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Open house inaugurates our new Burnaby headquarters.
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COMMENT

HEU, CUPE stronger with each other
by Chris Alluant

BRITISH COLUMBIANS are being pushed backwords down a path that must be all too familiar to our sisters and brothers across Canada. Gordon Campbell and the Liberals are not very original in their attacks against public services like Medicare. The Mike Harries or Ralph Klein has tried it all before. We must resist with all the force we can muster and push back, and the most powerful tool we have is our members and our solidarity. In the battle to protect public health care we are up against some incredibly powerful forces.

HEU is a large union; there’s no doubt about that. But it’s not big enough on its own to stop Campbell or even slow him down very much. That’s why our affiliation with the B.C. Federation of Labour, the Canadian Labour Congress is so important. And it’s the reason our membership in the Canadian Union of Public Employees is so essential.

CUPE has the resources and more importantly perhaps, it has the experience and understanding of its roots and commitment to the broader struggle. It is a key ally and we will continue to strengthen our relationship.

NAME THE CENTRE

HEU has decided to extend the deadline for the Name the Centre Contest. The Provincial Executive is looking for a name for the conference centre in our new Burnaby digs that will honour the history of health care workers in this province. Or it could be the name of a Canadian or British Columbia labour hero, someone HEU members and other workers want to honour and remember.

So put on your thinking caps and send in your ideas to Info@heu.org or NameHEU Contest, HEU Communications, 5000 North Fraser Hwy, Burnaby B.C. V5J 5M3, Attention: Dan Hayman. Deadline is Dec. 1, 2001. If two entries are the same, the earlier postmark (or email date) “takes the cake” – which is a coveted HEU jacket with a fierce looking.

Thank you for the entries we have already received. They will be among those considered for the prize.

Guardian

"In humble dedications to all those who seek to live." EDITION

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THE HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES’ UNION TO THE B.C. HEALTH SERVICES DIVISION OF THE CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

The Guardian welcomes your feedback. Send letters to 5000 NORTH FRASER HWY, BURNABY V5J 5M3 OR PHONE 1-800-600-4994, PLEASE BE BRIEF.
Joint trusteeship pension funds' saving grace

Municipal Pension Plan trustees are anticipating a surplus, but will not know exactly how much until the end of the year.

Even though investments in the stock market were on a downward spiral for most of the year, made even worse by the events of Sept. 11, Steven Polak, who represents HUD on the pension board, is confident that the plan’s investments are diversified enough to enjoy a certain amount of protection from the ups and downs of the stock market.

And secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt says it’s a good thing the unions were able to negotiate joint trusteeship of the Municipal Pension Plan. "Given the political times we are living through right now, workers have at least some say in how their pension funds are invested," he says.

"I wouldn’t want the Liberal government and their friends being the only ones deciding where the sizeable funds contributed by public sector workers towards their pensions are to be invested."

Union ready to fight private hospital scheme for Abbotsford

GOVERNMENT officials admit that a private health care facility is in the works for the Fraser Valley, after HEU blew the whistle Oct. 19 on a secret scheme hatched by Gordon Campbell’s Liberals for a privately financed, privately owned and partly privately operated hospital in Abbotsford.

"It’s the most brazen attack yet by any provincial government to undermine Medicare," says union spokesperson Chris Allnutt about the plan to replace the aging MSA General Hospital. "We’re deeply troubled by this development, and we’re going to work to make sure it doesn’t happen."

Appearing at Premier Campbell’s health summit Oct. 22, HEU secretary-business manager warned the Liberal leader that the move is a step backward and that the union would be mounting an all-out campaign to stop it.

Noting that it would be a Canadian first, Allnutt says that the privatization scheme is based on a model first developed in England by the Thatcher government. The Fraser Valley Health Region would lease space over a 30-year period, which would guarantee a significant rate of return for the developer involved.

The preliminary blueprints for the new facility don’t provide any space for support services like dietary and laundry. "This is how government plans forced privatization of these kinds of services," Allnutt charged. "It’s also likely that the developer who builds and owns the private hospital will be offered an iron-clad long-term franchise to provide these services."

Meanwhile, speaking to the United Nurses of Alberta general meeting in late October, a British expert on so-called private finance initiatives warned that British Columbians should be "very worried" about Campbell’s plans.

"Britain has been using private financing sources in health care for a number of years and the results have been disastrous," says Professor Albyn Pollock, a University college London health policy specialist.

Fraser Valley residents have fought long and hard for a new facility to improve the quality of care they’re able to receive, says Allnutt. "But Gordon Campbell’s private scheme will result in second-class care for local citizens. They deserve better.”

Construction of the private hospital scheme is expected to be in private hands by 15 months and be completed by early 2005.
Trailblazer ‘just did it’

But B.C.’s first female plumber
had to win over her union brothers

by Brenda Jordison

THE TIME IS 1965. Women’s wages were
low. With no legislation dealing with
equal pay for equal work, blatant dis-
crimination was alive and well.

There was no recognition in 1965 that this was a
problem. Women who worked side-by-side with
men, doing the same job, accepted, as did the rest of
society, that they would be paid less.

Although Louise Jordison would not
receive a equal wage, she leaned toward
traditional male employment. It still paid
better than traditional women’s jobs.

She had a very large family to support;
six children, which would eventually
increase to 11.

The stories were not conducive
to women working; consequently day care
was scarce. Certainly there was no help
in the form of subsidies or assurance of
quality by the licensing of day care. Some-
how, though, Jordison was able to work in a
field that was traditionally male and take care of her children.

This alone is a testament to this woman.

Jordison says it’s amazing what can be achieved.

She says, “I just did it. It was never easy, but we
often have strength and determination we are not
even aware we have.”

She says it was not really until she retired and had
enough time to reflect that she realized she had a lot
to be proud of.

Back then, she was a woman struggling to support
a family. She was holding down three jobs, working
nights at a gambling club, then going home to bathe
penises to sell at the Alamo Club’s coffee shop. After
a few hours sleep, she’d gather up the practice, arrive
at the club, do the jumprun, work, set up and open
the coffee bar.

