MEDICARE ALERT

Two HEU activists and a paramedic from CUPE 873 were Alberta bound after touring B.C. in an ambulance. PAGE 3

WORKLOAD

A new HEU poll confirms that we're working harder and hurting more. PAGE 8

This photo is the winner in the HEU at Work contest. Congratulations to Jeanette Standley. See page 14
GUARDIAN

"In brittle health as all done so much to our own.

EDITOR:

Managing Editor:

Associate Editor:

Design Producer:

Design Consultant:

Editing Director:

Working Design Director:

THE GUARDIAN is published on behalf of the Office of the Executive of the Hospital Union 130, under the direction of the following Directors:

Fred Smith, Chris Allnutt, Mary LeBlanc, Bruni Billet, Colleen Fitzpatrick, Bob Jenkins, Linda Hagenburg, Provincial Executive, Paul Smith, President

This letter was sent out to MGAs and the Smithers newspaper.

I am concerned with the cancellation of home care services in our community. Seniors deserve better treatment. In order to stay in their own homes they need the assistance that home care services provide. It is too easy to say families can help when many are already working two jobs. My mother-in-law is 83-years-old. She is in fairly good health but has high blood pressure, arthritis in her back joints and other problems with her vision. She helps with vacuuming, baking over to clean her bathroom and kitchen floors, wall washing and other chores of cleaning. The New Directions in Health Care is supposed to keep people at home and adapt them to their homes. It is more economic to not put people in the hospital or in senior's homes.

Seniors in their own home feel productive, in control of their lives. They contribute to the family and the community. In a seniors' home

"As front line caregivers you are the experts with the concrete ideas"

You have also told us that you prepared to fight to get comparable and leveling money now before the next round of bargaining.

Tell us more.

In these uncertain political and workplace climates, with change always the rule, it is important to remember that only by working together and talking with each other can we achieve our goals.

CHRIS ALLNUTT

SECRETARY/TREASURER

Linda Hagenburg

MC3D

THE GUARDIAN SPOKES YOUR FEEDBACK. SEND LETTERS TO 2000 WES ST, ROYAL IN

VANCOUVER 1-450 OR PHONE 7-880-2300. PLEASE BE BRISK.

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What we’re up to

Spring into labour studies

This spring Capilano College is offering another full time of courses exploring labour history, law, health and safety and union development. Any HEU member who registers for courses is eligible to be reimbursed up to $300 per year. This is for registration only and does not cover books or wage loss. Courses begin in March, April, May and June. The faculty are all well-seasoned labour activists.

Upon successful completion of the courses which carry college credits, the student will receive a Capilano College Certificate in Labour Studies. Enrollment in the home study program of the Labour College of Canada also qualifies HEU members for the same reimbursement.

Pamphlets describing the program and courses were in a recent secretary-treasurer mailing, but if you did not receive one, call Capilano College at 904-7175. HEU members should pay the registration fee, and then apply to the union for reimbursement.

We can help with LTD claim

Claiming for long-term disability benefits can be a difficult and stressful task. HEU can provide support to help those members who need to make a claim throughout the process.

If you have any questions about the claims package, the process for applying for long-term disability, your rights under the collective agreement, or if you need to appeal a denial or termination of an LTD claim, you can obtain assistance from your shop steward or servicing representative.

continued on page 4

Medicare ambulances head toward Alberta

A PART of the official launch of the nation-wide campaign by the Canadian Union of Public Employees, a special Medicare ambulance departed from Nanaimo Feb. 14 on the first leg of an eight day B.C. tour to raise public awareness about the threat posed by Ralph Klein's bid to set up private hospitals in Alberta.

Along with two others departing from different parts of the country, the ambulance headed toward Alberta to mobilize public opposition to the health care emergency caused by Klein and his privatization initiative, and to press the federal government to restore federal health care funding to modernize public Medicare services in Canada.

Representing CUPE’s Health Services Division in B.C., HEU activists Sheila Rowswell (Provincial Executive and G.P. Strong local) and Arleta Keppler (Royal Jubilee local in Victoria) joined ambulance paramedic Stuart Myers from CUPE local 873, on the tour which featured many stops, rallies and special events in communities across the province. They were to hand over the ambulance to Alberta activists on Feb. 23 in Prince Coupage.

HEU president Fred Muzin said the ambulance tour is just the first step in the initial phase of the campaign, building toward a national day of action by CUPE members Feb. 29.

"We’ve gained some real momentum in the fight against Klein and right-wing proponents of privatization," says Muzin, who urged union members to take an active part in the campaign. "Let’s keep up the opposition to Klein and increase pressure on federal health minister Allan Rock to block the privatization efforts."

Muzin said other groups are organizing and mobilizing around the Medicare campaign as well. The B.C. Health Coalition, which HEU is part of, has a number of events planned. The B.C. Teachers’ Federation, with support from HEU, is sponsoring a speaking tour by Council of Canadians leader Marshall Barlow about protecting health care and education in a global economy.

Contract is signed, but no money yet

Last June, after 14 months of bargaining and 12 weeks of job action, HEU community social services workers signed a new collective agreement.

The last thing they expected was to be back on the streets fighting to get raises they’d already won but that’s exactly what they’ve been doing.

The new contract includes a wage increase retroactive to April 1999, certain RRP contributions and other benefit improvements effective Oct. 1, 1999.

By December, workers were still waiting for their money and they mobilized to get it.

To pressure those responsible for the delay, workers met with employers and MLAs and suggested ways to implement the wage and other monetary improvements.

They filed grievances at their workplaces. And the union filed a complaint with the Labour Relations Board.

"The lengthy delay is a slap in the face to community social services workers and their families," said HEU secretary-business manager Chris Albutt. "Our members should not be paying the price of employers’ failures to meet their obligations."

In January, workers went public with their story.

They rallied outside the Victoria offices of the Public Sector Employers’ Council, and talked face-to-face with NDP leadership candidates at a public meeting.

The activists’ efforts have paid off. The Community Social Services Employers’ Association finally finished the coverings for most agencies, and Treasury Board was able to approve the release of funds.

According to CSSEA’s January 24 newsletter, "The timing of releasing the first payment will depend on how quickly agencies sign and return copies of the Compensation Increase Agreement."

"It’s good news that the government and CSSEA have finally overcome their problems. Our community social services members can be proud of the part they played moving this situation forward," said Albutt.

"Now it’s up to the individual agencies to complete their paperwork so members get their money."

JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2000 • GUARDIAN
WHAT WE'RE UP TO

Call 234-3431 or 1-800-663-5813 to obtain names and phone numbers of your HEU contact persons. You can also contact the HEU People with Disabilities Caucus Help Line at 1-800-663-5813, ext. 314.

Two deaths, and many queries
HEU members and other health care workers were amongst two violent deaths in their workplaces over the Christmas holiday season.
Deaths is certainly a common occurrence in health care facilities, but these two deaths were particularly traumatic. For the workers, but also for the other patients and clients.
One took place in a residence for people dealing with mental illness in Vancouver's downtown eastside Hampton House, and the other in Langley Memorial Hospital's emergency ward.
A coroner's inquest has been ordered for the downtown eastside death, and the Guardian will attend and report on the testimony. The date for the inquest has not yet been set.

