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

THEY THINK OF THEMSELVES as the lucky ones. Ron and Wendy Bekkerma, 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.

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 DESLETS
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 Bosunic.

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 at least $700 million next year, and they claimed that collective agreements were a barrier for government to implement cost saving measures.

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

But Bosunic 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 benefit the wealthy and corporations.

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

And Bosunic says that the rollback 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 — Bosunic says HEU is already working with other unions in a coordinated fight back campaign.

Meanwhile other health care unions have slammed 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 independently. “Government should keep its hands off health care agreements,” she warned.
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. And 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 return to marketable 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 revenues.

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

Our helping hands

For the last 15 years, I worked in different Vancouver hospitals, mainly in food services, but also for a few months on a housekeeping at Lions Gate Hospital.

I still remember the day I was called to clean up an isolation room, where a patient smelled like 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 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 picked up by used needles carelessly discarded in the regular garbage.

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

So when I read Kim Berscheid’s Friday letter (in Blood on HEU’s hands, Nov. 8, Vancouver Sun Letter), saying she “can attest to the fact that HEU members don’t deal with stool, blood, urine, etc.” I wondered what the heck I was smelling all these years.

Who does Ms. Berscheid think is cleaning up the operating room?

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 OPIEKA
Lions Gate, UBC Local

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. 12, 2005.

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 address all our goals for both the members of the HEU and the BCHMTA.

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

DAVID PELLERIN
Vice President
Board of Directors
BCHMTA

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 in 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 people only 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 to pay a cut, 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. Now, even when knowing 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 but will cause to function as we know it.

ROBIN HILLSDEN
Lions Gate Local
We don't want PFIs
Workers, seniors, others mobilize to fight private hospital in Fraser Valley

HR 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 conducted for HEU by polling firm McIntyre and Macleod, 85 per cent of Fraser Valley residents supported the idea of having a referendum in the health region where privately financed, profit-making, privately owned hospitals are being proposed, to give the community the final say in whether or not they go forward. And, in a letter sent on Nov. 20, HEU has asked Auditor General Wayne K. Stetsloff 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 troubled by the company's role in this project," says HEU's secretary-business manager Chris Allatt. "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 do this work."

Bargaining to begin at Kelowna's Lakeshore Place
Thirty workers at Lakeshore Place in Kelowna certified with HEU on Oct. 23 and are now part of the Parkside 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 Allatt, 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 Cameron and Peter Stecklow 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 Allatt.

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 Lifelinks Retirement Communities Ltd. - Remington, Parkwood Care and Parkwood Retirement. All three facilities provide residences and services to retired per-
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 to the same political forces sought to wage a floor fight to block HEU from the convention.

Two days later, progressive Quebec activist Claude Géneviève was elected as CUPE’s new secretary-treasurer, winning by more than 500 votes. Géneviève had been a strong HEU backer in the divisive struggle leading up to the convention. He’ll work with another new 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.”

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, 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.

Deaths in Montreal remembered

On Dec. 6 British Columbians commemorated the 127th anniversary of the Montreal Massacre, where 14 young women were murdered at l’Ecole 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.

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continued on page 6
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 groundwork 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.

Silk temple spokesperson Gurnam Singh Brar, Mary Mannell 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 presentation that clearly demonstrated the real costs of privatization and the impact private deals have on patients, workers and communities.

BCNU Vice-President Bert Stuttleworth 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 contract ing out key hospital support services. Housekeeping and dietary staff are valued members of the hospital team." OAPCO's Mannell, a resident of the Fraser Valley Health Region, said, "The fear is real that a private hospital will 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. government'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 contradicts this 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 NESC has opposed PFIs since they were first proposed because it believes that a tax-funded service should not irrevocably tie 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, causing additional demands for primary care services, and are more expensive...many patients may be 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 restricted."

For more information about PFIs, look up the web sites of the BMI at <www.bmi.co.uk> or the search facilities to find articles on PFIs 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 Augusto Reyes is in Canada to talk about and garner support for ASOPIROC's (Association for the Promotion of Rural Communities) organization that works with rural and small town folk in the Toacoma 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.

ASOPIROC 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 ASOPIROC'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 Co-Development Canada.

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Fireings 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 subcontractors 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..."

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 5,000.

"With great balance, along with professional writing, layout, graphics and photography" said competition judge Art Kligour. "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. The 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 Nyacinth Vanried, a 34-year-old mother of four, who in the 1998's economic boom got off welfare and into a job. Last year she landed a full-time job at $11,35 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, however, 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 McLennan 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 employer 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

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

"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."

WINTER GUARDIAN 2001
"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 Power 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.

“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 crises 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 Power 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 56-hour week, but they make a lot of overtime. The rest of us work 40 hours a week and there is no OT — we go home at the end of our shift.”

Does she see any signs of that changing, of a new approach coming, as the debate takes shape?

“No. None. And it’s not just that. If this care (we give) went private, if this project of mine went 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 detour from drugs and booze and then they turn them loose and there’s nowhere for

“I’ve waited so long for nursing school, or just for a permanent job, then my husband got laid of when the mill shut down.”

