Before the election, Gordon Campbell told HEU members he didn’t believe in tearing up contracts. But on January 27 you could practically hear the ripping sound from Victoria as his government committed an act the Globe and Mail called ‘legislative vandalism’.

**Trashing signed agreements is only laying the groundwork for wholesale health care privatization**

Gordon Campbell is paving his “new era” with broken promises.

British Columbians did not vote for hospital closures, cuts to public services, nor the loss of thousands of jobs in small communities that are already hurting. The cuts his government has legislated are brutal and calculating.

And just how calculating became abundantly clear in a secret budget document obtained by HEU which outlines the Campbell Liberals’ plan to cut nearly $20,000 health care jobs, increase surgery wait lists and shift another $500 million in health care costs onto the shoulders of B.C. families.

The declaration of the province’s public health care system is bad enough, but it is only part of the Liberals’ grand plan.

When the government announced the elimination of 12,000 jobs along with the slashing of the public service, B.C. Government and Services Employees’ Union president George Heyman said that Campbell was doing exactly what he said he wouldn’t do: “He lied.” With funding to women’s centres cut and 24 courthouses closed, women in abusive relationships will have access to justice reduced. “And good luck if your family is in a crisis and needs professional help,” he said, with 1,000 jobs that provide services to families and children in the dumpers.

And then came that infamous late January weekend, when teachers had their contract legislated and health care workers had their freely negotiated contracts ripped apart.

Claiming all the while to be protecting public education, the Liberals only had their tax cut and funding freeze in mind when they legally imposed increased class sizes, changes in the school year and deferred construction of desperately-needed new classrooms.

B.C. Teachers’ Federation president David Chudnovsky said the government’s actions will not guarantee peace and stability in the province’s schools. Quite the contrary.

The same can be said of the province’s health care system.

If there ever was a piece of legislation that was inappropriately named, it is Bill 29.

If there ever was a piece of legislation that was inappropriately named, it is Bill 29. The Health and Social Services Delivery Improvement Act. HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allenart said the implications of Bill 29 for health care are dire for all British Columbians. “Communities are going to suffer immensely,” he said.

If there ever was a piece of legislation that was inappropriately named, it is Bill 29.

HEU members by the thousands arrive in Victoria for the February 25 rally in front of the legislature (above).

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6
When we work together, there’s reason to hope

Sisters and brothers, these are trying times. It seems we are being attacked from every side. But it is in times such as these that we learn to stand together and fight back. The premier has screwed up – he made all sorts of promises before the election that he had no intention to keep. You know the ones:

- he’ll respect contracts;
- there will be no cuts to health care and education; and
- HEU members do valuable work and don’t have to fear privatization from a Gordon Campbell government.

Unlike Ontario’s Harris, or Alberta’s Klein, who at least campaigned on an extreme right-wing agenda, the premier was dishonest with voters before the election. He’ll never recover from the fact that he doesn’t have a mandate from B.C. voters to do what he’s doing.

Already, less than nine months after his election, 59 per cent of British Columbians don’t trust him with our public health care system.

We’ve already forced him to back down in these ways:

- he’s reversed himself on the cuts to seniors’ bus passes;
- in his province-wide TV address, he had to acknowledge his promise to HEU members not to break contracts; and
- he’s put in $700 million more into health care this year than he had originally planned.

We’ve succeeded in these areas because we’ve stood together with communities throughout B.C. in fighting for the public health care system.

Serious threats to our contracts, our jobs, Medicare and our communities remain.

By fighting smart, we can knock the Liberals and their employer agents off their privatization agenda and continue to build a public Medicare system we can all be proud of.

voice.mail

He looked a critical gift horse in the mouth

HEU president Fred Hutton wrote, “When New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani said the heroic efforts of public sector workers in responding to the World Trade Centre disaster, but then denied them the ability to bargain a better contract, I doubt his sincerity.”

I have my doubts as well. In the wake of that horrific disaster, I looked upon Giuliani as a great, compassionate man. That is until I read an article in the Vancouver Sun on Oct. 12, 2001 which stated, “Prince Alwaleed bin Talal of Saudi Arabia condemned terrorism and handed the New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani a cheque for U.S. $50 million for the relief efforts in New York.”

The mayor rejected the donation after learning the prince criticized the U.S. Midwest policy.”

Giuliani returned the cheque without telling the victims’ families if they would appreciate the donation, I saw the article only once. Not one word have I read in the media about that returned cheque since October 12.

GERRY GLIEN
Central City Lodge Local
Housekeeping

Private health care equals for-profit

Private health care will not save the public money. Rather, it will drive up health care costs.

