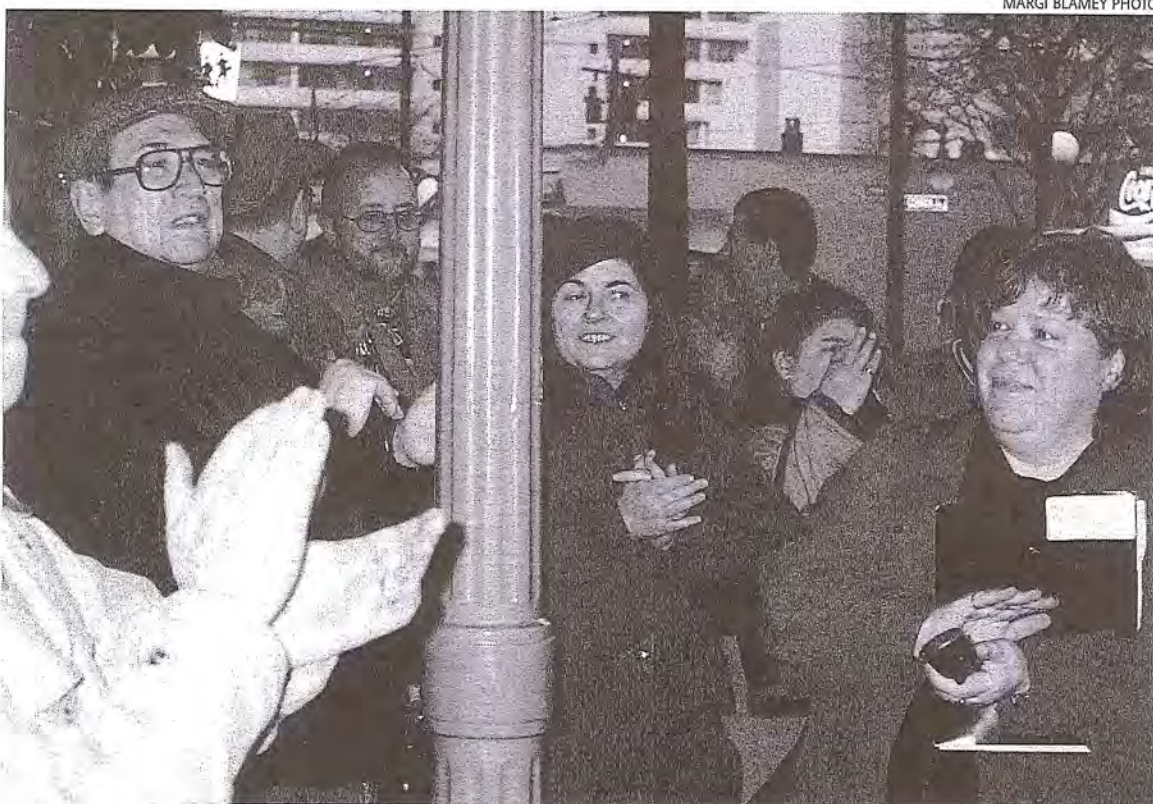
economic forecasting firm Inforemetrics, the unemployment rate falls below six per cent by 2001 and the poverty rate is reduced from 18 per cent to 12 per cent in four years. This is accomplished at the same time as the budget is balanced and the overall federal tax-to-GDP ratio remains constant.

"The federal government is poised to reap huge budget surpluses over the next two years," said Klein. "Using the surplus to pay down the debt or cut taxes at this time is pure folly. With continuing global financial instability, it's critical the surplus be spent on public programs to stimulate job creation and economic growth here in Canada."

The AFB increases core program spending by \$13 billion in 1999 and increases unemployment insurance benefits by \$6 billion.

"The federal government has balanced the books on the backs of the unemployed," said Klein. "Cuts to unemployment insurance benefits account for half the total cut in program spending in recent years. Our budget restores and improves benefits to the hundreds of thousands of unemployed Canadians who have paid premiums but have been shut out of the system."

