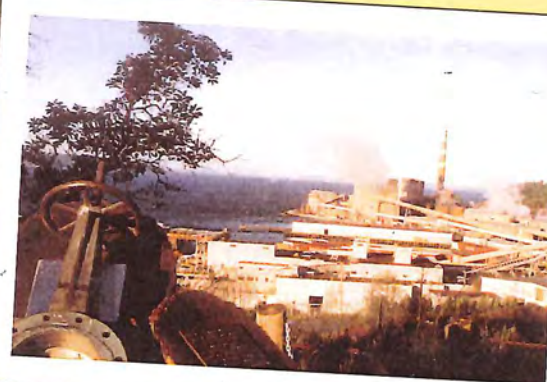




B.C. AT THE CROSSROADS



In Powell River where HEU member Wendy Bekkema and her husband Ron live, many residents are facing an uncertain future. A CEP member, Ron held on to his job when the Norske Skog mill (below) laid off almost 300 workers, but only because many took early retirement.



Six people, three towns ... and how things are changing

THEY THINK OF THEMSELVES as the lucky ones. Ron and Wendy Bekkema, residents of Powell River, are watching their resource town slowly crumble. The Tru-Valu has closed. Schools are withering. There are no jobs for kids who graduate.

Wendy's a licensed practical nurse at the local hospital. Her two-year-old pilot project, an alternative-level-of-care rehabilitation unit that readies patients to return home, is still being funded — although that could change any time, and her job could disappear, and she could be forced to work at a private facility for much lower wages.

Ron works at the Norske Skog paper mill,

where 282 of his colleagues have just been laid off. He was among them, briefly, but held on to his job after a series of retirements lifted him back onto the board. So he's still working — for now.

They have a house that's worth \$40,000 less than it was three years ago — and that after they'd sunk some \$25,000 into renovations.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

These are uncertain times for people in British Columbia. Especially for those who work in resource industries like forestry or for the public sector in hospitals, schools and the civil service.

Beginning with this issue, the *Guardian* is looking at how provincial government cutbacks and a slumping economy are affecting some HEU members and their families. And we'll check in with them and others over the next few years.

In this first installment **CHRISTINA MONTGOMERY** reports on families in Prince Rupert, Powell River and Nelson — communities that have been hit hard by the downturn in the forest industry.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROLLAND DESILETS

news



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He lied! Campbell's threats shocking betrayal of trust

Unions say premier can count on a fight if he rolls back our contracts

Before last spring's provincial election, Premier Gordon Campbell said he didn't believe in tearing up signed contracts, and that health care workers didn't have to worry about privatization from a Campbell government.

But now, in a stunning about face, the Liberal government said Dec. 4 it's considering introducing legislation early in the New Year to roll back collective agreement provisions for more than 100,000 B.C. health care workers.

"We're deeply disturbed by the provocative comments made by the Premier," says HEU assistant secretary-business manager Zorica Bosancic.

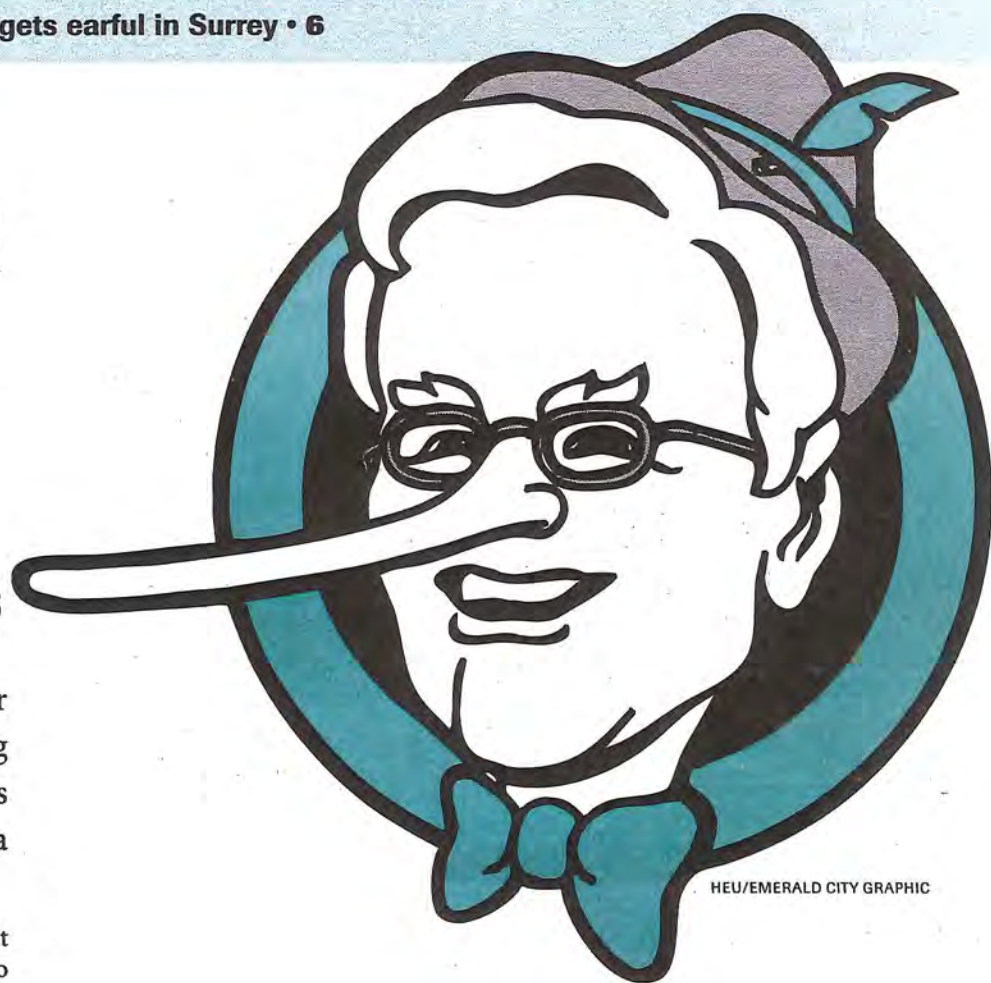
"Given Campbell's commitments before the election, it amounts to a shocking betrayal of trust. He campaigned on bringing honesty and integrity to government. Yet he's lied to all health care workers. Has he no shame?"

"Clearly we need to start the fight

back now," she says, "because we're not going to be bullied by a premier who lied when he told us before the election that he wouldn't tear up our contracts."

To begin the fight against attacks on our contract provisions and possible wage rollbacks, HEU has developed a quick Christmas checklist of things you can do to mobilize opposition during the holidays. See the sidebar below.

Campbell and health minister Colin Hansen acknowledge that B.C.'s health care system faces cuts of a least \$700 million next year, and they claimed that collective agreements were a barrier for government to implement cost saving measures.



HEU/EMERALD CITY GRAPHIC

And Hansen again targeted HEU members who provide important support services as being overpaid.

But Bosancic says it's not collective agreements that are the problem, but the government's failed assumption that tax cuts pay for themselves.

"We're facing a crisis in our health care system caused by reckless tax cuts implemented by Campbell that benefited the wealthy and corporations.

"The so-called flexibility that government wants is code for contracting-out and privatizing services," she said.

And Bosancic says that the rollback

Premier Campbell can expect a lot of allusions to his broken promises and attacks on his credibility if he doesn't back down.

threat adds more urgency to the B.C. Federation of Labour's fight back plan, which includes a mass rally in Victoria Feb. 19 to protest Campbell's social and economic policies.

In the social services sector – where government is moving to eliminate successorship provisions so that it can decimate services for the mentally and physically challenged – Bosancic says HEU is already working with other unions in a coordinated fight back campaign.

Meanwhile other health care unions have damned Campbell's big lie.

George Heyman, president of the B.C. Government Employees' Union, told Campbell to keep his hands off signed contracts.

"Our members fought hard to win their agreements," said Heyman. "They'll fight just as hard to defend them."

B.C. Nurses' Union president Debra McPherson says all health care workers are a team who work together interdependently. "Government should keep its hands off all health care agreements," she warned.

Quick Christmas checklist

HEU MEMBERS CAN FIGHT TO PROTECT JOBS AND SERVICES

- Contact your local MLAs to tell them how angry you are that Campbell wants to gut our agreements. MLA contact information can be found on HEU's website, www.heu.org, or phone Enquiry B.C. at 1-800-663-7867, or 604/660-2421 in Vancouver.
- Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper.
- Stay in touch with developments by phoning

the special HEU Defend Our Contracts hotline: 1-800-909-4994.



- Give us your e-mail address so you can be part of our rapid e-mail update list (see page 12 to find out how you can enter our e-mail contest at the same time!).
- Talk to your employer to put them on notice about the consequences of breaking promises and gutting collective agreements.



COMMENT

Stand on guard

If there is one lesson to be learned from the year that is drawing to a close, it is this: never, ever take anything for granted.

When an election was called in the late spring, the writing was on the wall – the Liberals would be the next government. But never did we imagine that the defeat of the New Democrats would be so sweeping, leaving them even without the power to be an effective opposition.

The Liberals have used their overwhelming majority of seats in the legislature to ram through new laws with little or no debate.

Almost every week there is a new attack on the poor and working people of British Columbia. Cuts to Pharmacare, massive cuts to public service jobs, draconian legislation aimed at teachers' bargaining rights are all only the start of the Liberal agenda. And now they are going after health care workers. Gordon Campbell told HEU members he would not tear up any agreements – but that is exactly what he is proposing to do.

Even with no official opposition, the Liberals' steamroller strategy is not going to work. There is a snag – British Columbians are beginning to organize to stop it in its tracks.

The B.C. Federation of Labour has called for a broad coalition

of community and advocacy groups to join them in doing more than standing around criticizing the government's callous disregard for the majority of its citizens – the ones who aren't rich and who not only haven't benefited from tax cuts – they are suffering from them.

And Liberal hopes for a rift between private and public sector unions were dashed at the recent BCFL policy convention. It was good to hear private sector unions pledge support of their sisters and brothers in the public sector, saying that those public service jobs are just as vital to communities as private sector jobs.

We are going to come up with ideas and strategies to create jobs – not cut them – to expand our exports, to stimulate investment in the province and to generate government revenue.

The message to Mr. Campbell is this: we are not going to just roll over. We are going to be very loud, we are going to offer solutions and we are going to be in your face every day you are in power.

The message to our members is equally clear: we have to be ready to defend everything we fought for during the last decade. If we don't it will be snatched away from us.