Cleaning up at Cowichan Valley
HEU staff do the washing, drying and ironing for the hospital and long-term care facilities in the area at Cowichan Valley Hospital's 30-year-old laundry facility. The work is slow and back-breaking, and it was obvious that something had to be changed.
The regional health board said the answer was to close the laundry and ship all the dirty linen, uniforms, etc. to Victoria. This would have meant the loss of seven jobs.
CDH staff calculated that it would cost $774,000 to procure 1.7 million pounds of dirty laundry every year in the Duncan facility. To ship and clean all that laundry to Victoria would have cost an extra $213,000 a year.
The health board, together with the local MLA NDP, held a meeting with the Cowichan Co-op, and agreed to re-negotiate and upgrade to the tune of $1.2 million. Joanne Hardy, the local chief shop steward, said, "This is good news for the hospital and for seven staff members whose jobs will remain in the Cowichan Valley. The project will enhance the work environment by replacing an outdated facility with cost-effective, modern equipment that requires less maintenance and is physically easier to operate."

Oregonian sends kudos
Oregonian Nikki Ferranti was visiting Victoria when she ran into a group of community social services workers out on the picket line last May. She was so impressed she sent a moving letter to the HEU office, saying, "Striking is a hard thing to do, and I applaud your members' commitment to advocating for living wages and decent benefits in exchange for honourable employment."
She also sent along an article which addressed the problem of long (in both number and time) and for re-election in October. "Advocacy doesn't start with any one person," Thornton maintains. "It starts from the heart."
Since that first, fateful local meeting, Marilyn's activities have focused on technological changes at home. Laughing, she admits she now owns a fax machine and has an e-mail address so she can stay on top of her advocacy work.
Marilyn recently put her name forward to the Ministry of Health for a place on the South Fraser Health Board. If she's not appointed, she hopes to sit on one of the boards committees. During her interview, she told the panel, "Even if I don't get this job, I want to talk to you about LPNs."
Nurturing her new-found interest in workers' rights and labour history, Thornton has just completed a Women's Rights course at Capilano College, part of the institution's comprehensive Labour Studies program. "It was excellent. This is my field," she enthuses. "A recipient of the George North bur-

LPHN has a caring disposition

A FEW YEARS ago, when colleagues suggested to licensed practical nurse Marva Vilad and Marilyn Thornton that she get involved in the union, her response was quick and decisive. "No, I don't want to be in the union. Unless you're a conspiracy, Thornton recalls telling friends. "My problems change and so do my people."
An LPN at George Derby Centre in Burnaby since 1988, Thornton has rapidly become an HEU activist and a champion of her chosen profession even though she attended her first local meeting only two years ago.
She credits her best friend and co-worker, Marva Vilad, with being her union mentor. "Without Marva, I never would have been active. She told me, 'We could use you,'" Thornton says. "She is the wings beneath my feet."
Marilyn is passionate about nursing, proud to be an LPN, and now, devoted to her union. At George Derby, where she's a shop steward, Thornton works to improve education and upgrade opportunities for her colleagues, to have their professionals utilized to the fullest potential of their scope of practice, and to boost morale on-the-job.
Thornton's own naturally upbeat attitude is evident when she talks about her work. She admires the people she cares for. Many are veterans and she enjoys hearing their stories but, finding the time for a few moments of personal interaction is difficult. She believes care-providers can't give the residents the care and attention they deserve due to work overload and a need for increased staffing.
Within HEU, Thornton serves as the Lower Mainland representative on the Ethnic Diversity Standing Committee. Eager to find out more about her union and how it works, she's watching, for another round of Basic Shop Stewards' courses, having missed the 1999 series.
She has been to Nursing Team conferences -- which helped galvanize her into action -- and wants future conferences to continue reaching out to more and more care aides and LPNs.
Her union activism extends into the broader community. As an avid writer of letters-to-the-editor -- she follows them up with phone calls to the papers to make sure the letters are printed -- Thornton explains the valuable role LPNs play in our health care system.
And Marilyn is a board member of the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of British Columbia and chairs its education committee. She intends to stand for re-election in October. "Advocacy doesn't start with any one person," Thornton maintains. "It starts from the heart."
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HER UNION ACTIVISM EXTENDS INTO THE BROADER COMMUNITY

by Marvi Blaney

LPHN Marva Vilad and Marilyn Thornton, in front of George Derby Centre in Burnaby where they work, enrolled in Capilano College's Labour Studies program after deciding, "Let's do it, it's getting late!"

LPHN has a caring disposition

by Marvi Blaney

LPHN is a regular Guardian column about the challenges facing women activists.

by Marvi Blaney

"He uses the food and money to buy drugs," she said.

"I eat the right food. I believe in rest. I go to church," Marilyn says simply.

She's learned to take care of herself while she takes care of others.

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Support Medicare, Muzin urges business leaders

I N A CANDID presentation at a special forum on health care issues Jan. 27 sponsored by the B.C. Chamber of Commerce, HEU president Fred Muzin challenged B.C. business leaders to be more supportive of the public Medicare system, and recognize that our public health care system is an economic asset that gives Canadian companies a competitive advantage that will expand opportunities on the world stage.

Muzin chided leaders for the invitation, saying it was an important first step in building trust between business and labour.

He said the billions of dollars in transfer payments out of Ottawa have had a disastrous impact on health care, education and other social programs in Canada.

He also highlighted the health labour accord as a positive provincial government policy initiative that has set the tone for a more progressive approach to health care restructuring in B.C.

"It created the opportunity — and I would argue a responsibility — for health care workers and their unions to move beyond the normal defensive stance in approaching change, and for us to be involved in developing ideas and strategies for progressive change and innovation in health service delivery."

Focusing in on the crisis that gripped hospitals across Canada around Christmas time, Muzin was critical of all levels of government for delays in implementing community based and preventative health care services to take pressures off acute facilities.

"We don’t have 24-hour care in the community or community health centres. We don’t have creative supportive living arrangements for enough home care, a national drug plan to cover prescription costs outside of hospitals. Nor do we have doctors on salary and the holistic use of a range of caregivers to provide services."

While advocates of two-tiered U.S.-style health care like the Fraser Institute and BCMA president Ian Coutoule delivered their standard pitch to about 150 business leaders, Muzin was joined in a defence of the public system in an effective presentation by Vancouver Hospital president Murray Martin.

Martin said many people had a naive understanding of the role of for-profit companies in providing health care services in other countries. Simply put, he said, these companies focus on "profitable illnesses" while steering clear of the more complex and unprofitable cases that are left for the public system.

El benefits for parents not fair

HEU members currently receive the same maternity and parental leave as all new Canadian parents. Mothers receive 60 per cent of their salary with the maximum leave of 17 weeks for the first child. Mother or father receive the same amount for optional leave of 10 weeks.

Employment Insurance penalizes workers who make more than one unemployment insurance claim, and the same goes for maternal/paternal leaves. Therefore, the amount is reduced to 55 per cent of salary for the second child. Additional problems can be encountered if, between two children, not enough hours accrue to make a claim. This is especially difficult for casual or part-time workers.

WHAT WE’RE UP TO

waiting lists for group homes for developmentally disabled adults, according to the article’s writer when he pointed out that the high staff turnover built into low-wage rate for U.S. workers in this field—barely above the minimum wage.

We’ve got a new logo

At the Dec. 1999 meeting HEU’s Provincial Executive formally added the letters ‘CUPE’ to the official HEU logo.

“This symbolizes HEU’s standing as the Health Services Division of the Canadian Union of Public Employees,” said HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allutt. "The logo is still recognizable as it is incorporated into HEU’s traditional logo."

HEU’s welcome mat

HEU organizers have been busy in the last few months. Their efforts have succeeded in bringing in a large number of people who work in the community social services sector, which receives funding from the Ministry of Children and Families. Two hundred and ten new members have been added at the North Shore Association for the Mentally Handicapped.

Thirteen care providers from Sharecare Lodge / Sunset Manor in Surrey have also joined HEU’s ranks.