• The Alternative Federal Budget, now in its fifth year, is coordinated by the CCPA and the Winnipeg-based coalition CHOICES. It's available on the internet at <http://www.policyalternatives.ca>.



VANCOUVER EAST NDP MP Libby Davies joined community and labour activists at a CLC/Vancouver and District Labour Council rally outside Vancouver Centre Liberal MP Hedy Fry's constituency office – staged to pressure the federal government for better UI benefits and coverage.

Workers 'left out in the cold'

As part of an on-going, national campaign to pressure the federal government to improve the Employment Insurance system, the Canadian Labour Congress commissioned *Left Out in the Cold: The End of UI Coverage for Canadian Workers*, a report that details the collapse of UI coverage and the plight of unemployed workers in Canada.

Based on Statistics Canada figures, *Left Out in the Cold* graphically details how changes to UI are affecting coverage for the unemployed across the country. It provides data on the percentage of unemployed who receive UI and breaks the data down by city, UI region, and federal riding.

Nationally, only 36 per cent of the unemployed qualify for benefits under current rules – less than half of those who qualified in 1989. In Vancouver, only 26 per cent now qualify.

Many women's, community and church organizations, anti-poverty groups, unions and other social justice-seeking proponents are pressing the federal government to use the EI surplus to improve benefits and coverage of the unemployed.

The CLC is pushing to have at least 70 per cent of unemployed workers covered and for claimants to receive at least 60 per cent of their weekly pay.

'Alberta Advantage'
a myth for most,
says new study

A Tale of Two Provinces

THE MAINSTREAM media and the business lobby have made much of the so-called "Alberta Advantage" – that province's strong economic growth and relatively low unemployment.

But according to a new study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and the Alberta-based Parkland Institute, the "Alberta Advantage" is an illusion for most people.

A Tale of Two Provinces: A Comparative Study of Economic and Social Conditions in British Columbia and Alberta goes beyond the headlines to examine what has happened to public services in both provinces, who has benefited from the economic growth in Alberta and identifies the sources of Alberta's recent growth and B.C.'s recent economic downturn. "Except for the wealthiest of the residents, what people save in taxes in Alberta they lose in

reduced public services and new out-of-pocket expenses," says Seth Klein, director of the CCPA's B.C. office and co-author of the report.

"Health, education and welfare all receive less public funding in Alberta than in B.C.

Funding for public programs in Alberta, which at one time was among the highest in Canada, is now at or below levels in the poorest Atlantic provinces."

Albertans now spend more per capita on private health care expenditures, more in post-secondary tuition, and send more to the government in the form of lottery and gambling expenditures.

And the "Alberta Advantage" as it relates to the job market withers under closer inspection.

"It may be easier to find a job in Alberta right now," Klein says. "But overall the benefits of growth in Alberta have been unevenly distributed. The 'Alberta Advantage' has not translated into concrete gains for the majority of working people."

Earnings and wages in Alberta are lower than in B.C. And more than in any other Canadian province, the Alberta labour market is characterized by inequities: between the income of workers and corporate profits, between hourly-paid workers and salaried workers and between the earnings of women and men.

The study shows that while both provinces need to do more to fight unconscionably high rates of poverty, the rate of poverty among children of single mothers in Alberta is 71.4 per cent as compared to B.C.'s rate of 58.6 per cent.

A key finding of the study is that both Alberta and B.C. remain too dependent on the export of primary resource commodities. Alberta, however, is more dependent on the resource sector, and is becoming

A look at the benefits of living in B.C.