CHRIS ALLNUTT • SECRETARY-BUSINESS MANAGER

voice.mail

Our helping hands

For the last 14 years, I worked in different Vancouver hospitals, mainly in food services, but also for a few months as a housekeeper at Lions Gate Hospital.

I still remember the day I was called to clean up an isolation room, where a patient smeared feces not only all over the walls, but also the ceiling. I took my mop and bucket and cleaned up the windowless room. That was my job.

A big part of my job was the collection of mountains (no kidding) of garbage bags filled with used, disposable diapers. The problem was that many of these bags opened, because they were torn or not tied properly.

Housekeepers were also scared to be pricked by used needles carelessly discarded in the regular garbage.

Food service workers clean the dirty food dishes that come back from patients. Beside leftover food, these trays also carry syringes and who knows what kind of diseases.

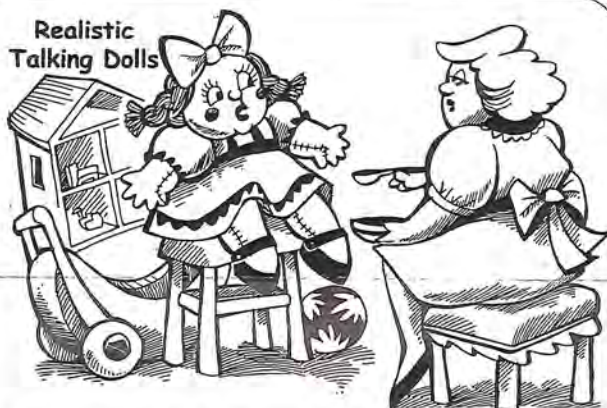
So when I read Kim Bearell's Friday letter (No blood on HEU's hands, Nov. 2 *Vancouver Sun Letters*) saying she "can attest to the fact that HEU members don't deal with stools, blood, urine, etc.," I wondered what the heck I was smelling all those years.

Who does Ms. Bearell think is cleaning up the operating rooms?

Nurses are a vital part of a hospital, but there are many different people doing many different jobs that make the system work. It always seems easy to criticize someone if you don't understand fully what they are doing.

HANS OPELKA
Lions Gate, UBC Locals

Realistic Talking Dolls



Solidarity note from trade workers

The Board of Directors of the BC Hospital Maintenance and Trades Workers Association would like to thank you for the opportunity to meet with the Provincial Executive on Oct. 11, 2001.

We felt this meeting was very productive. Though this was only the first step in the process of building a better understanding and appreciation of the issues and concerns affecting our association and the HEU, we felt that it was an important one.

In light of all the issues, such as privatization, that are affecting all HEU members, we believe that it is even more important now than before, to continue this process. This will allow us to build an even stronger and more united union to strengthen us all for the struggle ahead.

We therefore pledge our full cooperation to you, our brothers and sisters, so that we may attain all our goals for both the members of the HEU and the BCHMTWA.

We will be contacting you in the new year to arrange another meeting to continue our discussions.

DAVID PELLERIN
*Vice President
Board of Directors
BCHMTWA*

Let's get word out

I was just wondering if any of the information that is released to members of the HEU via the e-mail service is or has been released to the general public?

I have spoken to several of my friends about some of these issues and they have no idea of what the Liberal government is attempting to do.

Even some of the nursing staff I work with had no idea about the Liberals wanting to privatize the new hospital in Abbotsford, until it was announced on the news.

It is obvious to me that our current premier cares nothing for our way of life and is determined to turn B.C. into another state.

I was informed yesterday that B.C. ambulance service is now implementing a new policy. They are going to bill the

hospital for time that they have to wait in the hall, due to staffing and/or bed shortages in Emergency and other hospital wards. And, they have put a hiring freeze on.

We have a great health care system here, that is why I have stayed in Canada. I don't want to see us go the way of HMOs, where only people who have a lot of money get adequate health care.

Who is going to look out for the people who don't have a voice, the elderly, single parents, people with disabilities, families just starting out, street people or whomever? I don't see Gordon Campbell telling his cabinet that they have a pay freeze, or have to take a pay cut. I am very sure that they all make a hefty salary.

I feel very strongly that the general public needs to be aware of the things this man is attempting to do. I have noticed that other unions made a lot of noise when their contracts were up for renewal, and they gained public support. No one even knew that the HEU contract was being negotiated until three months after it was settled when the BCNU threatened strike action.

If we don't have the support of the public, our health care system will not only deteriorate it will cease to function as we know it.

ROBIN HILLSDEN
Lions Gate Local





COFFEE BREAK

All stories guaranteed factual. Sources this issue: Internet, CALM, The Public Employee, CUPE B.C.

Children

You spend the first two years of their life teaching them to walk and talk. Then you spend the next 16 telling them to sit down and shut up.

Mothers of teens know why some animals eat their young.

Children seldom misquote you. In fact, they usually repeat word for word what you shouldn't have said.

The main purpose of holding children's parties is to remind yourself that there are children more awful than your own.

We child-proofed our home three years ago and they're still getting in!

Be nice to your kids. They will be choosing your nursing home.

Digging the dirt

Dig Dirt Day thrilled the kids of Castlegar, B.C. this June. About 900 of the city's 7,000 residents showed up with their children, who got a chance to dig dirt with the public works employees. With help from CUPE members, they drove loaders, excavators and other machinery that moves dirt.

"We just wanted to do something for the kids in our community," said Shawn Boven, one of the originators. "They get a T-shirt, a toy hard hat and some leather gloves, plus a free hot dog and drink."

The half-day began at 11 a.m. and ended at 2 p.m., but the crowds were lined up at 10 a.m. this year. They clearly didn't want to miss the chance to visit 10 different workstations to see what city workers do.

Job hunting throughout history

Julius Caesar: My last job involved a lot of office politics and backstabbing. I'd like to get away from all that.

Marie Antoinette: My management style has been criticized, but I'd like to think of myself as a people person.

Joseph Guillotine: I can give your company a head start on the competition.

Hamlet: My position was eliminated in a hostile takeover.

Lucrezia Borgia: My greatest accomplishment? After I took over the department, our competition just seemed to drop out of sight one by one.

Pandora: I can bring a lot to your company. I like discovering new things.

Genghis Khan: My primary talent is downsizing. On my last job I downsized my staff, my organization, and the populations of several countries.

Macbeth: Would I go after my boss's job? Do I look like the kind of guy who would knock off his boss for a promotion?

Libs breaching obligations, say unions

THE UNIONS REPRESENTING B.C. teachers, registered nurses and school support workers have filed a formal complaint against Gordon Campbell's Liberal government with the International Labour Organization, the United Nation's labour body.

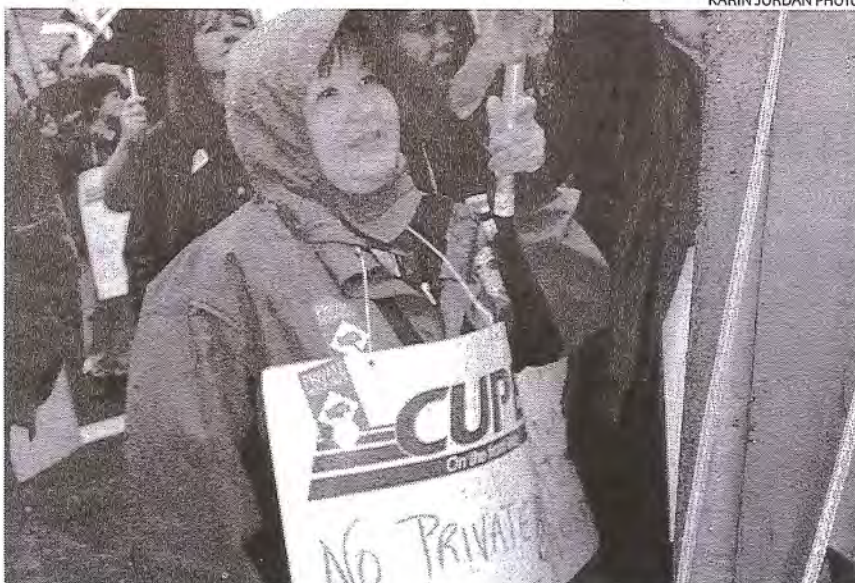
The B.C. Teachers' Federation, CUPE B.C. and the B.C. Nurses' Union are saying that Bills 15 and 18, the laws that

imposed the nurses' contract and made education an "essential service," are contrary to Canada's obligations under international labour standards.

The complainants note that the ILO has repeatedly held that "essential services" do not apply to education. This principle has been affirmed in other parts of the world including Honduras, Peru, Germany and Quebec, where

governments tried to deny workers in education the right to strike.

"Our position is the same as that of the U.N. — essential services protect life and limb. While education is vital and important, it's not an essential service," said David Chudnovsky, B.C.T.F. president. "With Bill 18, the provincial government is trying to restrict or eliminate the right of workers in the public education system to bargain collectively and, if necessary, to strike."



KARIN JORDAN PHOTO

In pouring rain, 1,000 CUPE delegates staged a rally outside Price Waterhouse Coopers, loudly protesting their possible role in health care privatization.

conducted for HEU by polling firm McIntyre and Mustel, 85 per cent of Fraser Valley residents supported the idea of holding a referendum in the health region... where privately financed and owned hospitals are being proposed, to give the community the final say in whether or not they go ahead.

And, in a letter sent on Nov. 20, HEU has asked Auditor General Wayne K. Strelieff to review the role of multinational consulting firm Price Waterhouse Coopers in the controversial planning process to build the new Abbotsford hospital. PWC already profits from involvement in a number of so-called private financing hospital schemes in Britain.

"We're deeply trouble by the company's role in this project," says HEU's secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt. "PWC is supposed to be providing independent and balanced advice to the region on all options-including public-to replace MSA Hospital. But the company's track record leads us to believe that it may be inappropriate for them to perform this work."

POLL

85 per cent of Fraser Valley residents want a referendum to decide on a private hospital

We don't want PFIs

Workers, seniors, others mobilize to fight private hospital in Fraser Valley

THE HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' Union is gearing up to fight to stop a privatization scheme known as a private finance initiative (PFI) that could see Abbotsford's aging MSA General Hospital replaced with a privately financed, privately owned and partly, privately operated facility.

Spearheaded by the MSA local's "Organizing Against PFI" committee, activists have connected with allies in

the Fraser Valley and beyond including seniors, students and community organizations, to build a broad-based coalition against a private deal. Mobilizing efforts are expanding rapidly. MSA health care workers have taken their message to the street in a number of creative ways including a free community breakfast and outreach.