Nine workers from Prince George have been certified as HEU members. Four health care workers at the Prince George Mental Health Services office work in the community sector.

One new member works in the paramedic sector at Craigend Renal Home in Burnaby.

One hundred and five new members work outside the health sector. Vancouver’s South Granville Park Lodge now employs 65 HEU members, with 25 additional members at Sociedad Macho Services at the same facility. On Vancouver Island, 13 members who work for Beaver Foods Ltd. at Douglas House in Victoria and 12 more at Fan Group Home in Duncan have signed up with HEU.

Mac-Pap dream a reality

On Feb. 12 a dream was realized when a statue called “Spirit of the Republic” was unveiled in Victoria. The republic referred to is the Span of 1956, when a violent civil war erupted. The loss of that war was a victory for fascism and heralded the beginning of a world war.

Many people from around the world formed the International Brigades and poured into Spain to help defend it. The Canadian Brigade—the MacKenzie-Papineau Battalion—never received official recognition from the Canadian government, in spite of their contributions in the fight against fascism.

The dream referred to is that of BCGEU member Tom Koar, the son of a Mac-Pap veteran. He made it his mission to have a monument erected to the Mac-Pap veterans.

The “Spirit of the Republic” is located in a prominent location in Victoria’s Confederation Park.

Comparability mailout: be ready to fight

A letter summarizing HEU’s historic comparability award was sent to the home of every HEU member in the province.

The message contained some good news on the amount of retroactive wage adjustments members can expect. But the letter also contains a call to members to stand ready to take whatever actions are necessary to close the final chapter of HEU’s struggle for comparability.

“HEU members should feel quite proud of what they’ve accomplished over the last two decades in terms of comparability,” says HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allutt. “It means many of our members will reach their pay equity targets sooner. And by “mixing the bar” workers in all sectors of health care will eventually benefit.”

While significant progress has been made working out the details of implementation, Allutt warns that further appeals of the comparability decision by the Health Employers Association of B.C. could lead to months or even years of delays.

“We’re still far apart on such issues as the date of implementation for improved maternity/paternal benefits,” says Allutt. “We’ve told HEABC in the strongest possible terms to abandon further foot dragging and get on with task of delivering comparability to our members.”
PRESIDENT'S DESK

New premier has work cut out for him
by Fred Muszyn

AMONG a sea of bright orange U1 balloons and poodle shaped signs, competing for space with Corybk's green and yellow balloons and streamers at the Pacific Coliseum, 1,318 B.C. NDP delegates chose Ujjal Dosanjh as their next premier. I was fortunate to be there at convention to congratulate Ujjal on his victory and offer our commitment to work with his new government on a plan of action to modernize our Medicare.

Longstanding leadership campaigns are always adversarial. While NDP members share the core values of justice and dignity and caring for the less fortunate in society, leadership debates and intense competition provide a clash of style, approach, ambitions, priorities and egos. We do express our politics passionately.

Now is the time to build on our diversity and nurture each other so that the NDP can regain its former strength. Ujjal Dosanjh cannot succeed alone. The hard work of rebuilding the party and refocusing the government on a people's agenda will take tremendous commitment and dedication from all of us, but it is essential that we continue to represent the 105U membership and support our social partners to the best of our abilities.

The alternative is to sacrifice nine years of extensive effort and the considered and plan that has been achieved for health care workers in B.C.

The pre-election window during which government can now act is short. In his last official campaign speech of Feb 19, Premier Dosanjh clearly articulated his opposition to a privatized, American style health care system. He acknowledged the value and efforts of health care providers in maintaining Canada's public Medicare and recognized the need to modernize the system. As frontline health care workers we have workable solutions to achieve much needed change. Like a national Home and Community Care Act to ensure standards and regulation, a rational pharmacare program, 24-hour community clinics staffed by multi-disciplinary teams and 12ths utilized to their full scope of practice.

The NDP leadership convention also approved an emergency resolution calling on the government to be unequivocal in its opposition to the immediate threat of Ralph Klein's proposal to privatize hospitals. The government and Klein's proposal to privatize hospitals is a clear violation of our mandate to defend Medicare and the WTO. Over two-thirds of Canadians have consistently indicated that restoring federal health funding is more important than tax cuts.

Can the NDP restore its credibility and public trust? It is imperative that the government live up to its commitments for success and pay equity legacy.

As well, the party must come to terms with the need to thank former Premier Glen Clark for his exceptional efforts that gave the MLA's the opportunity to serve a second term. While it may be politically attractive to vilify Clark, he made an exceptional contribution to furthering the Nisga'a Agreement, tuition freezes for undergraduates, free adult basic education and employment security for workers.

The lack of continuity between regimes created a vacuum at the conversion. A true test of Premier Dosanjh's leadership will be his ability to work with activists to reconvene the party.

LOGAN SIGNS

in an inauguration
day, Dec, 6, 1999,
making him
officially one of
the members of
Colwood city Council.

Gordie goes to council

Running for Colwood City Council on Vancouver Island in last November's municipal election was a natural conclusion of Glenary activist Gordie Logan. Logan's involvement in his community as a member of his residents' association executive, he had gone up against the council many times and was happy with the positions it took on many issues. He wanted to get further involved in the community and to be an advocate for residents on council.

He tossed the idea of running for council around for quite awhile, but couldn't make his mind. NDP MLA Rick Keating's constituency assistant encouraged him to run, offering him his expertise when Logan expressed his doubts in that area. "He gave me a lot of pointers, which helped and pushed me into running," says Logan.

One of the main election issues in Colwood was the construction of a new major development on the site of a gravel pit operation that will be winding down in the near future. The proposal is to build 2000 new homes - a major impact in a city of roughly 13,500. Logan partially supports the development, although he feels it is too large and there is not enough green space provided for in the plans. And he thinks either the province or the developer should pay for the $3 million access road. The province says that the cost should be absorbed by the city. Logan also wants to see some affordable housing in the plan. He says his sense from sitting on the residents' association executive and public forums during the election campaign is that the community supports this issue.

Logan is already putting in about three nights a week on council business, with actual council meetings taking place twice a month.

One of seven council members (including the mayor), he takes on the responsibilities of chair of junior police services (RCMP and the fire department), as representative to the Inter-municipal Committee on Disabilities issues and on the Juan de Fuca Retail Commission.

So his plate is quite full, and will be for the next three years, at least. He says that if his life leads him in that direction, he may consider provincial political office in the future, but right now he's concentrating on the task at hand.

The most valuable lesson he learned, he says, was to speak sincerely to the public.

"I didn't make promises, but I spoke from the heart, looked them in the eye and answered their questions as truthfully as I could."

NOTEBOOK

We’ve got some battles coming up
by Dale Fuller

The year ahead holds some interesting challenges for the union movement in Canada. The Hospital Employees' Union has stepped up its own priorities with some very important goals ahead.

With a provincial election on the horizon, we need to both prepare for the election of candidates who support the goals of labour and Medicare and to defend these goals should Gordon Campbell and his Liberals win an election.

Although lately Campbell has not spoken a lot on health issues specifically, he is widely known, and they are not favourable to workers or British Columbians who support Medicare.

Under the NDP we’ve achieved employment security for health care workers, improvements in the provincial labour code and in spite of federal cuts, no decrease in the health care budget.

The February meetings in Alberta are a national level, and HEU is working closely with CUPE to pressure the federal government to tell Alberta premier Ralph Klein that he has to back off on privatizing hospitals. We are also working together to advocate solutions to modernize our public health care system. HEU members and the public are strongly behind this movement.

2000 could see the culmination of important fights in victories for HEU, too. We may at last achieve the change in the "willynilly" between the community and facility sector, the implementation of the comparability/pay equity and win our fight over the preconditions.