- When all direct taxes are considered – income taxes, property taxes, sales taxes, payroll taxes, etc. – taxes in B.C. are the second lowest in the country after Alberta for all but the very wealthiest residents.
- B.C. has seen a steady increase in health care spending, and currently ranks first among the provinces with respect to public health care spending per capita. Alberta, in contrast, now ranks last among the provinces in per capita public health expenditures. In 1997, B.C. was spending \$367 more per person on public health care.
- B.C. spends over \$1,100 more per pupil on primary and secondary education than Alberta.
- In 1997-98, average university tuition in B.C. was almost \$800 per year less than in Alberta.
- Albertans now send approximately \$150 more per capita to government coffers by way of lotteries and gambling than do British Columbians.
- B.C.'s minimum wage is the country's highest at \$7.15 compared to \$5.90 in Alberta.
- Women earn 73.8 per cent of what men earn in B.C. – in Alberta women's wages shrink to 67.5 per cent of men. That's the lowest ratio in Canada.
- By 1997, the natural resource sector represented nine per cent of B.C.'s GDP, down from 13 per cent 10 years earlier. In contrast, Alberta's natural resource sector accounts for a growing share of provincial output, climbing to over 21 per cent of Alberta's GDP in 1997 from 19.5 per cent in 1987. Alberta is approximately twice as dependent as B.C. on the resource sector for its government revenues.
- Net exports are positive for Alberta. In B.C., however, net exports are negative, and thus a drag on growth. Alberta's international trade surpluses are three times that of British Columbia.

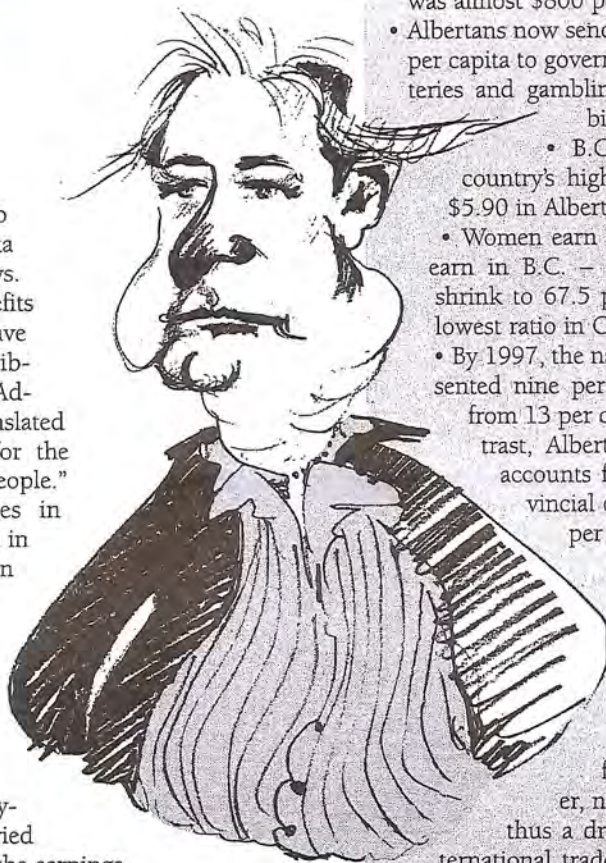
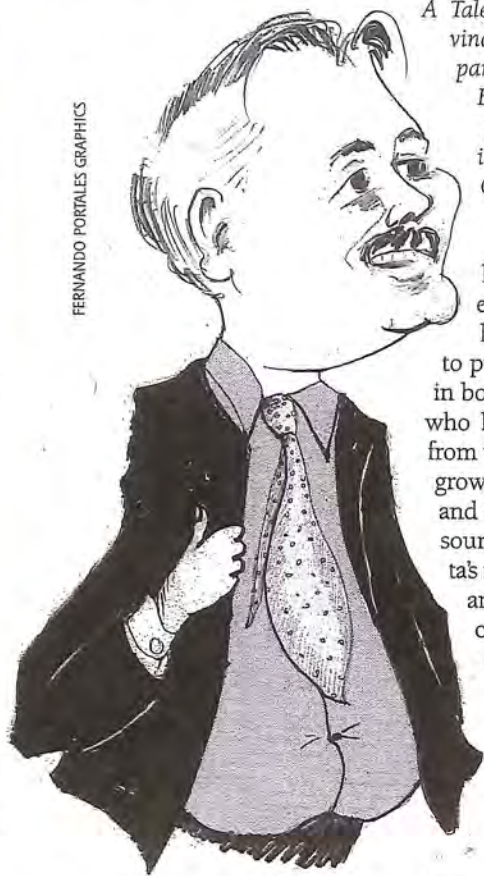
more so. The study concludes that Alberta's growth has been export-led, driven by oil and gas exports to the U.S. market.