Early afternoon, when other help arrived, she
would take off to the parking lot between the Odeon
Theatre and the English Sweet Shop on Victoria’s
Yates Street. The entrance to the parking lot housed
a counter, time clock and a rack for our keys. Inside
parking was Jordison’s job. It was early evening
before she finished. Then she’d go home, catch a few
hours of sleep and go back to the gambling club.
When she had time off, she’d pick up extra shifts at
the parking lot.

She kept up this pace for a couple of years.

The manager at the coffee shop was married to the
owner of a plumbing and contracting company—a
small shop.

Stan Johns often had coffee at the Alamo
Club where he learned of Jordison’s struggle
to support her family.

Being a man away from home, he
offered Jordison an apprenticeship as a
plumber. He said if she became an appren-
tice, as it was a union shop she would be
paid for her work, not her gender. Her
wages would be enough to support her
family. His offer changed her life.

She continued to work at the parking lot
on weekends until she was up to the jour-
neyman rates. The union she belonged to
was the Plumbers and Pipefitters Union, Local 324.

Jordison, though often thinking himself,
was clever enough to acknowledge the real-
ity of the times. He informed Jordison that
after she obtained her apprenticeship, he
would hire her, thus securing her membership
in the union. “I got in through the back
door,” she says.

Thirty-five years later her pride is still
very evident. “In those days you paid your
union dues directly to the union hall, which
was housed in the old union building on Quadra,”
she says.

When the general membership became aware that a
woman had joined their union, congratulations
were not on the agenda. Jordison was not invited when
they called a special meeting to deal with it. Members
were very concerned. Could she do the job? After all,
this was man’s work. The issue that raised the most
anger and debate was the fact that she was taking a
job away from a man, who was taking her family.
Some members were also galled with the union’s
policy of pay for the job, not the person. Of course,
their argument didn’t hold water because Jordison
was the sole breadwinner in her family.

Lack of tolerance, understanding and acceptance
were standing in her way, but she is quick to point out
that the union ultimately accepted her into its ranks.

Jordison fondly remembers her apprenticeship, but
admits it wasn’t that difficult. “Once you have done
the frames the first or second time, you pretty much
have it,” she says. But later on, underground plumbing
presented more challenges. “That was interesting
and extremely hard work.”

Family circumstances led Jordison to opt for jobs
closer to home, rather than travel around as she had been doing. She went to work for Sears in their plumbing
and heating division and did quite well there. But she ran into more opposition from her male colleagues there.

Today she is retired and an active member
of her Vancouver Island community.

She worked on many political campaigns, but never
ran for office. “Being a big mouth on the sidelines can
in a lot of ways be more effective,” she says. “Besides,
I always had a bad thing for the undertaker, no matter
what their affiliation or beliefs. I feel it’s more impor-
tant to do what’s right, instead of being right.”

• Brenda Jordison is the chair of the Pacific Rim home
in Victoria, and she’s Lou Jordison’s daughter.

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

NOW THAT SHE’S RETIRED Lou Jordison, as she
prefers to be called, can reflect on all she’s done —
and is still doing.

2 GUARDIAN • FALL 2001
Union leaders say ‘Stop the cuts’

B.C. Fed president warns of job loss, recession

Labour leaders from B.C.'s private and public sector unions joined B.C. Federation of Labour president Jim Iker on Oct. 23 to demand that government sit down with labour, business and community groups to develop a new economic strategy.

In a submission to the legislature's Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services, Sinclair said the government's massive tax cuts to corporations and the rich will cost British Columbians at least 14,000 jobs and slide the province into a deep recession.

"The government is planning another tax cut totalling $1 billion for January 2002," he said. "We are here to call on the Liberals to defer what amounts to another massive reduction in provincial revenues."

Reminding the government of their claim that tax cuts would stimulate the economy, he said 60 years to own up to the fact that isn't going to happen.

"It's now clear the tax cuts will not pay for themselves," he said. "And the program costs to pay for them will have a brutal effect on working families by reducing critical services at the same time they depress economic growth."

Secondary-business manager Chris Allnutt, who was part of the delegation accompanying Sinclair to Victoria, agreed.

"This is nothing but a tax shift. The wealthy get big tax cuts, programs are cut and working people have to pay for the services that are not universally available to all, paid for by our taxes."

Besides calling on the government to defer the January tax cut, the labour leaders called on the government to forget about balancing the budget for the time being, instead working to maintain funding for vital public services.

After the labour groups' submission, more than 800 ranks and file union members packed a rally in the Auditorium of the Royal B.C. Museum.

"We hope that Campbell was listening," says HEU president Fred Munro. "Working people can't just be ignored. We want cooperation, not confrontation -- to develop an economic strategy that protects services, jobs and communities.

For health care and education -- those freeez mean cut and they have already begun."

After 45 days at the bargaining table, says Chudnovsky, there have been no significant clauses signed off. BCTF will begin measures to strike action if the B.C. Public School Employers' Association does not reverse their concession demands from the bargaining table.

"We need to work together to improve educational services for our children, and negotiate a fair and reasonable raise for teachers," he concluded.

Teachers say yes to strike

In their first ever province-wide strike vote, B.C. teachers have voted 91.4 per cent in favour of strike action.

British Columbia Teachers' Federation president David Chudnovsky says he is pleased with the vote because it signals a strong sense of confidence in the union's bargaining committee. "And
Notes

Fight for justice never so important
by Dale Fuller

Two days after the towers of the World Trade Center in New York came down, HEU president Fred Muzin sent a letter on behalf of HEU members, offering solidarity and condolences to the sisters and brothers of New York Local 1199 of the Service Employees International Union.

New Yorkers say the World Trade Centre was a city within a city. In a tragic illustration of how a society cannot exist without workers to make it go, over a thousand of the dead and missing are staff and members from many unions.

Hundreds of members of the fire and police unions entered the buildings to rescue those trapped inside and lost their own lives in the process. Inside were an almost unimaginable variety of workers. Elevator operators, waiters, janitors, office employees, mailroom clerks, security guards, tour guides, civil servants, teachers, window washers, painters. The last go in and on.