HEU will continue its campaign against a private lab giant which is intent on getting its foot in the public health care door. In conjunction with other unions, we will push Victoria to activate the lab restructuring process and continue to highlight the role of MDS in privatizing health care and its links to Klein's privatization initiatives in Alberta.

Unions won a major battle last year when they scored a certain measure of control over their own pension funds with the agreement to implement joint pension trusteeships. We will work hard this year to begin the negotiation process to get this program up and running.

And, of course, this year we are gearing up to another round of bargaining. And bargaining will be linked to everything we do in the next several months - on into the year 2001.
Students decry funding cuts to higher education

by Mike O'D

FED UP with skyrocketing tuition fees, shrinking funding, decaying campuses and increasing corporate control of classrooms, members of Canada's largest union marched alongside students to a national day of strike and action held Feb. 2.

"The federal Liberals have slashed education and training funding by $7 billion over the last five years," says CUPE National President Judy Darcy. "It's time to fund the future of this country. It's time to give that money back."

The Access 2000 campaign organized by the Canadian Federation of Students calls for restored federal funding for post-secondary education and other social programs, a system of national grants, the reduction and eventual elimination of tuition fees and of national standards for post-secondary education.

CUPE members work in colleges and universities as teaching assistants, teaching and research assistants, custodians, support staff and library workers. "Funding cuts mean our work is contracted out, privatized and eliminated," says Darcy.

"At the same time, tuition fees have more than doubled in the last decade (except in B.C. where they have been frozen) and student debt loads have tripled to $25,000. Post-secondary education is being priced out of reach of most working families."

"Corporate control and privatization are also looming threats," says Darcy. "Corporations control cash-starved institutions and offer to fill the funding gap — in exchange for ownership and control of courses, research and buildings. These 'partnerships' benefit corporations, not students, teachers and taxpayers."

In Vancouver, more than 1,000 students marched through the downtown core chanting "Martin, Chrétien, go to hell. We won't fund the NHL."

Find out more about the Access 2000 campaign on the web at www.cfs.bc.ca.

Facing down privatization in El Salvador

by Teodillo Reyes

For more than three months, 10,000 health care workers in El Salvador have been on strike, part of an ongoing battle against the effects of free trade.

The Salvadoran government is dramatically reducing the public sector to comply with requirements of the WTO, World Bank and International Monetary Fund. "In May of 1996, El Salvador became the 134th country to join the WTO," explained Manuel Vasquez, secretary general of the Asociacion de Trabajadores del Ministerio de Obras Publicas. "In December of 1996 the Salvadoran legislature ratified the agreement of entry to the WTO, leading to the radical restructuring of the public sector."

Since this radical privatization campaign began, 15,000 public sector workers have been laid off. Restructuring has cost 12,000 more jobs and the government plans to lay off an additional 70,000 workers. Sugar mills, energy, telecommunications and public pensions are already privatized and the government promises to privatize health care education, public works, water distribution and the ports in the next six months.

"To respond to this, unions have had to build a new movement," Vasquez said. "Seventeen public sector unions joined together to form the Movimiento de Organizaciones Laborales Integral (MOLI), The government's response," Vasquez said, "has been torture, gun fire and the assassination of three of our comrades."

Social Security workers went on strike Sept. 30 after the government reneged on a January 1998 wage increase. The strikers have strong support from the rest of MOLI, some 20,000 workers from other unions have participated in rolling strikes in solidarity. (The strike continues despite being declared illegal in late January)

Repression, however, has been swift. Death squad activity is once again on the rise in El Salvador in conjunction with increased repression from the National Police. Vasquez himself escaped injury while riding in a car that was shot at with machine gun fire.

"We will not stop struggling until we have justice," Vasquez said. "The more they repress us, the more we will struggle. We will not die on our knees before the Salvadoran government and the WTO."

U.S. workers sign security pact

Unionized health care workers in the U.S. have inked a major employment security pact with the largest non-profit Health Management Organizations (HMO) south of the border. And in many respects, the National Employment and Income Security Agreement resembles the ground-breaking health labour agreement reached between the provincial government and B.C. health care unions eight years ago.

A national coalition of unions representing 60,000 health care workers reached the agreement last October with Kaiser Permanente — an HMO with more than eight million U.S. subscribers. With an overall goal of avoiding displacement of employees in a sector undergoing dramatic structural and technological changes, the agreement also provides workers additional opportunities to work with Kaiser on working conditions, staffing and patient care.

Like B.C.'s labour accord, the U.S. agreement aims to reemploy potentially displaced workers in jobs with comparable hours, classification and rate of pay within reasonable geographic proximity. There's also a one-year period of income security if a worker is reemployed to a lower paying job classification.

With 17,000 members working for Kaiser in Northern California, SEIU Local 230 is the largest member of the coalition. Local 230 president Sal Roselli, says the agreement is a formula for success for his members and for the HMO.

"Our front-line workers are eager to add their voices to the effort to provide affordable, high quality care to all patients," says Roselli. He says his union is challenging other employers to adopt similar agreements.
Numbers talk! Results from an HEU poll tell a story of on-the-job injuries and pain and how they affect our lives and work.

by DALE FULLER
illustrations by DEBRA ROONEY

December 1999 HEU/Meinhof & Mustel poll reveals a startling relationship between injury rates and workload – the most detailed insight we have to date of health care workers’ injury rates tied into what they see as the major contributing factor. And they are unequivocal – they have way too much work to do.

And things are not getting any better, they are getting worse, in number and in severity.

Why?

One of the great victories of the last round of health care workers’ bargaining was the establishment of the Occupational Health and Safety Agency. It signals the beginning of the process that will arrest the burgeoning problem of workplace injuries and illness.

“It is jointly recognized by all parties that this is a significant first step,” says HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt. “It is a precondition for dealing with the problem of workplace injury and illness, and we have to make sure it works.”

The stated goal of the new agency is to reduce workplace injuries and promote a safe and healthy work environment through healthy workers, safe work practices and manageable workloads. But before this poll was taken, workplace was not so graphically tied in with injury rates. The poll clearly illustrates that there is a link.

“So we need to start talking about workload as being a health and safety issue,” says Allnutt. “When 72 per cent of the 801 HEU members polled say they are working more shifts with not enough staff, a similar number say they stay home sick more than they used to, and almost half say they have been hurt at work and/or suffer from chronic pain, it is easy to draw that conclusion. “And to top it all off, many of them take their work problems home.”

We’ve made the link; now we have to find solutions. This is everyone’s interest: workers, employers and the health care system all suffer from this strain.

Assessment rates for employers have risen dramatically, and if the situation is not corrected they could easily double in the future.

Health care employers should tear a sheet out of Surrey Memorial Hospital’s notebook on health and safety. Its staff and management set up a very effective health and safety program after they demonstrated to the administration that there were substantial cost savings to be made.

Experience-based assessment rates could suck millions out of health care budgets, especially in long-term care with its high injury rates and the expected expansion of this sector.

What can HEU members do to reduce their workload and the resulting injury rates? They can start leaving a paper trail, for one thing, by diligently filling out incidence reports. And they can talk to their local executive and their supervisor. Show them these figures.

What is the union doing to help its members stay healthy? The Workplace Anti-Stress Guide will be made available to union members as soon as it is off the press.

It defines stress, what it does to you and what you can do about it. It is innovative in that it does not blame the worker for stress.

We are also revising our OH&S manual and holding seminars for OHSes, shop stewards, using the poll results as a teaching aid. We will work with forward-looking employers and WCB pilot projects to reduce injury rates.