"The 'Alberta Advantage' is not a product of lower taxes and budget surpluses," says Klein. "Rather, Alberta's growth results from the real Alberta advantage: oil and gas."

The Cost of Cutbacks

Summary of cost and service comparisons for a two-income family of four with an average family income of \$55,000	Alberta	B.C.	"Alberta Advantage"
Total direct provincial and federal taxes, 1998	\$13,331	\$14,067	\$736
Public health care expenditures per capita, 1997 (estimate)	\$1,587	\$1,954	-\$367
Private health care expenditures per capita, 1997 (estimate)	\$729	\$685	-\$44
Public education spending per pupil (K-12), 97-98 (estimate)	\$6,235	\$7,361	-\$1,126
Public post-secondary spending per capita, 96-97	\$315	\$373	-\$58
Average university tuition, undergraduate arts & science program, 97-98	\$3,102	\$2,308	-\$794
Average college tuition, academic program, 97-98	\$1,675	\$1,390	-\$285
Government revenues from lotteries and gambling per capita, 96-97	\$219	\$68	-\$151

A Tale of Two Provinces is available from the CCPA – B.C. office at (604) 801-5121 or e-mail ccpabc@intouch.bc.ca



MARCH 2-4

Introductory shop steward workshop, Kelowna.

MARCH 4-6

CUPE B.C. Women's Conference, Vancouver.

MARCH 8

International Women's Day.

MARCH 10-12

Introductory shop steward workshop, Nanaimo.

MARCH 23-25

Introductory shop steward workshop, Nelson.

MARCH 30/31, APRIL 1

Introductory shop steward workshop, Vancouver.

APRIL 2, 5

Office closed for Good Friday and Easter Monday.

APRIL 12-14

Introductory shop steward workshop, Prince George.

APRIL 28

National day of mourning for workers killed or injured on the job.

MAY 1

May Day, the international workers' day.

MAY 3-7

CLC convention, Toronto.

MAY 12/13

Equity Conference '99, Vancouver.

Americans seek refuge from persecution

by Dale Fuller

ALAN MAKI is an American citizen who came to Canada with his family in 1990 after his 10-year-old son was shot at as he waited for a school bus. This was not a random act of violence, and it was not the first time that it happened. Now the Canadian government wants to send them back.

Canada is a place of refuge to many people from around the world. But what to do with a man and his family who are from the United States and are claiming to be political refugees?

As a youth, Maki was involved in the civil rights movement and anti-Vietnam war activities. Documents released under the American Freedom of Information Act show that the Federal Bureau of Investigation began spying on him when he was 17 years old.

He believes his campaign for the repeal of the Communist Control Act and the National Security Act attracted the ire of the FBI and right-wing fanatics. He contends that the Bureau has hidden behind these acts to spy upon and harass American citizens. His family became the object of harassment, culminating in the attack on his son.

"Many people do not see, nor understand, this side of life in the United States of America," says Maki.

The family hurriedly entered Canada,



REFUGEE-SEEKERS Alan Maki and his now-grown son Jeremy (in baseball caps) are afraid of what will happen if they return to the United States.

fearful for their children's lives. They bought some land in Manitoba where Maki made a modest living trapping.

He became active in the Manitoba Trappers' Association, and his wife Carol in the local parents' advisory council.

The kids excelled in school, and the family became an integral part of the community.

Everything changed when Maki wrote an article in a trappers' newsletter condemning anti-First Nations racism in the fur trade.

Soon after that, representatives from the local RCMP detachment and Canada Immigration presented Maki with a deportation order, saying that the fami-

ly was in Canada illegally.

"We have not denied this, but there are extenuating circumstances," says Maki.

The community has rallied to the support of the Makis, who have applied for political refugee status in Canada. The Department of Immigration has granted a hearing, but much of the evidence needed to prove their case is being withheld by the FBI. And the Canadian government refuses to put any pressure on the Americans to open their files.