Many others also died in the Pentagon and on the highjacked airplanes. The APA/ICO reports that over 100,000 Americans have lost their jobs as a direct result of the Sept. 11 attacks.

New York health care workers rushed en masse to the hospitals, clinics and even impromptu street clinics to help where they could. Many were members of SEIU Local 1199, which represents over 220,000 health care workers in the city of New York.

HEU and SEIU Local 1199 have enjoyed close ties for many years. Dennis Rivers, the local's president, was the keynote speaker at HEU's 1991 Summer School.

Rivers said in a message to his members, "At such a time it is easy to give in to feelings of anger, fear and hatred. It is our fervent wish that, instead, this tragedy helps to change our hearts, and to make us more understanding, accepting and loving of our neighbours and of our common human family."

Muzin echoed those thoughts in his letter. "This situation calls for true strength and purpose. Violence will only loge violence. We must not set aside our fight for social justice. It is the only way to make sense of this unbelievable tragedy."

The U.S. and Britain have since begun an all-out attack against Afghanistan, with the support of their allies, including Canada.

Pentagon across Canada have denounced the bombing of civilians in Afghanistan. Americans, too, have united their voices against their government's actions, among them many union members.

SEIU New York Local 1199's executive presented these principles of unity to their membership. Terrorism cannot be condoned or justified, the perpetrators should be brought to justice and war should be rejected as a response to the attacks.

Unfortunately, the U.S. government is not listening.

Notebook

Anti-terrorism law imperils democracy
by Fred Muzin

SINCE SEPT. 11th, a feeling of nervousness lies just below the surface of all that we do. There is a fear that the actions and reactions of individuals beyond our control can at any moment plunge us into the darkness of a world war. We now realize how vulnerable we have become.

The stark contrast between the images of the twin towers jutting into the Manhattan skyline one second, versus the smoldering fires and destruction at ground zero the next, has indelibly impressed on us that our democracy is extremely fragile. One of the consequences of corporate globalization is that international terrorism has also become universal.

Nothing can ever justify the despicable murder of innocent people by the airplane-firing brains of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. While it is imperative that Canada plays an important role to ensure that the terrorists are brought to international justice, the actions of the Canadian government in tabling Bill C-36 go far beyond achieving that objective.

"Our democracy is extremely fragile"

The so-called "Anti-Terrorism Act" defines "terrorist activity" in part, as "an act or omission, in or outside Canada, that is intended to cause serious interference with or serious disruption of an essential service, facility or system, whether public or private, other than as a result of lawful advocacy, protest, dissent or stoppage of work." Who will decide which protests or work stoppages are illegal?

This law would appear to equate civil disobedience and peaceful protest, which are essential activities in promoting accountability in a truly democratic society, with terrorism. Will welfare justice activists now be threatened by denunciation and incarceration? When we engage in job action in health care to motivate our legitimate bargaining demands, do we suddenly become criminals? When we protest peace and disarmament and oppose war and militarism, have we turned into terrorists?

A better world is possible. As long as millions of people live in poverty and helplessness while others dine on caviar, as long as people feel marginalized, not listened to and unable to create positive changes in their lives and the lives of their children, as long as acts of aggression, terrorism, intimidation and the abuse of power are acceptable methods to achieve success, violence will continue.

The provisions of Bill C-36 make it evident that the federal government has not grasped this reality. Its support of the police actions at the protest against APEC in Vancouver, and at the FTA in Quebec, coupled with the extent of the current "anti-terrorism" legislation, are in direct opposition to the stated intent of creating a safer world.

While terrorists must be brought to justice, the remedies must not move us down the road from the democracy that we are attempting to protect towards a benevolent dictatorship or eventual police state.

The Shift

When Tracey Greenberg’s mother was pregnant with him, she was in a serious automobile accident. Years later, when Greenberg was about nine or 10 years old, he began to experience strange symptoms. His facial muscles would twitch, his arms and legs would flail about, he would go into convulsions. He’d make funny noises.

The doctors said it was because of the car accident. The truth is they didn’t know what the problem was. They treated him with tranquilizers because they didn’t know what else to do.

"I think it probably was not the best thing in the world to do for a little boy," says Greenberg, now an LPN at Richmond General Hospital and chair of the HRU local there. As he moved into adulthood, the symptoms gradually abated. He married and had a son and two daughters.

Over the years he would hear about a medical condition called Tourette syndrome (TS). "I was told a lot of the symptoms they described were suspiciously like the ones I had experienced as a boy," he says. The problem persisted away in the back of his brain. It wasn’t something he had to worry about anymore.

That is until his son started to exhibit the same symptoms when he was also about nine years old.

Right away Greenberg took himself and his son to a specialist for testing. They both tested positive for TS.

"That was three years ago," says Greenberg. His son’s TS is more severe than what he experienced as a child. Chronically his own TS seems to have returned, although it is not readily evident to anyone but himself, he says.

Children who suffer from TS are usually heavily medicated, but Greenberg says his son has the advantage of having a father who has the same condition, who knows what he’s going through and who doesn’t judge his son for something over which he has no control.

Sometimes TS kids seem to be rebellious — they call it defiant behaviour syndrome — and because my parents didn’t know that, they just thought I was being disobedient," he says.

Greenberg’s son is also able to benefit from advances in medications: treatment methods that were not available 30 years ago. Things aren’t perfect, Greenberg says, but they and others have to help with schoolwork.

"I remember it was hard for me to make friends as a kid. I was different so I was bullied a lot. And the same happened to my son," he says. "I hope that some day my son can look at me and say, ‘Hey, look at my dad. I should be able to do a lot with my life, too.’"
It's A QUESTION OF TRUST . . .
When the provincial Liberals say one thing and do another, how can we be sure our public health care system is safe?

BROKEN PROMISES
B.C. Liberals ran on a campaign that promised, among many other items, the following moves in health care.
These promises are being broken:
* make private clinics redundant
* build 5,000 non-profit long-term care beds
* maintain health services
* respect for caregivers
* preserve employment security
* commitment that HEU members shouldn't worry about privatization
* tax cuts pay for themselves

It's taken less than six months for Gordon Campbell's agenda for health care and other public services to come into sharp focus.