“Finally, HEU members can make workplace a bargaining item in the next round of negotiations,” says Allnutt “We need strong language in the next collective agreement that enforces demands protecting workers from excessive workload.”

### WCB injury stats for the health care industry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total # of TIR claims accepted</th>
<th>% increase or decrease over previous year</th>
<th>Current year claims costs</th>
<th>% increase or decrease over previous year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>7,148</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>not available</td>
<td>not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>6,994</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>not available</td>
<td>not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>6,475</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>63,777,000</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>6,322</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>47,915,000</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>6,436</td>
<td>-1.3%</td>
<td>41,326,000</td>
<td>-6.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Severity of injuries also increasing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WCB Average</th>
<th>Time Lost</th>
<th>Hospitals (CLASIN 62600)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>26.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chronic pain an ongoing problem
In the last six months have you ever worked while experiencing ongoing or chronic pain?
46% YES
53% NO
1% DON'T KNOW / REFUSED

Almost half have been injured at work
In the past five years, have you ever been injured on the job?
48% YES
52% NO

Increasing workload a widespread problem
In terms of your workload, would you say that over the past few years it has been increasing, decreasing or has remained at the same level?
77% INCREASING
3% DECREASING
18% REMAINED THE SAME
1% NOT APPLICABLE / NEW JOB
1% DON'T KNOW / REFUSED

Symptoms linked to higher workloads
How often do you end your workday feeling either mentally or physically stressed?
28% ALMOST ALWAYS
27% OFTEN
28% OCCASIONALLY
12% RARELY
4% NEVER

What are the on-the-job effects?
In your opinion, do you agree or disagree that the following workplace situations are related to increased workload?
72% MORE FREQUENT SHIFTS WHERE YOU WORKED SHORTSTAFFED
70% HIGHER USE OF SICK TIME BY YOU OR YOUR CO-WORKERS
63% MORE DISAGREEMENTS AND CONFLICT BETWEEN CO-WORKERS
53% MORE DISAGREEMENTS AND CONFLICT WITH YOUR EMPLOYER OR SUPERVISOR
49% MORE GRIEVANCES FILED BY THE UNION
8% NONE OF THE ABOVE

Workload impacts life outside of work
Would you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree that increased workload has had a negative impact on your life outside of work?
30% STRONGLY AGREE
28% AGREE
34% DISAGREE
4% STRONGLY DISAGREE
3% DON'T KNOW / NO OPINION

SOURCE: HEU/McIntryre & Mustel poll of HEU members; December 1999
Lab giant thwarted in Victoria

by Stephen Howard

A

Fair trading scheme to privatize hospital lab services in Victoria's Capital Health Region through a joint venture with health care multinational MDS has been blocked thanks to the concerted campaign efforts of HEU members in the region.

"We won the battle," says HEU Royal Jubilee activist Arleta Keppler, who was part of a HEU regional campaign committee. "If HEU members hadn't mobilized, then no doubt the proposal would be on its way to implementation," she says.

The defeat—confirmed in a Jan. 6 letter from Deputy Health Minister Les Hollins—is a blow for CHR CEO Tom Classen, a recent transplant from Toronto with a reputation as a privatization promoter, says HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allbritton.

"But more importantly," he says, "it's a setback for the privatization ambitions of MDS in B.C. and its efforts to do an end run around the provincial lab restructuring process set up by health minister Pidrigy."

Classen subsequently resigned his post in early February.

Allbritton says the union will continue to oppose MDS as a key player in righting efforts to undermine and privatize Medicare—especially the company's links to Alberta Premier Ralph Klein's proposal to set up private hospitals.

The letter from Pidrigy's deputy to the CHR board made it clear that any changes in lab service delivery could only come from the provincial restructuring process.

With the lab privatization scheme in Victoria laid to rest, Allbritton says HEU will now press to get that process moving.

"We're the only province in Canada that hasn't looked at restructuring," he said, noting Manitoba's new NDF government has launched a proactive plan to bring all testing under a public system. "A similar move here would create a more efficient service and save millions of dollars that could be reallocated to solve problems in other parts of our health care system."

A December HEU/McIntyre & Mustel poll shows continued strong public support for hospital labs. Coupled with a commitment to maintain accessible, quality services, 64 per cent of British Columbians support Victoria buying out private lab operations. Keppler says the experience with MDS has served as a wake-up call to health care workers in CHR.

While recognizing the election of a Gordon Campbell government would open new privatization opportunities for Classen and MDS, she says the campaign—her first—was also a victory in terms of educating and mobilizing members, and then taking political action.

American seniors venture north

American seniors—desperate to buy their prescription medicines at prices that don't devastate their budget—have been coming north to Canada by the hundreds.

The cost of prescription drugs in the U.S. is so high, it is actually less expensive for them to travel to a neighboring country (often go to Mexico), pay to stay at a hotel for a night, buy their drugs and then return home than it is just to go to their own corner pharmacy.

Seniors collect on average $16,000 a year on their pensions. The cost of their drugs can—and often does—exceed one-third of their income. In fact, sometimes it can exceed the whole $16,000. They just cannot buy the drugs their doctor tells them they need and pay for the basics of food and shelter.

Most American seniors are eligible for Medicare. So they can go see a doctor without being out of pocket. But their prescription drugs are not covered at all, nor are generic drugs available to them. And that is the crux.

What is the difference in price? U.S. prices run two to three times higher than in Canada. A 60 Minutes showed these people are "refugees from the U.S. health care system" and called for a universal prescription program. "Drug companies are gouging American seniors," said the commentator.

The problem is that pharmaceutical companies spend millions of dollars on lobbying to stop reforms that would help seniors, especially with the potential market that the looming baby boomers represent. They don't want Medicare to pay for drugs, therefore controlling prices.

According to the American news show 60 Minutes, drug companies claim any reforms to help seniors would cripple research and development. Yet, their profits triple the amount they currently spend on R&D. Their friends, the Republicans, say their is no time this year to address Medicare coverage of prescription drugs.

Meanwhile the American soldiers continue to travel. They only need a local doctor's signature on a prescription.

Resistance to privatization gathers steam in Alberta

Revelations about what's behind Klein's plans to derail Medicare are a scandal

Premier Ralph Klein says he's determined to legalize private hospitals in the spring sitting of the legislature despite growing opposition to the scheme in Alberta and across the country.

And in an effort to counter claims like CUPE and the Friends of Medicare—who have been holding public meetings across Alberta and rolling out TV and radio ads targeting the privatization push—Klein has sent out two "truth squads" to support his proposal.

But CUPE Alberta president Terry Muirton doesn't think Klein's truth squads will wash with the public.

"Klein's government did implode the Calgary General, they did close other hospitals, the Holy Cross, the Grace and the Colonel Belcher and they have closed a lot of hospital beds," says Muirton.

"Klein did say that the status quo wasn't going to work any longer and that we need the private sector to get involved to save Medicare and reduce waiting lists. He forgot to say that his cuts caused those lists to get out of hand."

But Klein's PR pitch has hit another snag with the recent revelations that the private clinic that sends patients to benefit from legislation that contracts out overnight surgical procedures is in tough financial straits. HRG, the private Calgary clinic that operates out of the former Grace Hospital lost $2.1 million in the last fiscal year. The information was released by the Alberta NDP caucus.

"I see now that Premier Klein really is dedicated to alleviating the pain and suffering of financially strapped investors who appear to be experiencing serious financial difficulties," says acting leader of the Alberta NDP Raj Pandu.