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

Clogging in as a casual, 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
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.

LUMBER DISPUTE LOOKS 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 1997 crop 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 loud 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 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, Jarrell, has been steadily employed in the forest industry since 1984, most recently as a lumber grader at Sloooch 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’s never done anything else. If anything happens to one of our jobs, it would be bad.”

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.”

WINTER GUARDIAN 2001
EETG’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 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 Labelling 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 disclaimers. 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.

Ontario government 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 bioterrorism. Ontario is now the only province in Canada whose public health lab isn’t directed and led by scientists.

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

Award goes to fighting janitors

Maritela Salinas, Dolores Martinez, Rafael Ventura and Kamilo Rivera Lituna 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 $10,000 prize goes for the efforts of Maritela Salinas, Dolores Martinez, Rafael Ventura and Kamilo Rivera Lituna, 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 $50,000 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 raise awareness, organizing more workers, with more leaders,” says Salinas, one of the winners.

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 ’80s 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),” he 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-

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 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,泳 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.” Four-bashing, in other words.

The Liberals complain that B.C.’s social assistance provisions are much too generous to single mothers. This “ignominy” 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, SINTTRAINAL, 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 assassinations 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 Isauro 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 Bogota. 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. Coca's-Columbia 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 leave to save their own lives, and the union was completely destroyed."

The experienced workers who left the plant had been earning $380 to $400 a month and were replaced by new employees at $130 a month.

The assassinations were neither the first nor the last among union leaders in Colombian Coke plants. When the union denounced the killings, the plant's chief of security charged its leaders with terrorism. Five were jailed for six months.

According to Samuel Morales of the United Confederation of Workers (CUT), "In many ways, transnational corporations virtually govern the states in which they operate. And in our 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 5,000,000 sweatshop workers continue to face poverty, harassment, discrimination 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 Lella Salazar, the corporate accountability director for Global Exchange.

Six bucks sucks, says B.C. Fed president

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 4:00 a.m.

Young people and others who are getting angry about this cut and who 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 MacDonald's, 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

WINTER GUARDIAN 2001

"The minister himself admits that there will be no enforcement"
what we’re up to

First contract for NSAHM
More than 300 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 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 NSAHM care providers has always been respect and fairness in the workplace," says Allnutt.

This is a joint-HEU/BCHU certification for the residential care workers, vocational trainers and registered nurses at NSAHM. 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.ceneworld.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 negotiations 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 keep 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. HAI DA KRISTIANSEN thinks that if people know what it used to be like, they wouldn’t be so complacent about losing it.

LIFE BEFORE MEDICARE

Haida Kristiansen 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 read, unprocessed, a store of 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 universal 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 casually at 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 <healthcarebear@splitmail.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 Spanwood Hospital staff, both unionized workers and management, with the well-ordered response to the sensitive and potentially dangerous situation that unfolded right across the street from the facility. But Wedderburn wasn't surprised, noting that labour relations at Spanwood Hospital are good. "We always work together as a team," she said.

Abbotsford fights PFI

HEU's MSA local is on the move again. This time they're reaching out into the community and mobilizing against the Campbell Licens' 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 80s 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 Ahne Hanse would envy. As one part of their outreach, HEU MSA members hosted a community breakfast Dec 8th where they served

Chilliwack local officers Russ Bratton and Joyce Burrows joined HEU president Fred Mazin 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 $520 for the food bank.

continued on page 14

AFTER THE SHIFT   DAVE FULLER

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 46 per cent have some post-secondary education.

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

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 $3,000.

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

Desserts spelled backwards is - stressed.

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

GIVING TIME

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 group. 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 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.

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

WINTER GUARDIAN 2001 13
Performers dance the stories of young innocence and living in a dangerous time.

December
HEU PEOPLE

Young [Jayne] 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, travelling and spending a lot of time with her husband and family, especially her grandchildren.

Shorncliffe's loss, Lions' gain

Another retiring Shorncliffe member, Berrie 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 Toronto 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 hum-ming as she efficiently went about her work everyday.” Now she enjoys the fruits of her labour by travelling, gardening and spending a whole lot more time with her grandchildren.

“New” HEU stuff

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. 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 the other two of whom are teenagers.

Board Lands has been a rep since May 2000, but she has been in the Lower Mainland HEU office since July 1997. Before coming to work at HEU Lands-forward as a health assistant/ambulance attendant 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.

Tod McDermid has been a rep trainer since July 2001. He came to HEU as a temporary rep in July 1999. Now he services four Fraser Valley locals. McDermid started off in the health care field as a “pot scrubber” at Canada War 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.”

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.

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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 of HEU held a forum in Kitimat asking if you want to be heard. 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 of being afraid of being identified, feeling isolated, want to know your rights? Call for information on same sex benefits, rights discrimination.

PRESS 4
People with disAbilities
If you are or know someone who is disabled or is visibly disabled in the workplace, let us know how the union can better meet your needs.

All Calls are Confidential

GUARDIAN

In humble dedication to those who tell the truth.

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From Care
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.

Disability doesn’t stop me. Discrimination can.