The public is becoming aware of the problems associated with private hospitals. According to a Nov. 7-11 survey

<<newsbites>>

Bargaining to begin at Kelowna's Lakeshore Place

Thirty workers at Lakeshore Place in Kelowna certified with HEU on October 23 and are now part of the Parklea local. The new members are housekeepers, cooks, servers, bus drivers, an activity coordinator, maintenance and laundry workers and security staff at the private, for-profit retirement living complex.

"We warmly welcome these new members into our union," said Chris Allnutt, the union's secretary-business manager. "We look forward to working with them towards a solid first collective agreement."

At their first local meeting, the members elected Donna Hall as the site representative. Brenda Canuel and Fran Stocknow will serve on the bargaining committee. HEU has received pertinent information from the employer. The parties will schedule the first round of talks shortly.

Lakeshore Place offers retirement housing with services to seniors and is another Holiday Retirement Corporation facility. The Oregon-based transnational is the same outfit involved at Imperial Place in Surrey.

"Our Lakeshore Place members will be able to draw on the union's experience with Holiday Retirement

Corporation as they go into their contract talks," says Allnutt.

Shelbourne local defeats decertification bid

All 164 HEU members of the Shelbourne local in Victoria are still in the union, thanks to a Labour Relations Board decision handed down on Oct. 10, 2001 that denied a decertification bid.

The local is made up of workers from three separate sites owned and operated by Lifestyles Retirement Communities Ltd. — Kensington, Parkwood Care and Parkwood Retirement. All three facilities provide residences and services to retired per-

STEPHEN HOWARD PHOTO

Delegates vote down challenge to HEU's status

Our place in CUPE 'strong, more secure,' says Muzin

MORE THAN 2,100 DELEGATES representing CUPE locals from across the country overwhelmingly rejected a bid to exclude HEU when the union's national convention got underway in Vancouver on Nov. 19.

It brought to a close a tense week in which some forces in CUPE resorted to B.C.'s Supreme Court seeking an injunction to prevent HEU from participating in the deliberations of its national union. At stake was the delegate entitlement provisions in HEU's seven-year old merger agreement that brought HEU back into the CUPE fold in 1994, which became an issue because of a hotly contested election to replace CUPE's retiring secretary-treasurer.

But the courts rejected that bid and delegates sent a clear message when the same political forces sought to wage a floor fight to block HEU from the convention.

Two days later, progressive Quebec activist Claude Généreux was elected as CUPE's new secretary-treasurer, winning by more than 500 votes. Généreux had been a strong HEU backer in the divisive struggle leading up to the convention. He'll work with another HEU supporter, CUPE president Judy Darcy who was re-elected for another two-year term.

"It's been an extremely positive outcome for us," says HEU president and

CUPE national executive member Fred Muzin. "Clearly, HEU's place in our national union is now stronger and more secure than before."

Généreux had been a strong HEU backer in the divisive struggle leading up to the convention

Rank and file CUPE delegates want our national union to focus on providing leadership so that public sector workers can challenge the attacks on our jobs and the important services we provide for Canadians."

And delegates did just that, rolling up their sleeves to passionately debate a number of issues like the Abbotsford private hospital scheme,



Claude Généreux was elected by a margin of 500 votes to be CUPE's new secretary-treasurer.

threatened efforts by the Campbell government to roll back the collective agreement for 13,000 community social services workers in B.C., the so-called war on terrorism in Afghanistan, and the struggles of 1,500 flight attendants and CUPE members who lost their jobs when the Canada 3000 airline went bankrupt earlier this month.

B.C. Fed says we're not going to take it

B.C.'s labour movement is one of the key elements that stands in the way of implementation of the provincial Liberals' right-wing political and economic agenda, says Jim Sinclair, president of the B.C. Federation of Labour.

And delegates to the B.C. Fed policy convention, held Nov. 26-28 in Vancouver, vowed to fight against privatization, deregulation and tax give-aways that are hurtling the province into an economic crisis.

Delegates voted to fight back and approved an action plan to meet the challenge of turning back these threats to the democratic, economic and social rights of British Columbians. Together with a wide spectrum of community-based organizations, the labour movement will be there to challenge the government at every turn, because only wealthy individuals and corporations will benefit from the government's plans.

Deaths in Montreal remembered



end violence against women

On Dec. 6 British Columbians commemorated the 12th anniversary of the Montreal Massacre, where 14 young women were murdered at l'École Polytechnique.

HEU's Women's Committee distributed their by-now traditional Dec. 6 stickers to remember not only those 14 young women, but all victims of gender-based violence. And the Men's Committee supplied white ribbons in support of a world free of violence.

Women's and students' groups held memorial services in Penticton,

Cranbrook, Prince Rupert, Campbell River, White Rock, Vancouver, Burnaby and Victoria. In Vancouver, there was a commemorative remembrance at Thornton Park, the site of a monument to women who have perished as victims of violence.

The Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter put up an information table at Vancouver Public Library.

Many similar events happened across Canada, giving communities and individuals the opportunity to reflect on concrete actions to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women.

sons. Except for registered nurses at Parkwood Care, the same classifications are used at all three sites.

The decertification application – for Parkwood Retirement only – came close on the heels of a 70 per cent strike vote. LRB vice chair Ken Saunders said there would be a real and significant impact on remaining employees if Parkwood Retirement were to be removed from the unit.

HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt agreed, saying, "Because the sites are so closely related, several employees exercise entitlements to claim work at both Parkwood Retirement and Parkwood Care. Bumping rights, as well as posting and

selection entitlements between the two sites, would have ended."

"Partial decertification is not available 'on demand'...." Saunders told the decertification applicants in his decision. It is the exception rather than the rule that governs the termination of collective bargaining rights, he said.

11th World Community Film Festival to feature two HEU members

In February one film at the 11th annual World Community Film Festival will feature the story of two HEU members. Joseph and Perpetua Alfazema both work in Victoria area hospitals, Joseph

A child does his share with Perpetua Alfazema's help in Journey to Kapasseni.

as a cleaner at Gorge Road and Perpetua as a casual continuing care attendant at Royal Jubilee and Victoria General hospitals.

In 1995, 30 years after fleeing war-torn Mozambique, the Alfazemas returned to their homeland only to discover their town devastated. The village head told the Alfazemas the children were in dire need of a school; could they help?

Back in B.C. the couple organized the Mozambique Choir and together with Victoria's Getting' Higher Choir they



staged a benefit concert and raised \$10,000. Back in Kapasseni, they helped the townspeople build a school, hire a teacher, enroll over 100 children and adults and witnessed the first day of classes. All in one week. A joyful and music-filled journey – and film.

Journey to Kapasseni: a refugee's gift will show in Courtenay, Salt Spring Island and Vancouver. Visit <www.webinet/~worldcom> for more information.

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'No' to private hospitals

HEU, allies cite cost overruns, reduced service under private schemes

More than 350 people packed the provincial government health standing committee Nov. 8 in Surrey to back community and labour representatives when they spoke against a private hospital scheme – the private finance initiative (PFI) – proposed to replace MSA General Hospital in Abbotsford.

The on-the-ground legwork of HEU MSA local's Organizing Against PFI committee, and the response from concerned Fraser Valley residents, seniors' and community groups, and other HEU locals and labour organizations, ensured that the Liberal MLAs heard the message loud and clear – no private hospital for the Fraser Valley.

Sikh temple spokesperson Gurnaik Singh Brar, Marj Mansell of the B.C. Old Age Pensioners' Organization, B.C. Health Coalition member Caryn Duncan of the Vancouver Women's Collective, and leaders from the B.C. Nurses' Union, BCGEU, CUPE B.C. and the B.C. Federation of Labour joined with HEU in a cooperative pre-

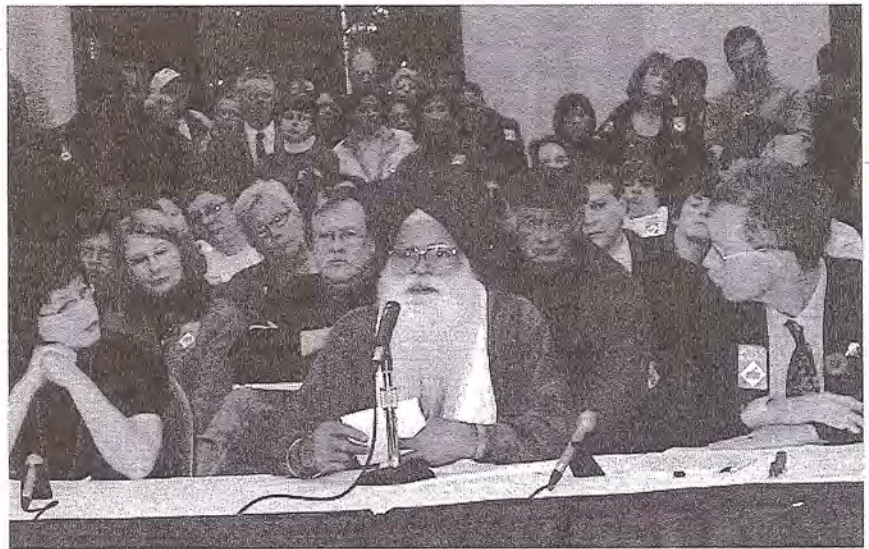
sentation that clearly demonstrated the real costs of privatization and the impact private deals have on patients, workers and communities.

BCNU vice-president Patt Shuttleworth said that when private contractors are brought in to provide hospital support services such as dietary and housekeeping, costs go up and service goes down. "We support our colleagues in the HEU when they argue against contracting out key hospital support services. Housekeeping and dietary staff are valued members of the hospital team."

OAPU's Mansell, a resident of the Fraser Valley Health Region, said, "The fear is real that a private hospital will

PFI'S IN BRITAIN

The experience in England with private finance initiatives has been abysmal



Caryn Duncan of the Vancouver Women's Collective, HEU's Chris Allnutt and Gurnaik Singh Brar of the Sikh Temple all said no private hospital in Abbotsford.

cost more to operate and thus will take scarce health care dollars away from this region."

And Brar brought down the house when he closed his remarks with "... and I wish you good health so that you never have to go to the hospital."

HEU members, other health care workers and supporters of Medicare presented progressive solutions to expand and strengthen our public health care system to the standing committee throughout the MLAs' B.C. tour.

You can check out what's been said before the committee on the B.C. gov-

ernment's web site at <www.gov.bc.ca>. Click on search, then type Hansard, Select Standing Committee on Health and hit enter.