"Klein's entire scheme to open private for-profit hospitals has nothing to do with shortening waiting lists or reducing wait times—it is an elaborate and obscene bailout package for private investors." Pandu says HRG's 1998/1999 income statement analysis contains several other revelations including:

- general administration expenditures of HRG account for 36 per cent of total expenditures, almost exactly the average administration expenses of U.S. for-profit hospitals as determined by a study in the New England Journal of Medicine. This compares to the Canadian average of approximately 15 per cent for Canadian public hospitals.
- HRG accrued almost $400,000 in debt interest revenue, pointing to significant debt. Pandu believes that if HRG were to contract with a Regional Health Authority to perform overnight surgeries, taxpayers would indirectly subsidize this debt bill.
- budget overruns in general administration expenses related to public relations efforts on Bill 37, the communications were over budget.

Pandu also released information that indicates HRG is operating at much less than capacity. Bed nights and surgery hours were well below projections.

Klein is expected to introduce his legislation sometime in March.
Polls take snapshot of health care attitudes

There is strong public support to increase funding to health care, while confidence in system is declining

A recent poll of HEU members offers some mixed insights into the impact of high workload and short staffing on the lives of B.C. health care workers (see page R-9).

Meanwhile, a companion public poll, completed in December amid the emergency room crisis that plagued hospitals across the province, shows declining public confidence in B.C.'s health care system, and a record level of support for increased funding to help the system address problems.

From a public standpoint, confidence levels have declined significantly since the last HEU public survey almost two years ago. Just shy of 20 per cent of British Columbians rate the system very good to excellent, compared to 36 per cent in the previous HEU/McIntyre & Mustel public poll in early 1998. And a record 84 per cent say funding levels need to increase, up 10 points over the same period. For the most part, HEU members are satisfied with the general performance of their unions. About 16 per cent of union members say they're dissatisfied, up slightly from 15 per cent in the last member poll two years ago. In specific areas, four out of five members are satisfied with the union's efforts on health and safety issues, but less pleased with HEU's ability to implement solutions to the workload crisis.

While negotiations for new collective agreements are still a ways off, maintaining employment security is the top bargaining demand for more than 90 per cent of members. Other priorities pinpointed by members include workload, protection against privatization and contracting out, retaining and skills upgrading opportunities, a wage increase and better health and safety practices.

In another recent poll taken by McIntyre & Mustel for HEU, 60 per cent of the 513 B.C. adults polled or strongly agreed that federal health minister Allan Rock should take all necessary steps to prevent Alberta Premier Ralph Klein from privatizing surgical services and legalizing private hospitals.

"Canadians are concerned about the unprecedented pressures facing Medicare," says HEU president Fred Muzin. "Unfortunately, public health care corporations and some provincial politicians say the only way to save our health care system is to privatize it. But British Colombians aren't buying the privatization agenda by a long shot. And they want Ottawa to stop it."

HEU/McIntyre & Mustel Poll

60 PER CENT
say federal health minister should prevent privatization of medical services in Alberta

HEU/McIntyre & Mustel Poll

84 PER CENT
of the public say health funding levels should be increased

HEU/McIntyre & Mustel Poll

75 PER CENT
of the public think Medicare can be modernized without privatizing health care services

Reinvest surplus in health care

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' sixth annual Alternative Federal Budget (AFB) contains plenty of advice for Finance Minister Paul Martin as he prepares for a late-February budget.

The AFB would reinvest the budget surplus—forecast at close to $12 billion next year—in programs that ensure healthy families and communities.

"Program spending in a share of GDP is at a 50-year low," says Seth Klein of CCPA's B.C. office. "There is no moral justification for delivering tax cuts to Canada's upper-income families. With one in five children living below the poverty line, a national homelessness emergency, public health care in crisis and an education system starved for funds, we must put first things first."

The AFB proposes new spending in the 2000 fiscal year including: $2 billion in National Child Care and Early Education Services; $3 billion for health care; $3.5 billion to bolster family income security through the Child Tax Credit; $2 billion for a National Housing Investment Fund; and $1.5 billion for infrastructure investments. The AFB would make these investments while maintaining a balanced budget over its five-year plan and reducing debt at about the same pace projected by Ottawa now. The AFB authors say the benefits of tax cuts or debt reduction are small compared to spending on public programs that stimulate job creation and economic growth.

And according to a recently released HEU/McIntyre & Mustel poll, British Columbians support the AFB plans for the surplus. Seventy-one per cent of those polled said Ottawa's first priority for the surplus should be to fully restore health care funding to the provinces that it has cut since 1995. Only 24 per cent said the first priority should be tax cuts and debt reduction.

"Federal politicians have failed to address the growing social deficit darkened from years of program cuts," says HEU president Fred Muzin. "The AFB proposals would realign federal budget priorities with those held by British Columbians."

• The AFB 2000 is available online at www.policyalternatives.ca

10037 / McIntyre & Mustel Poll

7 PER CENT
support restoring health care funding to the provinces

7 PER CENT
of the public say tax cuts and debt reduction are top priority

HEU/McIntyre & Mustel Poll

HEU/McIntyre & Mustel Poll
Sinclair shares vision

B.C. Federation of Labour president
Jim Sinclair says that during his tenure he’ll work hard to build solidarity and defend Medicare

Sinclair: It’s imperative that the labour movement has a profile and a voice in this province. Primarily for our membership, but also for all British Columbians. One of the challenges I have to do a good job as leader in building solidarity and with working with the allies and with people in communities. I think we have to have a voice in government. We need to be pushing for policies that reflect the interests of working people, to keep jobs in British Columbia, and to create employment for young people.

Guardian: What is Jim Sinclair’s mandate as the new B.C. Fed president?

Sinclair: It’s imperative that the labour movement has a profile and a voice in this province. Primarily for our membership, but also for all British Columbians. One of the challenges I have to do a good job as leader in building solidarity and with working with the allies and with people in communities. I think we have to have a voice in government. We need to be pushing for policies that reflect the interests of working people, to keep jobs in British Columbia, and to create employment for young people.

Guardian: Tell us about building alliances.

Sinclair: It’s important that we reach out to people in the anti-poverty movement, in some of the environmental groups, in advocacy groups, women’s organizations. It doesn’t mean that we set aside our agenda or that they set aside theirs.

"All of our kids should have access to health care"

Sinclair: All of our kids should have access to health care.

Guardian: What do you think is the role of labour in protecting Medicare?

Sinclair: My firm belief is that if the labour movement abandons this fight, it’s over. If we do not take the issue up on behalf of all working and poor people in this country, then we will lose it. We need to make this one of our major priorities in the coming year or two, because it’s under severe attack from governments cutting back funding, with doctors and others wanting to set up a for-profit system.

Sinclair: We are at a very critical time right now. I think British Columbians should know that the system is fundamentally sound. It needs to be improved, and the policy issues sorted out. But the answer is not to allow a private system where the wealthy get to beat ahead of ordinary people for health care because they have more money. All of our kids should have access to health care based on their needs. What the wealthy—or the doctors—are proposing is that we don’t do it that way anymore. They say we should sell people’s health care the same way as we sell Chevys. I think most Canadians are against that. They know that it will cost more and be worse if we go to a private system like the United States had. There would be maybe a half million British Columbians not covered by health insurance, and who would they be? Who is going to take care of them for free?

Sinclair: It would be one of the great tragedies of this century if we lost Medicare.

Guardian: What can we do to prepare for the next provincial election?

Sinclair: I think the best that we can do is to explain to our members what these parties stand for. There are achievements we need to maintain in this province, and also there are things we need to change to make it a better place to live. I believe that it’s our job to ask the right questions of politicians. What will you do with the health care system? What will you do with the labour code? What will you maintain funding to public education? Will you have wage controls in public sector workers or won’t you?