The “sensible” actions are nothing less than “reckless” because the only way private, for-profit companies can provide such important health care services at lower cost is by cutting wages and undermining working conditions and the quality of care. Our public health care system ischerished by virtually everyone, because currently all taxpayers benefit from it and have a stake in it.

The solution is not two-tiered and private clinics. Rather, it is for our governments to return Medicare to a universal 50-50 federal-provincial cost-sharing program.

When equity is eroded it is the middle class who pay the higher costs, while the poor get charity health care if they pass a means test.

TROY ZOHNER
South Island Community Living

Happy to be working again

Thanks to the HEU members who supported me during my struggle to return to work after a three-and-a-half years’ absence.

In June 1996, I had the misfortune to fall and break my left ankle in three places. After two surgeries, I was able to return for another job, because I could not return to work as a nurse aide.

I first met with human resources on Dec. 21, 2000 and had a real struggle to return to another job. Without the support of union members and the executive, I would still be without an income and struggling to find a job. LDT closed my claim last April and said I could do a sit-down job with minimal training. Human resources said there was no such job at the hospital.

I finally returned to work in the physiotherapy department at Lions Gate Hospital. Yes, it still need to use a walking cane, but I’m happy to be back at work.

A special thanks to the nursing staff on wing 2 who gave me a special return-to-work party and to the HEU sister in Prince George who encouraged me not to give up in my struggle to return to the workforce.

I would like to encourage all the HEU members off LTD and trying to return to work to not give up. I hope this letter will give you support and encouragement in your own future career change.

TRISH MCMURRIN
Lions Gate Local

Bum steer repudiated

On Friday afternoon there was a demonstration at the corner of Marshall Road and Sumas Way to bring public awareness about the threat of our hospital services being privatized when the new hospital is built in Abbotsford.

I want to thank the many hundreds of people who honked in support and gave us the “thumbs up.”

The response was encouraging and it was great to know that many people are already aware of the seriousness of this issue.

The protesters were demonstrating after their shift (they all work). I have been employed at MSF General Hospital for 25 years and I am very concerned for our community and the future of our hospital.

I am personally offended that you referred to me as a bum. It clearly shows me that you are unaware of the facts. In Prince Edward Island, the government was similarly planning to privatize services and the community banded together to defeat the plan. Studies have shown that there are no long-term cost savings.

In Surrey, England, there was a new hospital built under private financing. This hospital cost 27 per cent more because of higher borrowing costs and profits for private developers.

Right here in our own province, St. Paul’s Hospital has discharged its contract with multinational food giant Marriott and has brought back the workers “at no cost” as a “significant deficit reduction program” in the words of a senior administrator.

JOYCE GRINDEY
MSF General Hospital

* This letter was printed in the Abbotsford News on Jan. 22, 2002.
Leaked document reveals the ‘why’ of Campbell’s lies  

Voters would not have backed cynical Liberal plans to privatize health care

First the Campbell Liberals unilaterally broke signed agreements and stripped health care workers’ contract provisions to pave the way for hospital closures, service cuts and privatization.

Now, secret government documents released by HEU reveal the Campbell government’s plan to embark on widespread health cuts, shift another $500 million in costs on to the shoulders of B.C. families, and launch the most radical health privatization scheme in Canadian history.

In a damaging admission, Victoria also says surgery waitlists will increase, hospitals and hospital beds will close, and patient safety will be compromised by increased ambulance response times.

According to the secret documents, about 20,400 jobs are to be terminated by privatizing $700 million in health care services by 2003. Another 7,500 jobs will be chopped in clinical and support areas as a result of service cutbacks over the next three years.

"The Liberals’ privatization scheme is shockingly proof that its agenda is all about ideology—not about saving money," says HEU’s Chris Allbutt. "Victoria claims it will save $70 million over three years—about one-third of a per cent of the health care budget—by privatizing support services," he says. "But to eliminate jobs of thousands of women, Campbell will spend $163 million in termination costs. Handly a cost saving."

What will happen to workers whose jobs are privatized? At best, the secret document says they may be rehired by the private sector at reduced wage rates—up to 30 per cent lower. "That’s a wage cut," says Allbutt. "Of about $150 million—a huge cost to be borne by workers, their families and local communities that are already facing difficult economic times.

"For a third of one per cent of the health care budget, the Campbell Liberals are prepared to plunge health care into chaos," says Allbutt. "At the same time they will start writing big cheques to their corporate friends who are jockeying for lucrative contracts to provide these services."

Prior to the last election, Campbell told HEU members in a Guardian interview they didn’t have to worry about privatization from a Liberal government and their work was important and valued.