In Britain, where they have experience with PFIs, a report by the National Health Service Consultants' Association concludes they pose a major threat to the viability of the National Health Service in Britain and to the ability to provide comprehensive care for the citizens of the United Kingdom.

The NHSCA has opposed PFIs since they were first proposed because it believes that a tax-funded service should not irrevocably tie up its finances in the private sector.

The report, printed in the *British Medical Journal* and entitled *Private Finance in Health Care: Why Not*, "points out that PFI hospitals are far smaller than the old ones, creating additional demands for primary care services, and are more expensive ... many patients may feel forced into the private sector; funds will be found to allow trusts to use spare capacity in the private sector; or patients with potentially curable diseases will be forced to wait longer or find their treatment has been rationed."

For more information about PFIs, look up the web sites of the BMJ at <www.bmj.com> (use the search feature to find articles on PFI) and UNISON, Britain's largest trade union <www.unison.org.uk>. Click on "Campaigns and Policy Areas."

Exchange brings Colombian to Canada for tour

THE FALL 2001 *GUARDIAN* REPORTED that a group of Canadian trade unionists and social activists visited Colombia last August as part of an exchange between the two countries.

Now Colombian Augustin Reyes is in Canada to tell about and garner support for ASOPROCOR (Association for the Promotion of Rural Communities), an organization that works with rural and small town folk in the Tocaima region of Colombia.

"The social fabric in Colombia is ripped to shreds. What our organization has been attempting to do since 1979 is to help families reestablish themselves," says Reyes.

ASOPROCOR is helping families plan their farms in a way that is sustainable. For example, instead of planting only coffee, a family will be encouraged to grow fruits and vegetables and raise livestock, plant trees or leave them standing.

Millions of people have lost their land – rich in oil, minerals or pharmaceuticals – to individuals or corporations.

Integral to ASOPROCOR's work are the "communities for peace," helping some of the displaced return to their own villages or claim new land, declaring them to be weapons-free zones.

Reyes was in Vancouver in November, sponsored by the union-linked CoDevelopment Canada.

<<newsbites>>

continued from page 5

Firings in Langley unfair, HEU tells LRB

HEU filed a complaint with the Labour Relations Board in November after 14 workers were fired at Langley Gardens, a Fraser Valley private, for-profit seniors' complex.

The union says the termination of 14 employees in the housekeeping and departments and the hiring of sub-contractors constitutes an illegal lock-out. HEU wants workers reinstated and the employer to cease and desist contravening the Code.

Hearings began on Nov. 21 with

three more days scheduled in December.

Secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt says the union is deeply concerned that an employer would terminate workers in the midst of contract negotiations.

"This is intimidation," said Allnutt, "but our 100 Langley Gardens members are more determined than ever to gain a first collective agreement."

With limited progress at the table, however, negotiations have gone to a mediator.

Langley Gardens is owned by one of B.C.'s largest private, for-profit seniors' housing and care corporations – CPAC.



The Real Alternatives Information Network (RAIN) had a jolly ol' time singing anti-corporate carols to Christmas shoppers outside Hudson's Bay on Granville Street on Dec. 8.

New design, another award for *Guardian*

The *Guardian* has won another national award – this time as best overall newsletter for CUPE locals with a membership of over 3,000.

"You have great balance, along with professional writing, layout, graphics and photography," said competition judge Art Kilgour. "Your publication is head-and-shoulders above the competition."

Earlier this year, HEU's communications department won three other awards from the Canadian Association of Labour Media for best cartoon

The value of public health care

Many Americans will lose their health care coverage as a result of the Sept. 11 attacks

THE TERRORIST DESTRUCTION of New York's World Trade Center, and the spreading economic downturn resulting from the attack, is revealing an important difference between the United States and Canada.

In the U.S., thousands of families of victims are worrying where their future health care coverage will come from. If that kind of tragedy had hit Canada, Canadians at least would not have to worry about how to pay their medical bills.

Through a universal, public health care system, Canadians have access to care regardless of their economic circumstances, an enormous benefit.

In the U.S., families are dependent on an employer-provided plan, and most have a variety of restrictions included. Many small businesses provide no health insurance coverage at all.

Since the terrorist attacks, U.S. newspapers have been highlighting the plight of individuals who now find themselves at risk of having no health care coverage.

For example, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that while there are efforts to improve weak unemployment insurance benefits, "there is less movement in Washington on providing affordable health insurance to those who lack it, including many of the now laid-off workers who cannot afford to continue coverage."

It pointed to the situation of Hyacinth Vanriel, a 34-year-old mother of four, who in the 1990's economic boom got off welfare and into a job. Last year she landed a full-time job at \$11.53 an hour and health benefits.

But now she has been laid off and cannot afford to pay the \$600 premium to maintain her coverage. And one of

her daughters may have cancer.

The *New York Times* has also highlighted the problems of people who lost their spouses in the World Trade Center or who have lost jobs.

Some large companies are providing health benefits for families of lost employees. For example, Marsh and McLellan says it will fund benefits for a year. After that families can stay in the group plan for another three years but will have to pay their own premiums.

But as the *New York Times* reported, "many spouses and children of the dead and missing, and many employees of small businesses, could find themselves without coverage."

THE STATE OF NEW YORK, THE City of New York and federal Medicaid officials have put together a disaster health-coverage plan, but valid only for four months, for families with monthly incomes of less than \$1,287 with higher limits for families with children. The American Red Cross is helping some families of World Trade Center victims pay health-insurance premiums for the next three months.

U.S. federal law allows victims' families and laid-off workers to continue their employer's insurance coverage, but they have to pay both the employee and employer premiums which, according to the *New York Times*, can run to \$7,000 a year for family coverage. Even better-off Americans are worried.

Despite all the grumbling about the Canadian health care system, it has to be said that it is far superior to the U.S. system in ensuring everyone has access to health care regardless of their economic circumstances. That is something we should value and never weaken.

DAVID CRANE • TORONTO STAR



PRESIDENT'S DESK

Supporting each other is season's real meaning

MUZIN The season's spirit of compassion and caring, of reaching out to others and sharing is being transformed into a carnival of capitalism and consumption. Politicians are increasingly eager to utilize any excuse to destroy the notion that a civil society is far better for all people than narrow individualism.

When George W. Bush claims that shopping is patriotic, I wonder.

When New York mayor Rudy Giuliani lauds the heroic efforts of public sector workers in responding to the World Trade Center disaster, but then denies them the ability to bargain a better contract, I doubt his sincerity.

When Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's government uses the war in Afghanistan as justification to strip away civil liberties and the right to any democratic protest, I worry.

When Gordon Campbell's Liberals declare that the tragedy of Sept. 11th means that the Age of Entitlement is over, I get irate.

Osama bin Laden did not steal our communities. It's the politicians who inflict pain on the poor to pay for the budget deficits they created, so the rich can enjoy large tax breaks. The Liberals' actions in cutting social programs and welfare rates will increase homelessness and poverty, strand women who require the services of shelters and transition houses, increase the suffering of seniors and the disabled who can no longer afford medications or physiotherapy and encourage racism with a need-less \$9 million land claims referendum.

The capitulation of editorial writers to lunatic fringe politics means advocating for private hospitals, misusing the power of legislation to reopen signed agreements and selling off public assets such as B.C. Hydro and ICBC. Rather than promoting quality public services for people, the quick fix flavours of the-day are deregulation, contracting out and privatization.

We must fight back. This holiday season, our response must be to support one another; renew and strengthen our coalitions with youth, seniors, the disabled, women, gays and lesbians, environmentalists, peace advocates, ethnic communities, religious organizations, First Nations members and many others.

We have the ability to create peace on earth and goodwill to all and to ensure that it does not just become a voice of Christmas Past.

All the best for a happy and healthy holiday season!

FRED MUZIN • PRESIDENT

SEAN KAPITAIN GRAPHIC



Detail from Keep PG Strong leaflet shows the wide variety of jobs performed by the city's workers.

illustration, best flyer or brochure for the *Workplace Anti-stress Guide* and for excellence in layout and design of the *Guardian*.

"HEU continues to win awards year after year because it knows how to communicate with its members and the public," says secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt.

We are not ones to sit on our laurels, however, and so with this last issue of 2001 we are pleased to launch a new design of the *Guardian*.

Thanks to the folks at Working Design for their design expertise and to our own desktop designer, Carol Bjarnason. Enjoy.

Working to keep Prince George strong

City workers in Prince George have launched a campaign called Keep PG Strong in that northern city.

They have produced a leaflet and print ads that highlight the valuable

work done by city employees. And the material matches real jobs with real workers.

Beside each city worker's job title is a note about how their job contributes to the community — how it keeps Prince George strong.

"We are working for you 24 hours a day," the copy says. "We pick up your garbage and keep the streets clean and safe. We ensure that the drinking water is safe. We maintain city parks. We look after stray pets."

This is all in the wake of a summer binge of anti-public sector law-making by the Liberal government and in the face of rumours that city council is considering contracting out work most PG residents think CUPE 399 city workers do well.

B.C. AT THE CROSSROADS

"But we see people now going home so short of home support, and I don't think that's going to change."

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

And yet, amid the community collapse and the personal toll they see it take on friends and the sense of looming disaster as provincial cuts begin to click into place, they think of themselves as lucky.

They still have jobs, still have a house. They still hope they can make it to retirement with those jobs and in that house – and with each other.

At 55, Wendy is seven years from retirement. If she had to move and start again, she'd lose all seniority, likely have to start somewhere as a casual.

The prospect weighs heavily on her husband. "If I got laid off and had to look elsewhere," he says, "I'd have to commute for seven years and she'd have to stay. It's happened to our friends. It's hard on families. It's scary."

Wendy talks about a friend whose husband was laid off and who has left for another job. The wife works part-time and has stayed behind with their son, who is finishing Grade 12. Her friend's only hope now? That she isn't laid off too.

Even for those who have jobs, the tension takes its toll. Ron, a native of Powell River, held on to his job because 70 colleagues took retirement. Some didn't, and there were hard feelings about that in the small town – although, as he notes, you can't ever judge other people's circumstances.



Wendy Bekkema works at the hospital in Powell River.

"Guys are bumping, but they're trying to be as kind to each other as they can. They're very aware there (are) people in tough situations. I feel bad going to work."

As Ron wrestles with the ups and downs of his industry, Wendy keeps a critical eye on the health care front. It's a crisis that's particularly hard for her to watch.

As an LPN, she has watched for years as tight budgets were directed increasingly to the vocal professionals in the field – to rural doctors arguing for hardship pay, to nurses screaming for relief from overtime.