Cuts to Pharmacies, private hospital schemes, delisting of medical services, attacks on the work and wages of HEU members—it's clear that the Campbell Liberals have dropped any pretense of sticking to their pre-election promise to maintain health services.

And they're just getting started. The new government has announced a three-year health-care funding freeze—a move that will result in massive service cuts in communities right across B.C.

This Guardian special report takes a detailed look at how the Campbell government is setting up public health care in B.C. for its biggest fall.

We'll look at promises made and promises broken and we'll track how the B.C. Liberals have taken us to the brink of a wholesale privatization of health care in just five short months.

But HEU members are not standing idle while Campbell dismantles our health care system. Front-line activists are joining with other and community allies at hearings, public meetings and rallies to challenge the direction this new government is taking British Columbia.

Turn the page to find out more about your union's ongoing fight back strategy to defend health care and other public services.

And it's not just health care in the cross hairs. Cuts of up to 50 per cent in ministries outside health and education are planned—a move that will deprive British Columbians of critical public services and has the potential to throw tens of thousands of public employees out of work. BCGEU's George Heyman will explain his union's strategy to defend public services.

The second part of this special report goes to the heart of the Campbell government's plans to undermine the wages and working conditions of HEU members by taking on the myth of "hotel services" in health care.

B.C.'s ruling elite argues that HEU workers in occupations ranging from laundry and housekeeping to food services and clerical work are overvalued and should be paid more in line with those working in similar sounding jobs in the hotel sector.

It's the ideological justification for the privatization of huge segments of the HEU's membership but in a just-released study, Simon Fraser professor Marjorie Cohen shows just how flimsy this justification is.

Why the next six months are important

Chris Allnutt
Secretary-Business Manager
Ready to defend Medicare

Campbell's Liberals are moving ahead with health cuts and privatization at a breakneck pace. Within months, even weeks, many of you will be engaged in efforts to protect the quality of health care you deliver—maybe even your jobs.

But we'll win because of the commitment HEU members have to public Medicare. That's what gave us our strength during the darkest days of the Social Credit. That's how we strengthened public health care over the last decades. That's how we'll stop the current rush in Victoria from dismantling Medicare.

Fred Murin
President
We must strengthen our coalitions

Right now, in the early days of this new government, we must build our coalitions to defend health care.

In every community in B.C., we need to reach out to other health care unions, seniors' groups, anti-poverty groups, women's groups, advocacy groups and others to form the broadest possible common front to speak out for a strong public health care system.

The time to strengthen our coalitions is now—united in our communities, we'll make Medicare stronger.

Mary LaPlante
Financial Secretary
Our union is ready

Taking on the challenge of defending public health care from privatization will require commitment from HEU members and support from our union.

The commitment is there—it always has been. So is the support.

Over the next few weeks, your union's Provincial Executive will be reviewing and approving a campaign to defend Medicare. As we plan for the year ahead, resources to support the campaign will be our top priority.
CAMPBELL’S BATTLE PLAN

- Tax cuts: Campbell government announces deep tax cuts (June 1) converting a surplus into a deficit and setting the stage for a three-year health care funding freeze.
- Core services review set: In June, Campbell sets in motion a review of all government services including health care that will identify services to be privatized.
- HEU wages attacked: Health services minister Hanson presents misleading inter-provincial comparison of health support workers’ wages. Victoria says it will end community social services successorship accord.
- Fiscal update: Forwards cuts: July 30 fiscal update confirms that deep tax cuts for wealthy and corporations put province in deficit position.
- Premiers float privatization balloon: Campbell tells media in early September he’s not closing the door on an increased reliance on private practice or means testing for Pharmacare.

SENIORS CARE
Will the government give the private sector 5,000 new long-term care beds — if so it’s a promise broken to B.C.’s seniors, their families and those who provide them with direct patient care.

BY MIKE OGD

YOU COULD PRACTICALLY hear the sucking sound in the provincial treasury when Gordon Campbell announced huge tax cuts on June 1 — just three weeks after the election. With the stroke of a pen, the new government converted a budget surplus into a deficit and set the stage for massive health and public service cuts and the biggest privatization push in B.C. history.

But it’s not what British Columbians voted for when they delivered a huge majority government to Campbell on May 16. In fact, Campbell’s pre-election promises were incredibly comforting — 5,000 new non-profit, long-term care beds, strengthening public health care to make private clinics unnecessary, maintaining health care services where and when they’re needed, tax cuts to the bottom two tax brackets only.

And the premier told HEU members in the pages of the Guardian that they didn’t need to worry about privatization and that their work would be valued.

AND A QUESTION

The Liberals told voters their ‘new era’ of private health care. That’s not what the “new era” promised by Campbell is not what’s been delivered in a series of rapid-fire developments over the last five months.

This “take no prisoners” approach to public policy began with the tax cut. Despite his election commitment to target tax cuts to the bottom two tax brackets, Campbell’s government announced additional tax giveaways to the top three brackets and to corporations. In effect, 20 per cent of the value of the tax cuts have gone to one per cent of B.C. tax payers — those earning more than $150,000 a year. The zealous premier didn’t even wait for his own fiscal review panel to report back on the province’s finances.

And almost no one — including, it seems, finance minister Gary Collins — is taking the B.C. Liberals’ claims that the tax cuts are self-financing seriously. So Collins dropped a bomb at a recent open cabinet meeting in Pemberton — health and education spending will be frozen for three years and other government ministries will be chopped by up to 50 per cent.

The implications for health care are devastating. With no allowances for population growth, inflation and other costs, health regions will be forced to cut at least $2 billion in services over the next three years.

“In concrete terms, many communities will lose long-term care beds and community health services,” says HEU secretary.

HEU members are fighting back

HEU members are mobilizing across the province to prevent the Campbell Liberals from dismantling the health care system.