Sinclair: The Liberals have close ties to the business community and their agenda is clear: to cut public spending by 10 per cent, to cut taxes for the very wealthy and cut taxes very little for ordinary working people, to lift the minimum wage, to cut off Crown corporations such as B.C. Hydro, Insurance Corporation of B.C., and B.C. Rail.

Guardian: What do you tell people who say "Unions are all well and good in the beginning but now their time has passed?"

Sinclair: I say they are even more important now. The only balance to corporate greed is the labour movement. Those who don’t believe we are necessary should just go down to Mexico, into the factories where people work for $3.90 a day, who go home at night to no running water, no electricity, polluted rivers and streams running through their communities from the factories because there are no environmental standards. These people need to be organized. We need to be organized to protect ourselves, and if we are not, then we simply go backwards. It is not a stagnant situation where we just suddenly tell the unions to disappear today and everybody keeps what they get.

Sinclair: That’s why we are fighting the WTO, the Free Trade Agreement and the NAFTA (which we did defeat). We categorically reject that Mexican workers are our enemy. They are our allies. We have common enemies.

Sinclair: How do we make the unions relevant to young people?

Sinclair: We have to ensure that when young people join a union or go to work at a union site they are welcomed, and not seen as people who know nothing. They are the next generation of the labour movement, and therefore we need to be encouraged. We should make sure that the union structures are considering their needs. Young people care about what happens to them on the job; they want to go to a safe job and to be paid fairly. They want to have a job that is fair, and perhaps they can raise a family on. It’s real important to say to young people who are in the non-unionized sector, "The reason you have a 40-hour work week and not an 80-hour work week with no overtime is because of the trade union movement.

Sinclair: What do you see as the role of labour in this century?

Sinclair: I see labour as remitting the backbone of progressive change in our society. Most of the decent things that we have today have come, in large part, through the efforts of organized working people. Not to underestimate the role of other movements—farmers, women, the CCFTC NDP and other political parties. I see the role of the labour movement as actually becoming more important. I think as the labour movement goes, so goes the democracy we have in our society.

Sinclair scrutinizes article in the Wall Street Journal about a group of health care providers in Florida who are forced to "go begging" for health care for uninsured patients.

12 Guardian • January / February 2000
Women on the March in 2000

This year's March 8, International Women's Day, women around the world will be taking part in local, regional and national events to kick off the World March of Women 2000. Throughout the year, women in more than 140 countries will be marching, lobbying politicians, signing petitions, writing poems, singing songs, making banners, holding workshops, and calling, educational and mobilizing around the march theme, "Bread and Roses." Its focus will be to eliminate women's poverty and end violence against women.

The Halifax Women's Committee will mark the event with a B.C. tour. Linking up with the Global Alliance of Women in April, May and June around the province, Women's Committee members will hold workshops on the MW2000 "Bread and Roses" theme...

At each workshop, banners will be designed and then left with participants to finish for presentation at HEUs 22nd biennial convention in October.

Women pay the price of privatization

The increasing shift of health care dollars and services from public to private is jeopardizing women's health and threatening the jobs of female health care workers, according to a report released in December by the National Network on Environmental and Women's Health at York University.

The report, Women, Privatization and Health Care Reform: The Ontario Case, is the first comprehensive look at the effects of privatization and health care reform on women as patients, providers and decision-makers.

• long-term care facilities now deal with a pre-dominantly female resident population of whom 60 percent are required heavy care of 3.5 hours or more per day;

• long-term care providers are being taunted with the new demands involving those of residents with Alzheimer's, dementia and mental illnesses;

• resident-to-resident and resident-to-care provider violence is on the rise and workers are insufficiently trained to deal with the escalation; and

• the number of registered practical nurses (as licensed practical nurses in B.C.) and registered nurses employed in Ontario hospitals declined from 74,007 in 1991 to 60,446 in 1999. The number employed as casuals increased by 4,774 during this period while the number employed full-time decreased by 2,000. Many of these casuals are employed by for-profit companies providing community services.

American social activist Angela Davis spoke at the Vogue Theatre on Feb. 12 about race, globalization, women and prisons. Her talk flowed seamlessly from one topic to the other, demonstrating how they are not separate issues, but intertwined.

The injustice of the American prison system — where 2,000,000 people are incarcerated — are especially acute because of the racial bias.

And that's just one of the many activities being planned in B.C.

Watch for information in local's mailings, or contact the International Women's Day committee in your area.

For more up-to-date information on the World March of Women 2000 and events around the planet, check out the FFWs web site at www.ffwj.qc.ca.

Stress causes injuries

Health care workers know full well they hurt themselves — a lot — at work. As a matter of fact, work-related musculoskeletal injuries (MSIs) are the most prevalent — and costly — occupational health and safety issue in the health care sector.

Mitch Koechmok wanted to know why. She made it the topic of research for her PhD thesis at the University of British Columbia.

She conducted her research over a period of four years at an acute care hospital in B.C., taking a close look at the work and injury rates of clerical staff, dietary aides, housekeepers as well as pharmacists, physiotherapists and RNs. She found that job control, low job support, high job demands, time pressures and high levels of workload are all triggers for MSIs.

Health care workers often perform repetitive and demanding tasks — sometimes using very awkward postures — which can lead to back and neck problems. Lifting and bending during patient care; the entry of health records, cleaning equipment and patients' rooms, and the lifting of hundreds of food trays are examples of work that can cause these injuries.

Koechmok also identified stress as a risk factor for MSIs. The changing health care system is a source of stress. The layoff in the health care industry have also led to feelings of job insecurity," she says. All contributing to higher injury rates.

"Health care providers who have little to say about time pressures, workload levels, social structures and support and control over work decisions are vulnerable to MSIs, Koechmok study found. People in low-control and support jobs have three to four times the upper body injuries as people who are able to exercise control over their work environment and enjoy good support from their supervisors.

Koechmok makes several recommendations to combat this epidemic of injuries among health care workers: open communication between managers, supervisors and workers, ergonomic improvements to alleviate lifting and repetitive movements, and restructured staffing during critical levels of workload.

Look for HEUs Anti-Stress Guide to be published in the near future.

Canadian women tell the WTO to go

Canadian women went down to Seattle last Nov. 30 to help send a clear message to the World Trade Organization: our public services, our environment and our future aren't to be traded away.

CUPE members mobilized across the country, attending events in their own communities, writing MPs and joining forces with local allies.

The say the WTO agenda is a list track to privatization of health care, education, social services, water and waste services.

And they're determined to defend public services and the power of government to protect human rights and the environment.

Buoyed by the successes with the MAI and Seattle, CUPE activists are clear we've stopped them once and we can do it again.

• December 1999 CUPE Organizer.
Standley wins HEU at Work photo contest

TENET

THE Guardian announced a photography contest – HEU at Work – in its July/August 1999 issue, and several of you got to work to meet the end of the century deadline. We got what we wanted – pictures that show what HEU members do at work.

Jeanette Standley, a teacher in the program for three to five-year-olds at G.E. Strong’s daycare program, is the winner of the contest.

Ian Smith, a Vancouver Sun photographer, served as adjudicator. He picked Standley’s photograph because it was the one that was the most appealing – that captured the enjoyment of the viewer instantly.

Honorable mentions and brads go to Charlotte Cal, a care aide from 100 Mile House and District General Hospital and Sue Simmons, a cleaner (food photographer) who was featured in a December 1998 Guardian After the Shift columns) at Saint Joseph’s General Hospital in Comox.

Thank you to all who took the time and made the effort to enter our contest. All the photos we received will be used in future articles of the paper, with full credit being given to the photographers.