Next year, Wendy will have racked up 30 years on the job – 14 of them in Powell River. She has, on her own, studied hospital administration and pharmacy assistance. She says she's not much different than her colleagues, all of whom are trained to perform a far broader range of jobs than they are given.

And as she listens to the public debate on how to spend scarce health dollars, the same answer keeps occurring to her: Drop the single-minded focus on doctors and registered nurses. Use the people you've got. Respect their talents, and use all your health-care workers more fully. "It's very maddening, it's very frustrating," she says. "When we had team nursing, we did all the patient care, we can do that. Then we saw the work go, we were told suddenly we weren't qualified."

"If they just shifted focus, it would make sense to use us."

"RNs work a 36-hour week, but they make a lot of regular overtime. The rest of us work 40 hours a

PEOPLE

Ron and Wendy Bekkema

PLACE

Powell River

WORK

Wendy is a licensed practical nurse at Powell River General Hospital. Husband Ron works at Norske Skog paper mill.

PROSPECTS

Ron kept his job at the mill, but only because others opted for early retirement. Wendy feels confident she'll have work, but not about hours or quality of care she can deliver.

week and there is no OT – we go home at the end of our shift."

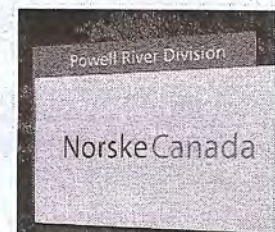
Does she see any sign of that changing, of a new approach coming, as the debate unfolds?

"No. None. And it's not just that. If this care (we give) went private, if this project of mine were private,

a lot of the care would be done through home nursing. And I could do that, I'm qualified, home nursing is part of our unit now.

"But we see people now going home so short of home support, and I don't think that's going to change. All that money spent on helping

people in hospital detox from drugs and booze and then they turn them loose and there's nowhere for



Ron Bekkema held onto his job at the Norske Skog Mill.

"I've waited so long for nursing school, or just for a permanent job, then my husband got laid off when the mill shut down."

PEOPLE

Joy and Patrick Hubahib

PLACE

Prince Rupert

WORK

Joy is a Care Aide at Prince Rupert Regional Hospital, Patrick is laid off from the Skeena Cellulose pulp mill.

PROSPECTS

Joy has lost almost all hope to fulfill her dream of entering nursing school, in the near future, anyway. The couple cannot just pull up roots because the massive unemployment in the town means the housing market has collapsed.



MILL CLOSURE SHROUDS PRINCE RUPERT

Joy Hubahib has done all the right things. She studied diligently for her patient-care aide certification and did well in the course.

Clocking in as a casual, for the past two years she has shown up every day that work was available at the Prince Rupert Regional Hospital – and worked hard.

In general, that's meant she worked full-time. In her early days, when only part-time shifts were open, she also worked briefly as a lab assistant, calling on the degree in medical lab technology she earned in the Philippines.

She even made an effort to further her education, applying two years ago for nursing school and biding her time patiently until she finally climbed up the



them to go . . . It's a zoo, it's a circus."

Wendy's also skeptical about some of the solutions she predicts will surface as times tighten – reduced hours, for example. More than a decade ago, she says, LPNs agreed to trim their hours from 40 to 36. "We did it to save jobs," she says. "But now we've gone from nine staff to six full-time and three part-time on the acute care ward and four full-time and three part-time on my project."

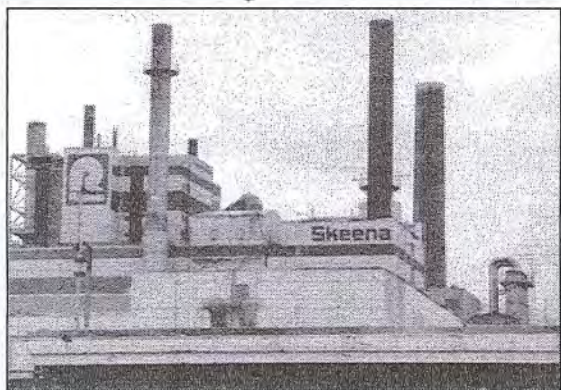
"We lost jobs anyway," she says grimly. "They call it 'restructuring'" At that point, the conversation ends. Ron is heading out to the plant for a union meeting on the prospect of his own shortened work week. The proposal would trim average yearly hours of 2,080 to

1,950. At an average hourly wage of \$24, that's more than \$3,000 per worker a year.

He leaves with no clear idea on how the vote will go. "It'll be tough," he said. "There's the heartfelt part, where you see it's right to share the work. Then there's everyone's need to maintain their standard of living. I don't know how they'll decide."

In the end, solidarity won out. The members of Local 76 of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers voted by 69.7 per cent to cut their own pay and save what they hope will be at least 25 full-time jobs, and with luck as many as 29.

"It was the right thing," Ron says later. "It's good for the families and it's good for the community."



waiting list and was accepted. Two years later, she's still a casual watching at least two openings go unfilled.

Two years later, despite steady employment doing vital direct-patient contact work like bathing the bedridden and taking their vital signs, she is still unable to the simple things that a permanent job would allow her to do – taking out a loan, for example.

With husband Patrick laid off from the troubled Skeena Cellulose mill in July, she is unable to take advantage of the nursing school opening, and will

Patrick Hubahib was one of hundreds laid off from the Skeena Cellulose pulp mill.

have to turn it down and slide back to the bottom of the waiting list.

Joy has tried assorted federal manpower assistance programs but finds herself ineligible either because works too many hours or lacks permanent status.

Although childless – "a blessing," she says grimly – the couple is unable to take advantage of their relative mobility and leave town for other work, given the collapse in housing prices in the resource town that's been dealt twin blows to its fishing and forestry industries.

Her hope now? That amid Liberal cuts and restructuring, the government will recognize the need for serious funding for people like herself wishing to retrain.

"It's kind of sad," she says. "I've waited so long for nursing school, or just for a permanent job, then my husband got laid off when the mill shut down. I want it so bad, but even if I get a student loan, I still need an income."

"I don't see any light at the end of this tunnel."

"When the mill closed in 1984, it affected the town a lot. So many of our friends moved away. Some got jobs – but some didn't."



PEOPLE

Paula and Jarnail Gill

PLACE

Nelson

WORK

Paula is a food service worker at Jubilee Manor and Jarnail is a lumber grader at Slocan Forest Products.

PROSPECTS

The family lives under the uncertainty resulting from the softwood lumber war with the U.S. Paula's hours have been cut before, but not the work, and she fears it may happen again.

LUMBER DISPUTE LOOMS LARGE IN NELSON

Paula Gill has a precise, practical translation for airy phrases like "health care cuts" and "reduced hours."

"You try to kill yourself sometimes because you're trying to go fast and get done," says the Nelson food-service worker. "If you're not done in time, you stay extra – but you don't get paid."

"Where I used to work (at Kootenay Lake Regional Hospital), the shift hours were 7.5 and now it's 7.2. They took 18 minutes off the shift, but they didn't take off any work."

Paula, a veteran of six years in the food service trade, watched cuts in 1995 and '96 creep up in little ways – where there had once been a job scrubbing all the pots in the hospital kitchen, there was suddenly none. The cooks inherited the load as an unpaid addition to their own.

Still, she likes her work. She moved in November to a job at Jubilee Manor, an extended-care home, where she makes a direct difference to patients' lives as she meets with them daily, serving tea and sweets and cleaning their dining areas.

At an average wage of about \$17, Paula has been able to send one child to university and another to college. Her husband, Jarnail, has been steadily employed in the forest industry since 1984, most recently as a lumber grader at Slocan Forest Products, but at 54, he is worried about his own security at a company caught in the softwood lumber war with the U.S.

"You wonder how you can get work at that age," she says. "He has never done anything else. If anything happens to one of our jobs, it would be hard."

Even in Nelson, buffered by summer tourism and the winter ski trade, she knows how much something like a mill shutting down can hurt.

"When the mill closed in 1984, it affected the town a lot. So many of our friends moved away. Some got jobs – but some didn't."

ETAG's disclosure campaign

Ask most apparel companies where they make the clothes you buy and you'll get an evasive reply. That's why the Ethical Trading Action Group (ETAG), a coalition of national labour, religious, non-governmental and student organizations working to end sweatshop abuses, is calling for full disclosure of manufacturing sites.

Whether these are factories owned by the company, subcontracted factories or workshops, disclosure would allow the public to confirm whether their clothing is being made under decent labour conditions.

One route to full disclosure is for the industry minister to change the Canadian government's Textile Labeling Act. This act requires companies to place informative labels on their products, but companies can also apply for a CA number instead of printing lengthy details. The detailed information is kept in a public Internet database where it can be accessed using the CA number. ETAG wants the minister to require a list of manufacturing sites when a company applies for a CA number.

Maquila Solidarity Network/CALM

Ontario response to bioterrorism: Lay off scientists

The Ontario government has laid off the last five scientists in the Ministry of Health who have expertise in dealing with life-threatening biohazards. Ontario is now the only province in Canada whose public health lab is not directed and led by scientists.

OPSEU, the scientists' union, has called on the health minister to rescind the layoffs and demanded the Ontario government establish a bioterrorism response unit based out of a world class lab in Toronto that now sits empty and unused because of program reductions.

OPSEU/CALM

Award goes to fighting janitors

Marisela Salinas, Dolores Martínez, Rafael Ventura and Kamilo Rivera Lizama were happy to accept the well-deserved Leadership for a Changing World award from the Ford Foundation on behalf of SEIU Local 1877 in Los Angeles, California.

The prestigious Ford Foundation granted a four-member team of janitor activists from the Service Employees International Union Local 1877 in Los Angeles one of its new "Leadership for a Changing World" awards in September.

The \$130,000 prize goes for the efforts of Marisela Salinas, Dolores Martínez, Rafael Ventura and Kamilo Rivera Lizama, who were strike captains during the local's successful janitors' strike last year. The foundation created the award to recognize those who are "getting results tackling tough social problems."

The award includes a \$100,000 grant for a new Justice for Janitors Training Institute in Los Angeles and \$30,000 to strengthen individual skills and support other future activities. Judges granted awards to 20 individuals and teams from among more than 3,000 nominees.

The union plans to use the money to open a computer lab where members can learn English and high-tech skills and to launch leadership development programs.

"I hope this will help us grow the union and move forward, organizing more workers, with more leaders," says Salinas, one of the winners.



SEIU LOCAL 1877 PHOTO

Bread and Roses is a movie about the struggle of invisible office cleaners in the Los Angeles office towers to gain dignity and respect at work.