- From Kimberly to Terrace, frontline health care workers are telling the legislative standing committee on health what it will take to strengthen health care services.
- Building coalitions — in every corner of the province, HEU members are working with other unions and community groups to challenge service cuts and privatization. A B.C. Health Coalition rally held in Port Coquitlam to oppose Pharmacare cuts attracted more than 700 people.
- HEU is blowing the lid off secret schemes to privatize hospitals and services — like the public/private partnership being negotiated for the Fraser Valley.
- The union is tackling the myth that hospital support workers should be paid hospital wages by releasing a groundbreaking study. HEU members will be using the report to lobby their MUs.
- Mobilize around the Romanow Commission.
OF COMMITMENT

aw era' would not include
that they say now.

business manager Chris Almint. "Staffing in health care facilities will be cut and care will suffer. Some communities will lose their hospital."

And the cuts have already started. The health services minister, Colin Hansen, has begun to gut the Pharmacare plan by deferring more than a dozen drugs. He's threatened more changes including means testing and higher co-payments and is the offing. He's also making more than 300,000 British Columbians cover the costs of routine eye examinations and is expected to bump many other health care procedures off the Medical Services Plan.

"This government has manufactured a revenue crunch, starved public health care of resources and cut services," says Almint. "It's a prelude to mass privatization."

AND PRIVATIZATION HAS ALREADY BEGUN. Identifying services that could be transferred to the private sector is one of the key responsibilities of the Campbell government's ongoing core services review. It's likely that the review -- to be completed this fall -- will target a variety of health care services for privatization including areas such as food services, housekeeping, stores, labs and laundry. And secret plans for a privately-financed and -owned hospital in the Fraser Valley made headlines in mid-October.

On another front, the labour minister has already indicated that he's willing to change B.C.'s labour laws to make sure contract protections like successorship and employment security don't get in the way of lucrative privatization opportunities for friends of the government. In fact, they've already announced that they'll tear up successorship provisions for community social services workers.

"Campbell's agenda to undermine Medicare and target frontline health care workers represents the greatest challenge our union has faced in decades," says Almint.

COMING TO A
COMMUNITY NEAR YOU

The closure of the May Bennett home in Kelowna is clearly linked to the government's plans to privatize long-term care facilities in the province.

CONSEQUENCES

Public sector cuts looming

BY GEORGE HEYMAN
PRESIDENT
B.C. GOVERNMENT AND
SERVICE EMPLOYEES' UNION

The provincial government has acted quickly and dramatically during its first 90 days in office -- putting itself in a financial box. It now seems to be prepared to smash its way out, smashing programs and services to B.C. families and fomenting job losses throughout the broad public sector. Cuts as deep as the government's planning are unprecedented. The total B.C. budget is just under $26 billion. The government has promised to maintain current spending on health and education, which together are two-thirds of all expenditures. If the government keeps that promise, it will have to cut just over $6 billion from the remaining $8.5 billion. The entire government payroll -- BCGEU members, plus excluded managers, nurses, professional employees, Association members, salaried physicians and everyone else -- is only $2 billion. As union members in health care and education know, this means no public service is truly safe. That's why, over the coming months, all union members will need to stand together. Every member, elected officer and staff must work together if we are to successfully defend our jobs and the services we provide to B.C. families.

"It now seems to be prepared to smash its way out, shuttering programs and services to B.C. families"
AND A QUESTION OF COMMITMENT

The Liberals told voters their 'new era' would not include private health care. That's not what they say now.

The "new era" promised by Campbell is one which has been delivered in a series of real changes. This is the first time.

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A CRITICAL PART OF CARE

To prepare the ground for a privatization offensive, Victoria and its allies are mounting a full-scale attack on HEU members who don’t provide direct patient care services. But a groundbreaking study by economist Marjorie Griffin-Cohen finds their work is closely linked to clinical services and is a crucial part of patient care in health care facilities across the province.

BY STEPHEN HOWARD

For more than 20 years, Margot Roloff has worked to safeguard patients by working to create a germ-free environment at the Creston Valley Hospital. A housekeeper, Roloff, 64, follows stringent, detailed cleaning procedures to eliminate the risk of infection. Daily, she faces dangerous biological and infectious hazards, and on-the-job injury rates that are astounding four times higher than the B.C. average. And she helps play a direct role in the well-being and recovery of patients because she spends a minimum of 20 minutes a day interacting with them in their rooms.

But since last May’s election, the valuable contributions Roloff makes to health care are being attacked by the new Liberal government and their right-wing allies who characterize her job as “hotel work.” Why? Because our province’s ruling elite claims that Roloff and thousands of other HEU members in occupations ranging from laundry and housekeeping to food services and clerical work are overvalued and should be paid less — in line with those working in similar sounding jobs in the hotel sector. It’s the ideological justification for the privatization of huge segments of HEU’s membership.

But in a recent study, Simon Fraser University professor Marjorie Cohen shows just how flimsy this justification is.

Shoddy study shot down

Contracting-out argument based on faulty research

Six years ago the notoriously right-wing Fraser Institute in Vancouver published a three-page study purporting to be a scientific comparison of wage rates for HEU classifications at Royal Columbian Hospital in New Westminster with what it called comparable hotel positions.

Four heroic assumptions and three unfounded extrapolations later, the Fraser Institute claimed that the government could save $20 million — or about seven per cent of all hospital spending at the time — if HEU’s “non-technical” workers were paid the same as similar workers in hotels.

But in the groundbreaking study prepared for HEU, economist Marjorie Cohen completely demolishes the right-wing think tank’s findings. Cohen turned up a variety of faulty research methods, incorrect data, wrong numbers; and — most important — serious errors of omission about whether hospital and hotel work is comparable.

“The major problem with the Fraser Institute claim is that it does not examine the actual work of hospital support workers,” Cohen says. “It has not examined job classifications in hospitals and compared them with hotel workers’ jobs; it’s merely assumed that they are the same.”

“Support work is critical to the efficient running of hospitals, and in most cases, to the health of patients,” says Cohen. “The distinction between ‘laboring work’ and the work of support staff is not as clear cut as is often assumed, and the work of the ‘non-technical’ staff is directly related to patient care. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that all health care support occupations require considerable health care specific knowledge, skills, and on-the-job experience and training.”