"Our lives would be in jeopardy should we be returned to the United States," contends Maki.

Visit their website at www.interlog.com/~almaki for more information.

'His family became the object of harassment'

Coming in from the cold

This winter, HEU gave many new members a warm welcome. The community social services sector grew by a total of 257 - from Kardel Consulting Services in Victoria, Namesta House in Nanaimo, Cultra House and Greenlea House on Vancouver Island and Salt Spring Island Community Services Society. And there are two new HEU parameds at Prince George's Simon

Fraser Lodge. In the independent category, 52 employees from the private, for-profit seniors' care facility, Waverly in Chilliwack, and 35 security officers at VGH are now HEU members. Finally, 13 workers at the Mercedes Guest Home in Abbotsford will become part of the HEU facilities sub-sector once the new owner's HEABC membership has been activated.

HEALTH CARE ON WORKING TV

New broadcast times

In the Lower Mainland, now two prime time broadcasts: Fridays at 7:30 p.m. and (NEW!) Mondays at 8:30 p.m.; on Kootenay Cable TV (Kimberley and Fernie) Tuesdays at 9 p.m., Wednesdays and Thursdays at 8 p.m.; and now on air in 50 American cities and worldwide on the internet at <http://www.workingtvc.com>.



Coffee break



All stories guaranteed factual. Sources this issue: CAW 2301 Hotline, Georgia Straight, Globe and Mail, Mahatma Gandhi, Reuters, UAW Solidarity/CALM, Vancouver Sun.

A regular union Joe

Tim Forneris, the groundskeeper who chased down Mark McGwire's record-breaking 62nd home run ball, returned the ball to the St. Louis Cardinal slugger rather than trying to make money off it.

"It's not mine to begin with," said Forneris. "McGwire lost it, and I brought it home. I'm just a regular Joe."

Well, a regular union Joe actually. Forneris is a member of the Service Employees International Union Local 50.

McGwire gave Forneris a pile of baseball memorabilia for the baseball. Forneris' family, including groundskeeper brother Tino and stadium concierge mother Rita, both SEIU members, got lifetime passes to the Baseball Hall of Fame.

A good idea

This exchange was recorded in a reporter's interview with



the late peace-activist, Mahatma Gandhi:

Reporter: "Mr. Gandhi, what do you think of Western civilization?"

Gandhi: "I think it would be a good idea."

Odd signs from England

In a laundromat: Automatic washing machines. Please remove all your clothes when the light goes out.

On a drycleaner's window: Anyone leaving their garments here for more than 30 days will

be disposed of.

In a safari park: Elephants please stay in your car.

On a repair shop door: We can repair anything. (Please knock hard, the bell doesn't work.)

In a department store: Bargain basement upstairs.

Y2K-17

If Julius Caesar were alive today, he would be dating his 1999 cheques MDCCC-CLXXXVIII, according to Brian Rose, a professor of classical

architecture at the University of Cincinnati. Modern users of Roman numerals must agree on either MCMXCIX or MIM, a headache known as the Y2K-1 problem.

It's the law

As a rule, rules are made to be broken. However, the Rules of Chocolate should be strictly followed:

- Chocolate-covered raisins, cherries, orange slices and strawberries, all count as fruit, so eat as many as you want.

HEU people

Congratulations X 2

Congratulations to **Raj Chouhan**, our HEU brother and staff member, on two recent appointments: his assignment as the director for the WCB/LTD/Rehabilitation department in the HEU Provincial Office and his re-appointment as a member of the provincial Labour Relations Board.

Always part of the family

Warmest wishes to brother **Dave Williams**, long-time HEU servicing rep. and life-long brother, on his retirement.

Dave has been part of the HEU family for more than 20 years, first as a local officer, then a PE member, and since 1980, a staff person in the Victoria regional office.

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

Along with good-byes from many well-wishers comes a great deal of gratitude and appreciation, too, brother.

Getting to know us

The lively, new smile in the Provincial Office belongs to librarian, **Jose Scriven**, who became HEU's newest permanent staff person this January.