The story is fictional, but is based on the inspirational real-life story of the Los Angeles janitors who beat the odds to win better lives through SEIU's Justice for Janitors campaign.

British director Ken Loach was living in Los Angeles in the early '90s when, at a bus stop, he met some Latino janitors "descending like an invisible army of the night from some of the richest real estate in Los Angeles [referring to the office towers]. I realized what a tremendously dramatic choice these people had made getting involved in the SEIU because it meant they'd be threatened with dismissal and deporta-

tion. But their confidence and optimism was infectious – and quite heroic."

He decided he had to make a movie about their story.

The film received outstanding reviews at the Cannes 2000 Film Festival and won best foreign film at the Rio de Janeiro Film Festival.

Bread and Roses is now at most B.C. video rental outlets. This is a rare chance to see a great working people's film. Many scenes will make you laugh, and many will touch your heart. Overall, *Bread and Roses* will make you think about present-day barriers that immigrant workers are still confronting to gain a voice at work.

The film is in English, with some subtitled Spanish.

>>notebook>>



"The mother and child are going to have precious little time together"

Even the Grinch would be ashamed

Just ahead of the holiday season, Human Resources Minister Murray Coell sent letters out to 100,000 British Columbians, telling them to get jobs.

Who did he send the letters to? Stay-at-home mothers on social assistance were among the recipients.

The minister says they'll still be able to stay home and collect social assistance – but only until a child reaches the age of one. Right now they must look for work when the child reaches the age of seven.

Jean Swanson wrote in *The Long Haul*, End Legislated Poverty's newspaper, "The letter has a propaganda purpose: scare people on welfare and reconfirm to the general public the myth that people on welfare are too lazy to get jobs." Poor-bashing, in other words.

The Liberals complain that B.C.'s social assistance provisions are much too generous to single mothers. This "largesse" should be a matter of pride, not shame.

Other provinces may very well have stricter rules concerning social assistance eligibility, but most of them also have much better child care programs. A single mother who is forced to look for a job when her child is only a year old is going to face the tremendous task of finding someone to care for her child. Then she is going to have to find a job that will pay enough for it, plus the rent and all the other necessities of life.

If she is able to miraculously accomplish this, the mother and child are going to have precious little time together. Time that is a smart investment for the province to make.

Hopefully, this letter is all bluff. But even if it is, it is causing a lot of grief at a time of year when everyone should be able to enjoy their families, their children and their parents.

DALE FULLER

It's the real thing – murders at Coke

After the leader of their union was shot down at the gate into the plant where they worked, Edgar Paez and his coworkers at the Coca Cola bottling plant in Carepa, Colombia, tried for four years to get the country's courts to bring the people responsible to justice. Instead, some of the workers themselves wound up behind bars, while they watched the murderers go free.

Believing Colombian courts incapable of ensuring justice, they decided to haul Coca Cola into the U.S. courts instead.

This summer, the Colombian union, SINALTRAINAL, together with the United Steel Workers of America and the International Labor Rights Fund, filed a case in Florida against Coca Cola, Inc., Panamerican Beverages and Bebidas y Alimentos.

The three companies are charged with complicity in the assassination of Colombian union leaders. The unions hope this new strategy will stop a wave of murders of union militants that's lasted over a decade.

The Florida case charges that on Dec. 5, 1996, a rightwing paramilitary squad showed up at the gate into the Carepa bottling plant and killed Isidro Segundo Gil, a member of the union's executive board. An hour later, paramilitaries kidnapped another leader of the union at his home, who escaped and fled to Bogotá. That evening, they burned the union office down.

The next day, a heavily-armed group went inside the bottling plant and called the workers together. "They said that if they didn't resign they would be killed," recalls Paez.

Coca Cola spokesperson Rafael Fernandez asserts the company's code of conduct requires respect for human

rights. Coke's Colombia spokesperson, Pedro Largacha, claims "bottlers in Colombia are completely independent of the Coca-Cola Company."

The bottler, Bebidas y Alimentos, says it had no way to stop the paramilitaries. But the suit charges that the plant manager gave the order to destroy the union. Paez says not only were the plant's managers responsible, but that Coke benefited. "All the workers left the plant and the area," he says. "All the workers had to quit the union to save their own lives, and the union was completely destroyed."

The experienced workers who left

Transnational corporations virtually govern the states in which they operate.



SINALTRAINAL PHOTO

Paramilitary troops guarded the gate of the Coca Cola bottling plant in Carepa, Colombia, for two weeks.

country, it's become a crime to speak out forcefully against them."

One hundred twenty-five Colombian trade union leaders have been murdered in this year alone. Last year, out of every five trade unionists killed in the world, three were Colombian.

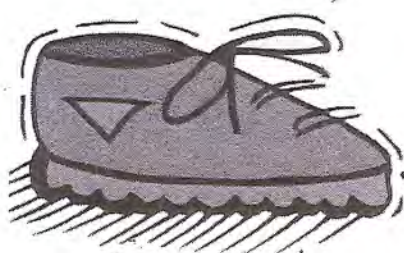
One objective of the Coke suit is to pressure the Colombian and U.S. governments to comply with the conventions of the International Labor Organization and the Geneva Accords on Human Rights. But Colombian unions want to see those responsible for the murders brought to justice.

"We want to strip off the mask hiding the involvement of transnational corporations in our internal conflict," Paez explains.

"To do this, we need a judicial forum outside the country, since within Colombia those guilty of these crimes are treated with impunity. We're giving our own global answer to their global operations."

DAVID BACON • U.S. LABOUR WRITER

Nike fails to keep sweatshop pledge



Despite Nike's promise three years ago to improve conditions, its 500,000 sweatshop workers continue to face poverty, harassment, dismissal and violent intimidation.

That's the key finding of a new report *Still Waiting for Nike to Do It* by San Francisco-based Global Exchange.

The report said that Nike CEO Phil Knight failed to keep his promise to improve working conditions at the

company's Third World factories. Any efforts that have been made to keep the promise have helped only a tiny minority or else have no relevance to Nike.

Nike continued to treat the sweatshop issue as a public relations inconvenience rather than as a serious human rights matter," said Leila Salazar, the corporate accountability director for Global Exchange.

>>voices>>



"The minister himself admits that there will be no enforcement"

Six bucks sucks, says B.C. Fed president

The dramatic cut in the minimum wage to \$6 an hour is both an election betrayal and a \$40 million gift to the Liberal's corporate election donors taken from the pockets of B.C.'s poorest workers. The outrage now being expressed by some of these low-paid, and often young people, is absolutely right on the money.

But this isn't just bad news for 100,000 low-paid workers, it's a message that the Liberal economic strategy is about paycuts to all workers and not just the most vulnerable. After all, if the big retailers and restaurant owners who demanded this cut say \$8 is just too high, what do they think about good wages that support raising families, buying vehicles and eating out once in a while?

What's so bankrupt and shortsighted about this race for the bottom is that it's people with good wages that fuel the economy, not cheap wages and unemployment payments.

But now, employers will be able to request right up front whether you are an \$8 worker or a \$6 worker. Guess which one the majority of the employers are going to hire?

Claiming to have training is now going to be seen as a negative, not a positive. The minister himself admits that there will be no enforcement if employers fire a worker at 499 hours.

Young people and others are getting angry about this cut and they should be. Unfortunately, the government/business coalition is not finished. The end of the eight-hour day is just around the corner if the demands of the Business Summit are met.

The result will be laws that allow employers to force employees to work 12 hours a day, seven days a week, without coffee breaks or overtime payments. While this may be progress for Walmart and MacDonalds, this can hardly be described as anything but turning back the clock half a century for the rest of us.

JIM SINCLAIR • B.C. FEDERATION OF LABOUR PRESIDENT



First contract for NSAMH

More than 150 care providers at the North Vancouver-based North Shore Association for the Mentally Handicapped have ratified their first collective agreement with an overwhelming "yes" vote.

"This is great news for this group of community social services workers," says HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt.

"This contract has been two years in the making and our members are to be congratulated for their solidarity and perseverance."

Allnutt says that the employer threw up roadblocks at every turn, and even charged unfair labour practices against the union and

the government in a complaint filed with the Labour Relations Board in 1999 that subsequently failed.

The contract, retroactive to Sept. 30, 1999 and expiring March 31, 2003, includes improvements to working conditions, wages and benefits. "The biggest issue for the NSAMH care providers has always been respect and fairness in the workplace," says Allnutt.

This is a joint-HEU/BCNU certification for the residential care workers, vocational trainers and registered nurses at NSAMH. They work in residential homes and in a wide variety of vocational programs that support people in the development of life skills through employment training, placement, recreation and

other therapeutic opportunities.

Win subscription to New Internationalist for a year

HEU is holding another contest! All you have to do is send us your e-mail address and you will be entered in the contest. The prize is a year's subscription to the *New Internationalist* magazine, a world renowned, award-winning international affairs periodical published in Great Britain. (You can check out past issues at their website <www.oneworld.org>).

Why are we doing this? With the Liberal government on the attack against all public sector workers, we anticipate we will be mobilizing

very quickly many times in the near future. One way we can do this is by instantaneous communication – which in this day and age means e-mail, folks.

And although bargaining is still a way off, we need to be prepared well in advance, because it's going to be tough. The Liberal government, as witnessed in negoti-

ations with the B.C. Nurses' Union, Health Sciences Association and the teachers, supports the employers' groups so much that it stifles negotiations. We will need to tell them, "Our members won't accept this," and be ready to back it up with quick action. Being able to get in touch with HEU members by e-mail will make this easier.

So, send your email address to update@heu.org by Jan. 30, 2001 and good luck!

Sparwood staff kept their heads

We are all familiar with organizational plans that look good on paper but when tested, fail in the real world.

However, HEU members at Sparwood Hospital in the

BALANCING IT ALL

MARGI BLAMEY

Our health care system is in peril. **HAIDA KRISTIENSEN** thinks that if people know what it used to be like, they wouldn't be so complacent about losing it.

LIFE BEFORE MEDICARE

HAIDA KRISTIENSEN remembers when she first realized how truly close Canadians were to losing their cherished universal health care system. It was in 1999 and Alberta Premier Ralph Klein was pushing his Bill-11, a wildly controversial piece of legislation that opened the doors to the operation of private, for-profit hospitals in that province.

Kristiansen had read an open letter to Canadians penned by federal NDP leader Alexa McDonough which outlined serious concerns about the legislation and its ability to undermine Medicare. McDonough's points rang true to Kristiansen, and she wasn't alone. Many Canadians said it contravened the Canada Health Act, would give preferential treatment to those who could afford to pay over those who couldn't and would establish health care as a commodity under various free trade agreements.