The attack started taking shape six years ago, with the publication of a three-page study by the Vancouver-based Fraser Institute. In it, the right-wing think tank claimed $20 million in savings if “hotel services” such as hospital laundry, housekeeping and dietary were contracted out and workers paid similarly to unionized hotel employees.

B.C.’s corporate media gave editorial life to the study, while post-election, Premier Campbell claimed incorrectly that B.C. support workers were paid 30 per cent more than the Canadian average. As the government floated trial privatization ballrooms behind the scenes, The Vancouver Sun’s editorialists urged Campbell to break HEU’s contract and roll back wage rates to what it called comparable hotel pay scales.

ANTICIPATING THE ATTACK FROM THE RIGHT, HEU had already asked Cohen to tackle the fundamental question at hand: Do comparisons between hospital support workers and hospitality workers make sense? In taking up that challenge, Cohen conducted a detailed analysis of the Fraser Institute’s report and demolishes its arguments. (See Sheldon study, at left.)

“It was a very tiny study,” says Cohen, “but it generated a considerable amount of publicity despite the fact that it’s full of methodological errors. From a scholarly standpoint, it’s an embarrassment.”

But Cohen’s most important contribution was to carry out a detailed analysis of the skills, responsibilities and experiences of workers in the jobs targeted by the Fraser Institute. Relying on extensive interviews with front-line caregivers, Cohen concludes to a different conclusion than Premier Campbell. Her 40-page study validates what Roloff and HEU members already know: their work is important, and they’re a crucial part of care services.

For housekeepers, Cohen says a range of factors like cleanliness standards, the complexity of the physical environment, health hazards and level of patient contact make their work sub-

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Editorial suite on the attack

HEU members are in the cross-hairs of the editorial writers who articulate the agenda of B.C.'s ruling elite. Here's an excerpt from a recent Vancouver Sun editorial, which argues that health care shouldn't be exempt from the Liberal's deep-scarf-cutting cuts.

"With 60 per cent of the $5 billion in lost revenue spent on health and education, common sense dictates that both these ministries must come under the knife. To paraphrase Alberta Premier Ralph Klein, you have to hunt where the ducks are. The fattest ducks, as anyone looking at B.C.'s books can tell, are in the health and education pond.

A key reason for this deplorable state of affairs is the high cost of labour and the misallocation of funds in the publicly-run medicare system. Non-medical staff, such as clerks, laundry workers, kitchen staff, maintenance employees, and the like, are paid anywhere from 25 to 65 per cent more than comparable jobs in the private sector.

With labour costs accounting for 68 per cent of the health spending, an obvious short-term solution is to roll back those inflated wages. And, over time, Victoria will have to...contract out support services to the private sector, saving a lot more money over the long haul."

from the 'caring' professions," writes Cohen, because it's assumed these workers perform their tasks behind the scenes and away from patients.

"It is surprising to hear trade unions talk about their work in terms of what it means for patients."

Cohen's study also offers similar findings about dietary workers and a series of different jobs in the clerical job family like admitting clerks, receptionists, and stores and purchasing work.

THE SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR concludes that staff who perform these jobs in the health care sector are not simply duplicating the work performed in a hotel in a different setting.

"Health care support workers are acutely aware of the health-related nature of their work," says Cohen. "They do not see their work to be a physical task unrelated to health care delivery."

"Patient care relies as much on the work of 'miscellaneous support workers as it does on doctors, nurses and technicians," Cohen points out for groups like the Fraser Institute, constructing these services is a first step toward privatization of the whole system. But Cohen is clear that the benefits claimed from privatization are driven more by 'ideological objectives' than they are by a class examination of the experience of hospitals in Canada or the U.S.

HEU spokesperson Chris Allum says he's proud of the new ground the study has broken highlighting the role of support workers, and that it would figure prominently in the union's battle to maintain decent wages and living standards for workers and to fend off the government's privatization schemes. It confirms that the work our members do is valuable, unique and can't be contracted-out," he says.

Copies of Cohen's study, "Do comparisons between hospital support workers and hospitality workers make sense?" can be obtained from HEU. Download it from <www.heu.org> or phone the communications department at 604-432-5000 and we'll mail you a copy.

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How the public sees our jobs:

The public isn't buying the Fraser Institute's hotel comparisons.

According to polling carried out by HEU, 98 per cent of British Columbians recognize that health care depends on many different workers, not just doctors and registered nurses. And by more than a two to one score, they know that health care facilities are different from hotels and support workers should be paid accordingly. SOURCE: HEU/ANGSTYRE AND MUSTEL POLLS FEB. 2001, AND OCT. 2001.

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Health care workers should be paid similarly to hotel workers:

- 29%
- 63%
CUPE health workers settle

MORE THAN 20,000 CUPE health workers in Ontario are ratifying a new collective agreement that delivers eight and half per cent in wage increases over three years and strengthens vacation and benefits entitlements. Reached just one day before the expiry of their last agreement, the new contract makes important improvements on issues such as workloads, trades and registered practical nurses.

During the last round of bargaining, CUPE health workers were poised to take illegal job action to support their fight for a fair agreement. That resolve united bargaining teams in achieving a timely and fair settlement on Sept. 27.

“Despite a deliberate strategy by the federal government, the corporate agenda in health care and the slashing of budgets, your bargaining committee was able to conclude a deal you can all be proud of,” wrote CUPE President Fred Munn to CUPE’s Ontario health workers.

And 12,300 CUPE health care workers in Saskatchewan have voted 71 per cent to ratify a new collective agreement.

Steve Foley, president of the CUPE Health Care Council in Saskatchewan is pleased with the results.

“Our goal from the beginning was to achieve a fair collective agreement that addressed the membership priority issues of workload, pensions and paid family leave. By voting to ratify this agreement our members believe we have secured our goal.”

The agreement includes a representative workforce article that gives a joint employment strategy committee responsibility for developing, implementing and monitoring proactive initiatives designed to ensure Aboriginal members are present in all occupations.