Originally from South Africa, Jose and her spouse immigrated to Canada via the U.S. in 1995.

She brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to us but claims that she's on a steep learning curve that includes all our names.

In memoriam Shirley Blackburn

Sister **Shirley Blackburn** died suddenly on Oct. 14, 1998.

Shirley had worked at Vancouver's Columbus Residence for eight years and at the time of her death was secretary-treasurer of the local. She is greatly missed by her sisters and brothers.

In memoriam Raymond McCready

On Dec. 22, 1998, former HEU business manager (1968-1974) and dedicated trade unionist brother **Raymond McCready** died in Vancouver.

Ray began his union work with the IWA and continued at HEU until his retirement in 1987.

Throughout his life, he held integrity, honour and kind-

ness above all else. He is lovingly remembered by family, friends and business associates.

In memoriam William Rolfe

Brother **Bill Rolfe**, long-time HEU staff person, died on Dec. 6 in Vancouver.

Many HEU members and staff remember his kind heart and how he put others' needs ahead of his own. His work on WCB claims and benefits kept him in touch with HEU members, who were among the people he most loved to serve.

Bill was honoured by family and friends at a service on Dec. 11.

In memoriam David Todd

Brother **David Todd** died unexpectedly Jan. 5 in Victoria.

Family, friends, colleagues and clients remember and greatly miss his terrific sense of humour, his kindness, his delight in his work and his love of his four children.

In memoriam Val Marie Corbett

HEU sister **Val Corbett** died in Prince Rupert on Jan. 24. She worked for the past 11 years in the dietary department of the Prince Rupert Regional Hospital.

Her laughter and love of life was well-known to all and she will be fondly remembered by her family and many friends.

FOR INQUIRIES ON LONG-TERM DISABILITY

HEU members can call toll-free:

Health Care Benefits Trust: 1-888-736-2087

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.



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.



ALL CALLS ARE CONFIDENTIAL

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 OFFICES:

- Vancouver site
1-800-663-5813
- Abbotsford site
1-800-404-2020

NORTHERN OFFICE:

- Prince George
1-800-663-6539

OKANAGAN OFFICE:

- Kelowna
1-800-219-9699

VANCOUVER ISLAND OFFICES:

- Victoria site
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That's cold, brother

Southam columnist Andrew Coyne defended merchants accused of profiting by raising prices sharply after the 1998 ice storm in Ontario and Quebec, saying they were merely "performing the vital social function of allocating scarce resources among competing users.

"If it weren't for the 'ice vultures,' goods would be allocated in much more haphazard, inefficient and unjust ways, he said."

Comparing Nike pay cheques

It takes a Nike shoe worker in Vietnam 11 hours and 42 minutes to earn enough money to buy a kilo of chicken.

A minimum wage worker in the U.S. can buy the same amount of chicken after just 41 minutes of work.

Michael Jordan, the world's best basketball player, makes enough to buy that chicken in just seven-tenths of a second. And that's just from his salary with the Chicago Bulls, not the additional \$47 million a year he gets from Nike and other companies' endorsement contracts.

We hope Jordan will follow through with his last year's

pledge to visit Nike factories in Asia, especially now that he's retired.

High hopes

In Milwaukee, the chronic shortage of Roman Catholic priests has prompted the local archdiocese to buy billboard ads that say: Enjoy the Ultimate Benefits Package. Consider Priesthood.

Listen to us

How concerned are Canadians about Medicare?

In a late-January Angus Reid poll, health care was cited by 43 per cent of respondents as the single issue warranting greatest attention from Canada's political leaders.

Most interesting is the extent to which the concern is escalating. Last July, 28 per cent cited health care as their top concern, up from 17 per cent in January 1998.

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JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1999



Does not compute

Health minister orders review of VGH's computerized patient health care information system.

PAGE 5

Public works!

CUPE report shows the price is too high when corporations gain control of public services.

PAGE 10



UI for jobless

While unemployed workers struggle to survive, the federal government gorges itself on their money.

PAGE 12



Fighting deportation

Alan Maki and his family claim to be political refugees – from the United States.

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