In the two years since Bill-11's passage, Kristiansen has searched, unsuccessfully, for stories that illustrate how good our public health care system really is, how we got it and why people are fighting so hard to keep it. Her search has given birth to a special project, a book of short stories about Medicare, told by Canadians of all ages and from all walks of life.

And Kristiansen has help. Tommy the Healthcare Bear, her creation and alter-ego, is currently traveling the country looking and listening for stories.

In an introductory letter, Tommy the Healthcare Bear tells of growing up free from the worry of medical bills and of an eye-opening experience with American health care. "Never again will I take univer-

sal health care system for granted," Tommy writes.

He wondered what brought about single-tier health care to Canada decades ago? What was it like for people before Medicare was introduced? What are some current stories now that the federal government has cut so much money from the system?

"And what are the health care stories of more than 40 million Americans who do not have medical insurance or the millions more with inadequate insurance? Most importantly, what is *your* story?" asks Tommy.

Kristiansen says that some stories are as close as her own family. That includes her 89-year-old grandmother. She and her friends have used St. Paul's Hospital for many years.

"All of us have had great services [at St. Paul's]," says Kristiansen. "And we didn't have to worry about health care payments."

Kristiansen, who has a bachelor of science degree in dietetics, moved to Vancouver Island a year ago and works casual as a food service supervisor or worker – whichever is required – at Nanaimo Regional General Hospital. Up until her formal resignation in November, she also commuted to Vancouver occasionally to fill in at Children's and B.C. Women's hospitals.

Kristiansen says she had wanderlust when she was younger. She

journeyed through northern Europe, India, East Africa, Australia, New Zealand and Indonesia, but the urge to travel has subsided.

Seeing the world has influenced how she views Canada's public health care system, and she considers it to be the best there is and worth saving and strengthening. She thinks her mission, with the help of Tommy the Healthcare Bear, is of utmost importance these days.

While Kristiansen wants Canadians to tell their health care stories, she would like to hear from people around the world. She hopes that by people outside Canada sharing personal stories about their health care experiences, Canadians will better understand how precious Medicare really is.

Send your story to Tommy and Kristiansen, with your name, address, phone number and, if you wish, your age, by e-mail or regular mail, in writing or on tape to: The Healthcare Bear, 561 Forsyth Avenue, Parksville, B.C. V9P 1G9, or <healthcarebear27@hotmail.com>

• *Balancing it All* is a regular Guardian column about the challenges facing women activists.

Tommy the Healthcare Bear says good-bye to Haida Kristiansen before setting out to listen to Canadians tell their stories about their experiences with the health care system.



Kootenays proved that good planning can yield good results when a respectful and cooperative team approach is operating in the workplace.

Recently, the staff and patients at the hospital found themselves literally in the line of fire during a police situation unrelated to health care. Calm heads prevailed at the hospital, workers and patients were kept informed of events, and decisions were made and implemented as outlined in the facility's emergency incident plan.

HEU site representative and dietary worker Shelley Wedderburn credited Sparwood Hospital staff, both unionized workers and management, with the well-ordered response to the sen-

sitive and potentially dangerous situation that unfolded right across the street from the facility. But Wedderburn wasn't surprised, noting that labour relations at Sparwood Hospital are good. "We always work together as a team," she said.

Abbotsford fights PFIs

HEU's MSA local is on the move again.

This time they're reaching out into the community and mobilizing against the Campbell Liberals' proposed private hospital scheme to replace the deteriorating MSA General.

The — called a private financing initiative (PFI) and based on Britain's privatization model of the early 1990s



under the right-wing Thatcher government — would mean the hospital would be privately financed, privately owned and partly privately operated. In other words, it would not be a public hospital, a

Canadian first even privatizers Ralph Klein and Mike Harris would envy.

As one part of their outreach, HEU MSA members hosted a community breakfast Dec. 8 where they served

Chilliwack local officers Russ Bratten and Joyce Giroux joined HEU president Fred Muzin at the Dec. 8 pancake breakfast.

up 300 servings of pancakes, bacon and freshly brewed coffee while handing out leaflets and talking to hungry Saturday morning shoppers about the dangers of a PFI hospital. They took this opportunity to launch a petition opposing the private financing initiative and calling on the government to ensure that a new, public hospital be built as promised.

They raised \$200 for the food bank.

continued on page 14

>>factfile

Did you know? 61 per cent of B.C.'s minimum wage earners are adults 19 years and over, 6 per cent are women and 48 per cent have some post-secondary education

Martin Luther King said, "Of all forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane."

The face of war: for every soldier, the average world military expenditure is \$22,000. For every school age child, the average public education expenditure is \$380.

World of working children:
Asia — 61 per cent)
Africa — 32 per cent
Caribbean and Latin America — 7 per cent

International agreements awaiting

George W. Bush's signature:

- Kyoto Climate Change Treaty
- Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines
- Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty
- Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
- Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

These agreements have been ratified by most of the rest of the world.

Desserts spelled backwards is — stressed.



AFTER THE SHIFT

DALE FULLER

By writing letters and donating his artwork, **PETER LOJEWSKI** feels he makes a difference to those suffering from human rights abuses.

GIVING TIME

S **EVEN YEARS AGO** Peter Lojewski, an LPN at Royal Columbian Hospital, reached a boiling point. "There were so many horrible things happening around the world, I'm only one person, but I felt I had to do something. At first that meant making financial contributions to Amnesty International, to help them with their work of monitoring and aiding to free political prisoners around the world. Three years ago, after reading the literature that would come with their fundraising materials, Lojewski decided to become more actively involved.

He joined an AI group in his community. Every year each group concentrates on one country that AI feels is abusing the human rights of its citizens.

Letter-writing campaigns are the main task assigned to the groups. This year his Burnaby/New Westminster group is writing letters to the government of Colombia — protesting the detention or disappearance of human rights activists in that country.

"Over the last five years at least 30 Colombian human rights defenders have been killed. Many are targets of almost constant harassment and threats," says Lojewski. "But they continue to do this vital work. They are true heroes, risking their own safety for the fight to achieve justice. And find answers."

If he ever wonders if all the letter-writing does any good, he only has to remember a Chilean friend of his. "The government there imprisoned him for two years for his political involvement. He was released because Amnesty took up his case," says Lojewski.

That makes him feel better than the form letter he



Peter Lojewski became serious about painting when he visited the Atlin Arts Centre.

got from Guatemala's president saying he will do his best to find the killers of a judge who was investigating human rights abuses in that country.

But it's not all about writing letters. Every year the Abbotsford/Burnaby/New Westminster groups hold a fund-raising dinner and auction. This year they are raising money to send to an Afghan women's group.

Here Lojewski incorporates another of his passions. As an award-winning visual artist, he donates some of his pieces to the annual auction. "It's a way to make a contribution that gives me a great deal of satisfaction," he says.

Another way he expresses himself artistically is through poetry. He writes his poems in English and German, his native language. He reads his poems at multicultural poetry readings held at the Vancouver Public Library and on Co-op Radio on their Tuesday night World Poetry show.

continued from page 13

HEU welcomes new members

Around the province, new members from a variety of workplaces are joining HEU, eager to enjoy the benefits of our collective agreements, to join the fight to protect our contracts and to defeat privatization in B.C. In the Lower Mainland from the Cheshire Homes Society, which provides transitional rehabilitation homes for brain injury survivors we welcome 18 new members at Lloyd/Graham House in Burnaby, 16 from Bodie/Dunbar House in New Westminster and 18 from King Edward House in Vancouver. The new members all belong to the

Labour community shares Christmas

Cheshire Local. From Castlebar we are pleased to welcome five new clerical workers from Castlebar and District Home Support Service into Castlebar Local (Home Support). For the sixth consecutive year, the B.C. Labour community is asking for contributions for their annual Christmas dinners which are being hosted Dec. 24, between 5:00 and 8:00 pm, in two locations - Maritime Labour Centre, 1880 Triumph Street, Vancouver and the Upper Auditorium, Whalley Legion Hall, 13525 106th Avenue, Surrey. The labour community

A hand up for young workers

HEU's Provincial Executive is making a concerted effort to reach out to the younger members of the union. Some ways to help are by volunteering, making a donation or spreading the word to local agencies so everyone will know it's happening again this year. If interested in volunteering or making a donation, contact Jane or Dan Staschuk at 604-541-6005.

The first step was to form the Young Workers Sub-committee, and the second is to recruit membership for the committee. The PE is asking local executives to find a worker in each local or site who is 30 years or younger and who would be willing to be a contact person and distribute information to other young workers. "Through education as well as mentoring we can encourage our young workers to participate in the union and become more active," says HEU secretary-business manager, Chris Allnut. Those interested should write to: HEU, Attn. Wendy Beer, 5000 North Fraser Way, Burnaby, B.C. V5J 5M3.

See you at the movies Tuesday night has become video night at HEU, with videos, popcorn and refreshments. It's a chance to see your union sisters and brothers and watch some educational, but entertaining, movies about the labour movement and other social issues. For example in December there was one film about the advertising business and its treatment of women. Another examined the impacts of privatizing.

Performers dance the stories of youth, violence and living in a dangerous time

DANCE

Fire ... where there's smoke by DanceArts Vancouver

reviewed by Dale Fuller

could walk away from the performance with a wide array of educational resources on violence and its prevention. Especially informative and useful is a companion brochure that is brimming with information on rights, contacts, websites and crisis lines. Marcuse said they were not able to include all the stories they encountered at the workshops. For example, the matter of sexual abuse by parents or relatives was absent from the performance. But *Fire* is the second in a series of four works that will examine many issues of vital importance to youth, and perhaps what is missing from the first two shows will appear in the next two. The first piece, *Ice: beyond cool*, was also a drama/dance production and looked at teen suicide. *Fire ... where there's smoke* was produced with the help and sponsorship of many groups and individuals, including HEU.



Eight professional actors and dancers tell the real story of young British Columbians dealing with violence.

DanceArts Vancouver recently mounted a theatre/dance production exploring the effect of violence in society on the lives of its young people. *Fire ... where there's smoke* was a dynamic piece of dance, theatre, music and video that told real stories of young British Columbians. Through dozens of workshops held over a period of three years, more than 400 teenagers explored the issues of violence in their lives. Being a young adult or a child is exceedingly difficult in today's society. Although violence is officially frowned upon, it is woven into the fabric of our world. This is confusing and isolating for young people who are overwhelmed by violence - it's in school, in their entertainment and sometimes even in their own families. In *Fire* the cast took the audience on a journey of pain, struggle and survival. Three video screens overhead provided a background and context to what was happening on stage - a squabbling family, scolding father, TV coverage of a war, a video game, children's drawings of war torn villages.