There is also language that promotes the use of Aboriginal elders in helping resolve workplace problems, provides for the hiring of an Aboriginal education coordinator for the health sector, and accommodates employees wishing to attend spiritual or cultural observances.

Liberals eliminate labour’s voice at WCB

The Hospital Employees’ Union says workers have lost their voice at the Workers Compensation Board after the Liberals’ replacement of the entire WCB panel of administrators with their business allies in late September.

Labour minister Graham Bruce, riding a wave of widespread resentment against the WCB, replaced the panel with a lawyer who represents some of the most powerful business interests in the province plus two accountants. Lawyer Alan Winter will review WCB’s workplace standards, funding for injured workers, rehabilitation and survivor benefits.

In one fell swoop the Liberals have eliminated any worker voice at WCB. But the Liberals’ business friends will have their interests protected by Winter, a lawyer for the Business Council of B.C., the Coalition of B.C. Business and the Employer’s Forum.

“These new trustees are certainly going to push their own agendas,” says HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allum. “And that agenda will include reduced health and safety protection for workers and significantly decreased benefits for injured workers. And we fear they’ll make it even more difficult to qualify for a claim.”

Allum says that dissatisfaction with the board is legitimate, but the government is using this as a cover to cut benefits and, he suspects, regulations.

“We think they are going to drastically loosen up regulations now in place to protect workers from injury and illness on-the-job,” he says. “We are hearing that injury on duty will be capped at 90 per cent of net pay. This will undercut the 75 per cent of gross pay HEU members fought so hard to retain in their contract during the last round of collective bargaining.”

Allum says this would, in effect, be a 10 per cent reduction in WCB payments for workers who are injured while performing their jobs.

“Instead of finding a way to make workplaces safer for all British Columbians, the Liberal government has just given carte blanche to industry to continue to injure workers,” says Allum.

Working TV no longer on air

Shaw TV discontinues community broadcasting

On Sept. 17 Shaw TV took the community out of community television programming and terminated virtually all public access to cable Channel 6 in the Lower Mainland.

HEU has joined other community and labour groups in urging the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission to enforce its own regulations and require Shaw TV to provide community programming.

The CRIC regulations evolved during the early 1970s when cable companies gained the rights to lucrative monopolies by selling distant signals of mostly American programming to cable subscribers.

The CRIC held the view codified in 1991, that there needed to be a return to the community through a dedicated channel to “ensure that members of the communities they served had access to the broadcasting system.”

“Even before this out-and-out cutting of programming,” says secretary-business manager Chris Allum, “the CRIC was receiving complaints about a reduction in access. Now with this, the community has no independent access at all. Zero.”

Shaw TV has replaced independent community programming like Working TV with their own tightly controlled entertainment programs which play over and over and all day long. They only deal with non-controversial issues, in short “dumbed-down” three minute segments.

Commercials like Pharmaceuticals can or trade agreements are ignored or are treated very superficially when mentioned at all.

In contrast, the terminated shows all provided unique perspectives and met with the CRIC’s objectives of providing an unensored voice for community expression, innovation and alternative viewpoints.

They provided a valuable public resource and educational forum that is gone from Channel 6.

Julian Fichter, Vancouver producer of Working TV — the only regular television show reflecting local workers’ lives and problems — says, “This is a free speech threat. TV ignores labour except in news programming, and then it’s only about strikes or disruptions.”

Now, he says, labour’s only voice on television will be silenced. “Why? So Shaw can make money advertising, and this directly contradicts what the community channel was intended for.”
Colombians, Canadians forge links

Late last summer 30 Canadians journeyed to Colombia to learn firsthand how the people of that country are struggling against the terrible repression and violence in their country. And about how progressive Canadians can help them in their fight for peace and justice.

The delegation of trade unionists, human rights activists, academics, NDP elected officials, Aboriginal leaders, representatives of non-governmental organizations and peace activists spent two weeks meeting with their Colombian counterparts.

Rhonda Spence of CUPE's B.C. division and Guy Pocklington of the National Union of Public and General Employees are two of the trade unionists who made the trip.

They spent their first full day in Colombia in Barrancabermeja, where two women's organizations were hosting an anti-war conference.

"The women of the Popular Women's Organization and the Road to Peace were very courageous to hold the conference in Barrancabermeja," says Spence, who is also president of the union-linked development agency CoDevelopment Canada. "It's heavily controlled by right-wing paramilitary forces — the main perpetrator of violence and death in Colombia."

The next day, the Canadians split into five groups.

Spence's group visited the cities of Cali in the interior, the port of Buenaventura on the Pacific coast and some Afro-Colombian communities along Colombia's extensive river systems. The latter are threatened by huge megaprojects like hydroelectric dams.

"That would destroy the habitat where they have lived for hundreds of years," says Spence.

Although they have legal title to their lands, if powerful interests want them, they just send in the paramilitaries. In some communities there are no keys to their communities.

In Cali the municipal workers recent-

ly won an important campaign against the privatization of their water. Although successful, the fight was vicious and the violence continues sporadically.

Barranquilla has just been designated as a free trade zone, which means temporary refugee and secure access to food when communities are threatened or if they are attacked.

Canadians can lend their expertise and resources in education, research and training in human rights.

"And we have so much to learn from them," says Spence.

"The efforts of Colombian unionists, women, Afro-Colombians, indigenous people and peasants to build their movements and to push for peace is to be admired and respected. Their commitment under such dangerous conditions was very humbling for me and I am sure for the rest of the delegation."

GIVE A LIFE A CHANCE

The B.C. Federation of Labour has partnered with the B.C. Transplant Society in a comprehensive campaign to urge union members to register as organ donors in a drive to reduce the length of time the waiting list grows. Canadians must wait for transplantation.

"This is a wonderful opportunity to be a member of the underground on how to keep our loved ones out of harm's way," said B.C. Federation of Labour President Jim Sinclair.

You can get more information about the organ donor program and register online through the B.C.F.L. website (www.bcgov.org) or call 888-696-2267 for more information.