COMING UP ON WORKING TV

March 10 — Pascale Barbeau’s March 1 appearance; March 17 — Part 2

Then a five-part/three-week series produced by volunteers from around the world (including Working TV) at the Independent Media Centre in Seattle during the WTO Ministerial Series titled Showdown In Seattle: 5 Days That Shook the WTO March 20, Part 1; March 21, Part 2; April 1, April 2, April 4, April 5, April 7, April 8, April 9, public WTO special “best of” the 5 part series April 7, Part 3; April 9, Part 4; 2 p.m.

Repeat of one-hour WTO special April 14, Part 4; April 21, Part 5.

April 28 — Mayday program.

Regular broadcast times for Working TV are Fridays at 7:30 p.m. and Mondays at 8:30 p.m., in the Lower Mainland on Rogers Cable TV Tuesdays at 9 p.m., Wednesdays and Thursdays at 8 p.m. on Canata Cable TV (Kamloops and Fernie) and now on air in 50 American cities.

and don’t miss the Working TV website at www.workingtv.com.

Coffee break

Action!

Oudhi Cutt

Kate is a form of martial art in which people who have had years and years of training can use only their hands and feet, make some of the most exciting movies in the history of the world.

Good for them, but not for us.

Centres have been reluctant to engage in the final touch by banning genetically modified food from the corporate giant’s ten staff centres. “In response to concerns raised by our customers,”

Out of the mouths of babies

A first-grade teacher collected and shared poems:

She gave each child in her class the first half of a proverb and asked them to come up with the remainder of the proverb. Their insight may surprise you:

• Better to be safe than... punch a fifth grader.
• Shore while the — bug is close.
• It’s always darkest before Daylight Savings Time.
• Don’t bite the hand that looks dirty.
• A miss is as good as a shot.
• You can’t teach an old dog new — much.
• An idle mind is — the best way to relax.
• A penny saved is — not much.
• Children should be seen and not — sprinkled or grounded.
• Better late — pregnant.

Shoppers anonymous

Hospitals and clinics in Ontario and Quebec have begun to sell space for branded advertisements on toilet, corridor, and staff rooms.

Michael Forbes of the Ontario Hospital Association claimed that many hospitals already feature commercial ventures such as “A Tim Horton’s, a Roots and a Disney store.”

Near-sighted heads merit second look

Sometimes those who write headlines are a little too close to the story, and they can – and that’s as unflattering here –happen with some real blood on.

• police begin campaign to run down jaywalkers.
• Drunk gets nine months in jail.
• Typhoon rips through city, hundreds die.
• Include your children.

HEU people

New rep joins HEU’s legal team

A new Rep II position has been assigned to HEU’s legal department. Carol Reardon is a lawyer with a background in administrative, environmental and labour law. Jim Quill, HEU’s chief legal counsel, said, “Now that we have two in-house legal advocates staff, plus counsel we have assigned to HEU by CLBA, we should be able to reduce our outside counsel to a small trickle.”

Reardon is originally from Nova Scotia. She studied at King’s College, Queen’s University and the University of Toronto. She has been with HEU since 1992. She is married to Jim Quill and has two children.

HEU’s Confidential Human Rights Harassment Process

Complaints coordinator can help if you are being harassed at work because of:

• sex (including sexual harassment)
• race
• sexual orientation
• disability
• religion
• (see Art. 4.05 of the Facilities Sector Agreement)

Call 1-800-310-6886 for a recorded message.

Boycotts, strikes and lockouts

The following list was compiled from the B.C. Federation of Labour and the Canadian Labour Congress.

Strikes and lockouts:

- International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Local 31 vs Domino’s Pizza distribution, Langley.
- ATSE Local 348 (B.C. Projectionists) vs Famous Players Theatres and Cineplex Odeon, Richmond.
- Health & Safety
- Hyndal-Kerkhoff, B.C. & Yukon Territory

Boycotts:

- BCAA
- California Table Grapes
- Electrolex
- Hyndal Products
- National Post and Calgary Herald
- New Union Postal Order
- Philips Electronics
- Products from Indonesia
- Sony products

When baking cookies:

- Clinton wins on budget, but more lies ahead
- Steven painting hand by tree
- It still isn’t ended quietly, it may not yet
- Red tape holds up new bridges
- Hospitals are sued by seven foot doctors

Just fueling:

- Bicycle courier Wayne Scott won his 16-year battle with Revenue Canada over whether or not he could deduct fuel for the additional 1,300 kilometres of travel per day. He claimed his job required, in the way that car messengers can write off gasoline.

Canned democracy:

- People seem to get a little closer to their emotions in the lavatories. You don’t have to pretend here. We are all human and we are all equal.

I just try to treat everyone the same with a little bit of respect,” said Carol Champion, a public bathroom attendant who was present for an award for her services to the London Transport Board.

No charge, really:

“There’s this feeling that if we could only take Americans aside and in a polite way explain to them the things they were doing wrong...”

Toronto-born Saturday Night Live founder Lorne Michaels, explaining that the players of Canada’s in American comedy is the manifestation of an inner need to offer free advice.

Teacher’s pet:

To draw attention to classroom underfunding, a union convention representing 35,000 union members voted to back a motion that training dogs be used as classroom assistants.

Teacher Wendy Dyble said a big dog could be useful for keeping kids in line, breaking up fights, and looking for lost property like gym shoes or Barbie dolls.

More mad mergers:

The last few weeks have seen many mergers, and anticipating them could mean excellent market gains. Here are some likely mergers to expect in the future:

- Fairchild Electronics and Honeywell Computers
- Fawell Honeychild
- Jim and Goodyear minnig
- John Deere and Abilab-Pries: Deere All
- Demin Mines, Alliance and Metal Mining: Mine, All Mine
- Sisko Manufacturing, Audit, Dofasco and Dakota Mining: Zip Audi Do-Da
- Fred-Ex and UPX: Foldup

You can:

1. Save HEU money
2. Save trees
3. Get your Guardian quickly

by notifying us promptly of any change of address.

Just clip this coupon, which has your mailing label on the back, fill in your new address below and mail to the Guardian, 2006 West 10th Ave., Vancouver V6H 4P5.

Name:

Address:

City:

Telephone:

Code:

Facility:

January / February 2000 • Guardian 15

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 3

Lesbians and Gays

For support if 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 instantly or visibly disabled in the workplace, let us know how the union can better meet your needs.

TALK TO US ... TOLL-FREE!

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

PROVINCIAL OFFICE:

Victoria site 1-800-663-5813

Abbotsford site 1-800-404-0220

NORTHERN OFFICE:

Prince George 1-800-663-6939

AUGOMAG OFFICE:

Kelowna 1-800-219-9699

HANCOVER ISLAND OFFICE:

Victoria site 1-800-745-8670

Vancouver site 1-800-663-2514

Nanaimo site 1-800-424-9940

KOOTENAY OFFICE:

Kelowna 1-800-437-9877

All calls are confidential.
Privatizing health care in Alberta is a tough job

Hi, I'm Ralph Klein. I want to salute some of my many corporate supporters in the campaign to bring private hospitals to Alberta. Like MDS, the private health care multinational from Toronto that makes a bundle off Medicare in Canada.

I know they like to model themselves as a small outfit that operates community lab testing clinics in B.C. But MDS is far too modest! They've provided crucial corporate support to advance the cause of privatized health care in Alberta. They've donated generously to my political coffers. And they've injected $3 million into the Calgary private hospital that's front and centre in the efforts to bring for-profit care to Alberta.

Even better, the MDS-backed private hospital is leading the charge in a legal suit against my worst critic — Alberta NDP leader Pam Barrett. Thanks MDS. Your support for private health care is deeply appreciated!

But I've got friends like MDS to help me get the job done!