The message of Fire is that young people are precisely that - young - and they have the power and the right to change things

Several short vignettes illustrated the confusion, isolation, anger, loneliness, peer pressure, fragility and powerlessness that are part of being a teenager even in the best of circumstances, but that are the spark to light a fire of violence in a worst case scenario. The message of *Fire* is that young people are precisely that - young - and they have the power and the right to change things. There is also recognition of the comradeship of teenagers and the helping hand they can extend to each other. At a "talk-back" session after the performance, producer/choreographer Judith Marcuse answered questions from the audience. Venues for *Fire* included theatres, schools and other venues where the audience was predominantly young. Anticipating some hard-hitting and deeply-felt questions and observations, counselors were present at all the performances. Audience members also

DECEMBER
JANUARY
FEBRUARY

DECEMBER 25
Christmas
HEU offices closed

DECEMBER 26
Boxing Day
HEU offices closed

JANUARY 1
New Year's Day
HEU offices closed

JANUARY 20 TO
FEBRUARY 15
CLC Pacific Region
Winter School
Harrison Hot Springs
Hotel

JANUARY 30 TO 31,
FEBRUARY 1
Provincial Executive Meeting

FEBRUARY 6
Canada Federation of
Students "Reduce Tuition
Fees" campaign kickoff

FEBRUARY 12
Spring session of the
Legislature begins

FEBRUARY 19
B.C. Budget Day, B.C. Fed
rally at Legislature, details
TBA

HEU PEOPLE



YOUNG



JANUM



LEMKEY



MCADAM



HOWARD

Retired, but still Young

Young (Joyce) Chang has retired from Richmond Lions Manor after 22 years. She started out there in the dietary department, but switched to housekeeping and laundry. She plans to keep young by golfing, traveling and spending a lot of time with her husband and family, especially her five grandchildren.

She'll see the trees now

Lynne Forrest has retired from her job as a Care Aide at Shorncliffe in Sechelt. She started at the intermediate care facility in 1983 and became a member of HEU in 1991. She has served her union local as chair, shop steward and trustee. Forrest looks forward to gardening and continuing her volunteer work as a driver for home support and the Kirkland Centre, but she's also got her eye on running for political office.

Shorncliffe's loss, Lions' gain

Another retiring Shorncliffe member, **Bernie La Riviere** also served as a shop steward for her union sisters and brothers. She worked in the maintenance department at the facility, and does volunteer work at the Sunshine Coast Lions Club.

She'll clearly be missed

Dolly Turcotte retired in September from her post as a nursing services aide at Dr. Helmcken Memorial Hospital in Clearwater. Staff and patients alike miss "her cheerful humming as she efficiently went about her work everyday." Now she enjoys the fruits of her labour by traveling, gardening and spending a whole lot more time with her grandchildren.

"New" HEU staff

Jacquie Janum has been working as a temporary rep since July 1998, working mostly out of the old Vancouver office, but also in the Abbotsford and Kelowna offices. In July of this year she was appointed to the post of rep trainee. She came to HEU from the Fraser Crossing extended care facility in the Fraser Valley, where she worked as a Care Aide for 11 years. She is married with three daughters, one of whom has flown the nest and two of whom are teenagers.

Barb Lemky has been a rep trainee since May 2000, but she has been in the Lower Mainland HEU office since July 1997. Before coming to work at HEU Lemky worked as a lab assistant phlebotomist at Prince George Regional Hospital, Royal Inland Hospital and most recently (for eight years) at St. Paul's Hospital. Her family is scattered

around B.C. and Alberta, she says. One sister works at the hospital in Prince George and is an HEU member, and her mother was a registered nurse for many decades.

Todd McAdam has been a rep trainee since July 2001. He came to HEU as a temporary rep in July 1999. Now he services four Fraser Valley locals. McAdam started off in the health care field as a "pot scrubber" at Canada Way Care Centre while still in grade eight. He eventually became a full-fledged cook there and then moved to Columbia Residence for 11 years. Born and raised in New Westminster, he lives there still with his partner and two stepsons.

President Howard takes CALM reins

Stephen Howard, HEU's communications director, was elected president of the Canadian Association of Labour Media at the last national convention in May. He looks forward to working with the CALM executive in their important job. "With over 500 member publications representing a total of 1.8 million Canadian workers, CALM has a vital role to play in communicating labour's message and the vision of a more progressive and fair society for working people all over the world."

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PRESS 1

Ethnic Diversity

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

PRESS 2

First Nations

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

PRESS 3

Lesbians and Gays

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

PRESS 4

People with disAbilities

If you are on WCB, LTD, or if invisibly or visibly disabled in the workplace, let us know how the union can better meet your needs.



ALL CALLS ARE CONFIDENTIAL

Talk to us Toll-Free!

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

PROVINCIAL OFFICES

• Vancouver Site
1-800-663-5813
• Abbotsford Site
1-800-404-2020

REGIONAL OFFICES

Northern Office
• Prince George
1-800-663-6539

Okanagan Office
• Kelowna
1-800-219-9699

Vancouver Island Offices

• Victoria Site
1-800-742-8001
• Nanaimo Site
1-800-347-0290
• Courtenay Site
1-800-624-9940

Kootenay Office

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1-800-437-9877

I'm a fighter...
...for an active life
...for work that works for me
...for human rights and
everyone's right to a
decent life

*Carol McGregor, frontline worker,
union and human rights activist.*

**Disability
doesn't stop me,
Discrimination can.**

Canadian Labour Congress
Congrès du travail du Canada
www.cdc-ctc.ca CDC Disability Rights Working Group

WORKING FOR YOU?
www.working4you.ca

Dec. 3, 2001 was the U.N. International Day of Disabled Persons. The Canadian Labour Congress is asking unions to see how they can do MORE over the coming year.

MOBILIZE Create ways in which all levels of people with disabilities can work together as sisters and brothers in the struggle for workplace democracy and economic justice. Bring us in.

ORGANIZE Work works better for us when we belong to a union – so tell us!

REPRESENT Get us to the bargaining table. Unions have a legal responsibility to raise issues of accessibility and accommodation – these are fundamental for working people with disabilities.

EDUCATE Make it a priority to integrate a disability rights perspective into all aspects of union education. Executive, staff, bargaining teams and members – our rights at work and our public policy demands need to be understood.

GUARDIAN



WINTER 2001 • VOLUME 19 NUMBER 4 • THE VOICE OF THE HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION



HEU wishes everyone a world of peace and justice

The Liberals lied

Gordon Campbell's broken promises are returning to haunt him

PAGE 3

Convention triumph

CUPE delegates say HEU's in, Claude Généreux wins election as secretary-treasurer

PAGE 5

Winning janitors

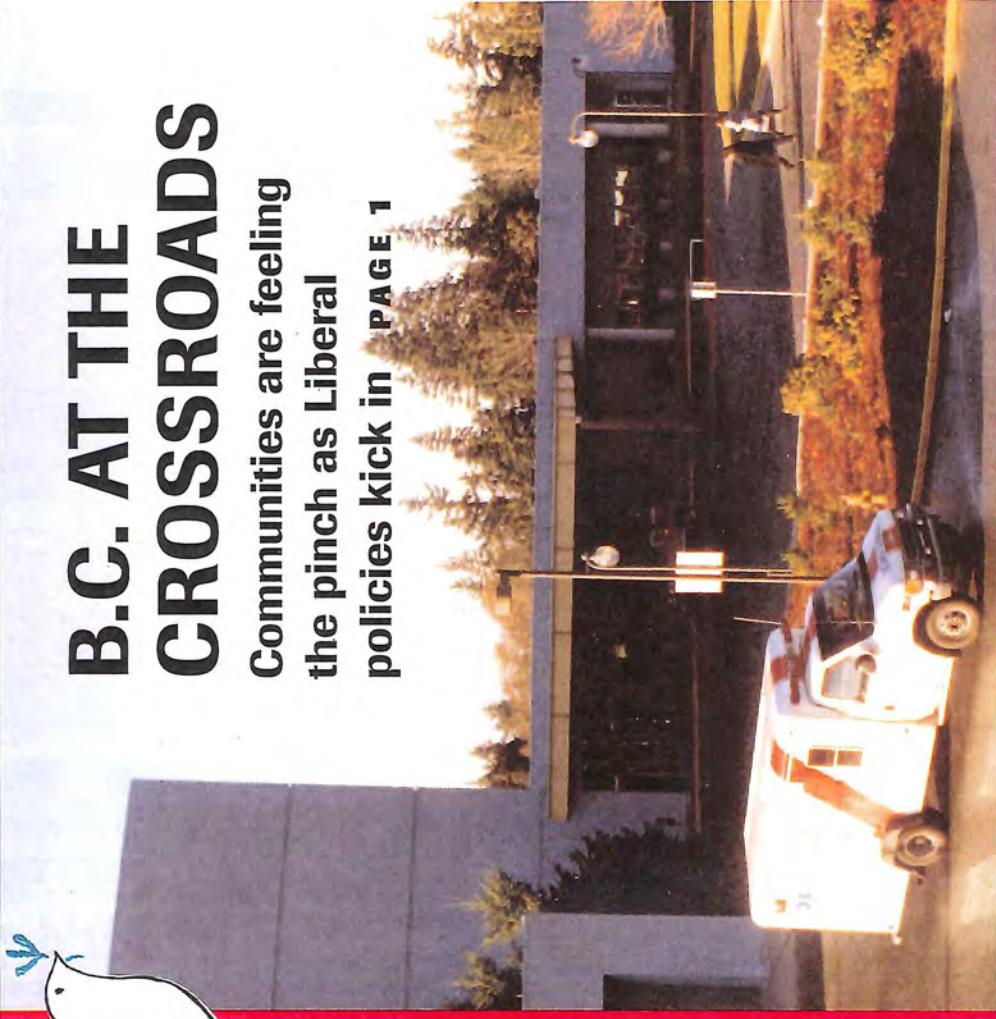
LA's janitors win award for their fight for justice

PAGE 10

B.C. AT THE CROSSROADS

Communities are feeling the pinch as Liberal policies kick in

PAGE 1



The fight against private hospitals is growing

1000 CUPE delegates showed their outrage at plans to privatize hospitals in B.C.

PAGE 4



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