"We've decided to take the organ donation campaign to the next level by including all our members in a drive to reduce the length of time the waiting list grows. The B.C. Provincial Tissue Registry is open to all Canadians."

We have worked with the BCTF leadership to ensure that the B.C. Federation of Labour has signed up to give life.
Youth can learn labour’s past

The cover of Youth, Unions and YOU is from a 1947 Fraser Wilson watercolour, the artist’s view of the Vancouver waterfront of the time. The painting is the artist’s proof for a mural now prominently on display at the Maritime Labour Centre.

The history of working people has been filled with drama, sacrifices and successes.

With us today in many parts of the world, they look at this existence, why it still deludes and what simple thing they can do about it.

Women have always worked, but for a long time their work was invisible. It didn’t count. How women fought to have their contributions to society recognized is part of the story. So is how they are still fighting discrimination and how young women (and men) now in school will most likely need to continue with this struggle. Even women’s involvement in the union movement was not immune from this syndrome, students learn.

The use of this guide is not a mandatory part of the province’s curriculum, but BCTF and the B.C. Federation of Labour urge parents to encourage their school boards and their children’s teachers to make use of the material. “It’s very exciting,” says Sinclair, “to see the potential for our kids to learn how events in their own community’s history — coal mining in Nanaimo, for example — build lessons about labour rights in the world today.”

The guide is available to anyone with access to the Internet. The BCTF has posted it on their web site at www.bctf.ca/lessonAids/dlOnLine/2005.

While it is designed for teachers and secondary school students, because this bears are numerous links to other sites, it is an excellent resource to anyone interested in the history of working people.
HEU people

Controller likes the West
Robert Shapiro started working at HEU as the new controller in early August.

Originally from Montreal, he says he has slowly been working his way west for the last 20 years or so. His last stop before British Columbia was Manitoba. During those three years in that province he became a chartered accountant. He brings a wealth of experience in the private sector to his new job, but he says he always was interested in working for a not-for-profit organization, and HEU fits the bill.

"I can use my skills in budgetary control to serve the members and staff of HEU," says Shapiro.

He was the chief financial officer of Polaric Water Company before joining HEU's staff. He has a family with two boys, one at UBC and the younger one in a prestigious snowboarder.

IN MEMORIAM
Ex-staffer dies after long life
Brother Owen Adams died in Kelowna on Sept. 15 at the age of 81, and the news triggered fond memories of the outdoor-loving, HEU servicing representative and director in both union members and staff alike.

Adams, who worked in the Lower Mainland, the North and the former Okanagan/ Kootenay region, retired in the 1980s. In his obituary, his family graciously acknowledged the members he worked for so tirelessly with "special thanks to the health care professionals on 4A at KGH."

He is survived by a loving family that includes nine grandchildren and seven great grandchildren.

PG Care Aide sorely missed
Sister Roberta Bilinski, the longtime Care Aide at Simon Fraser Lodge in Prince George, passed away in early August of this year. She was well beloved by her union brothers and sisters. The residents at the facility appreciated her kindness, wit and humour. Co-worker Wayne Polland, also a Care Aide at Simon Fraser, wrote her obituary in the Prince George Citizen.

"Special thanks, Roberta, for all the years of enjoying your humor, joyous character. Many that worked with you remember looking over their shoulder to see what tricks or jokes you were often up to. Do you do realize that you will have to send down a letter from the person in charge up there to verify your indelible mark of absence from work. It will most likely result in a grievance and end up going to arbitration. Any other time we'd say we stand beside you, but this time we send our love.

She has left a great emptiness, he says.

HEU notes passing of ally
Disability advocate and social justice activist Mary Williams died unexpectedly on Oct. 5 at her home in Vancouver.

Over 25 years ago, when institutionalized after her spinal cord injury, Mary and a few other residents began a disability advocacy organization. This marked the beginning of her long and devoted career as a spokes- person and mentor for people with disabilities.

Mary was a feminist and founding member of the Disabled Women's Network Canada, and the immediate past president of the B.C. Coalition of People with Disabilities. She brought a life of toughness, gentleness and a great sense of humour to her work, speaking out on issues from women's rights, to accessible transportation, to re habilitation, to AIDS as a disability.

Mary received the Coast Foundation Courage to Come Back award earlier this year because of her remarkable contributions.

Mary was key to the success of the 1999 campaign to save the G.F. Strong Rehabilitation Centre from closure. HEU was part of that campaign and benefited greatly from her knowledge and experience.

"There is life after disability. I'm so proud of my spinal cord injury and I'm not my wheelchair. I'm still Mary. I have a great quality of life, not just a good one, but a great one."

Mary, April 2001.

EQUITY PHONE LINE
1.800.663.5813, ext. 514
Lower Mainland 739.1514

press 1
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 2
Ethnic Diversity
One union, many colours! Working across our diverse community is a unique experience. Call us today.

press 3
People with disAbilities
Weld like to hear from you! If you are on WCBO or LTD? Or if you are partially or totally disabled in the workplace, let us know how the union can better meet your needs.

press 4
Lesbians and Gays
For support, if you are afraid of being identi-fied, feeling isolated, want to know your rights? Call for information on same-sex benefits, fighting homophobia and discrimina-

All call to the equity phone lines 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 is fast, it is easy and it is free.

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, 5000 North Fraser Way, Burnaby V5J 5M3.

Name:

Address:

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Facility:

FALL 2001 • GUARDIAN 15
Don't close your eyes to sweatshop abuses
Exploitation is never in fashion

Long hours. Low wages. Harsh conditions. Paid in coupons for
Milk. A high fever and meningitis are the usual end price for
the children who work in the garment and shoe industries.
We can make it happen. Find out more about the
NO SWEAT Campaign call 1-506-565-3000 or visit www.sweat.ca

All in the family
Richmond LPN and local chair can help his son cope with
Tourette Syndrome, because he has it too.

Shaw thumbs nose at community
Working TV and other community programs have been booked off
the air leaving no labour voice on
the television airwaves.

The drama of workers’ history
Kids are going to learn about the history of labour thanks
to a new teaching guide.

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