Meanwhile, Allbutt says the Liberal’s two-pronged cuts and privatization strategy will impact thousands of LPNs, Care Aides, RNs, and paramedical professionals who will be axed. And he warned privatizing housekeeping, dietary and laundry to multinational companies will reduce service standards and put pressure on nursing staff to pick up even more non-nursing duties.

The documents also reveal that seniors and B.C. families will pay $406 million more over three years for higher drugs. About $20,000 seniors will pay more while 800,000 people will pay $15 million more as the result of previously announced MSP cuts.

Allbutt charges that Campbell’s government isn’t telling the truth with claims that B.C. support workers are paid 30 per cent more than in other provinces. "When our higher cost of living is factored in," he says, "real wage rates in B.C. are the same as in Alberta, Ontario or Quebec."

STEPHEN HOWARD
Future uncertain for two Vancouver Island families

CHRIS GAINOR looks at how threatened cuts to health care jobs plays out with resource communities that are already hurting from the forestry industry slump.

Gord and Geri Klahahrt are already making the tough changes that are facing many families on Vancouver Island and elsewhere in B.C.

They are wonder whether the B.C. government is threatening them again as they recover from an earlier economic blow.

The Klahahrt live in Chemainus, a town in the Cowichan Valley that fought back from forest industry closures in the 1990s by turning itself into a tourist destination on the road between Victoria and Nanaimo.

Gord had worked as a fisherman at the Youbou sawmill. A clause in the local tree farm licence compelled the mill's owner, TimberWest, to keep the mill open, but the NDP government allowed the clause to "disappear."

As a result, Gord and his 200 fellow workers lost their jobs early last year when the mill closed and TimberWest began shipping raw logs outside of the country to be processed.

Geri, who worked as an activity aide at the Chemainus Health Care Centre for six years, fears that she will lose her job as the Liberal government restructures health care after tearing up union contracts with Bill 29.

When the Youbou mill shut down, some businesses closed and others suffered. And now the Cowichan Valley is healing itself for layoffs 10 times as bad as the softwood lumber dispute with the United States forces Domtar Industries to close down its operation in the area.

A member of Industrial, Wood and Allied Workers of Canada Local 180 and a former union organizer, Gord fought hard with his brother and others to save the Youbou mill. "I was feeling deserted," he said.

Last year, Gord spent weeks away from Geri, their son Ryan, 16, and daughter Sarah, 13, as he worked as a fishing guide on the North Coast. Now he is setting up a guiding business in Chemainus. "I've had to put up our house for collateral for a boat. Whether it will work out or not, I don't know."

In January, Geri attended an HEU meeting where she learned of the Liberal government's plans to gut collective agreements. She responded by spearheading the organization of a rally January 12 in Chemainus that brought together 450 people who were addressed by speakers from unions in both the public and private sectors.

"It was the first time I realized how serious our situation was. We needed to organize together," Geri said. "I'm shocked that everything is so easily at risk. We're very vulnerable."

In February, she helped organize a bigger rally in Duncan that drew 2,500 people from all over the Cowichan Valley, and she joined the crowds in Victoria on February 23.

Meanwhile, the workers at the Chemainus Health Care Centre have received no assurance from the Vancouver Island Health Authority about their jobs or the future of their emergency room, laboratory or x-ray facility that complements the 75 extended care beds.

"There are quite a few women I work with whose husbands have been laid off," Geri said. "People are scared."

Health authority ignores higher cost of privatizing

If the newly-formed Vancouver Coastal Health Authority gets its way, HEU members from North Vancouver to Bella Bella and Bella Coola will see a rapid change in the way health care support services are delivered in the region through a massive privatization deal. Management-types told union representatives in late February that a decision would be made within 90 days about contracting-out our members' work for the entire region in one of the support services areas.

"As Bill 29 becomes a reality, we can expect attempts from health authorities to privatize health care support services under the guise of cost efficiencies and improved patient care. But that's simply not true, and we'll fight those attempts every step of the way," says HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnut.

"Our members know, and research backs them up, that their work is an integral part of health care and that privatizing it leads to reduced quality of care and higher costs."

While VCHHA has not identified which support service will be targeted, food services may take the first hit. Private, for-profit giant, Aramark, has already infiltrated Lions Gate Hospital and may be courting expansion opportunities. They should take a look at what the Providence Health Group is doing in Vancouver — namely contracting in food services management.

The Providence Health Group, including St. Vincent's and Mount St. Joseph's hospitals cited cost savings as the reason for bringing the management of its food services back in-house and putting an early end to its contract with U.S.-based, multinational Morrison.

Grand Marnier not so grand

In its December 2001 issue, the New Internationalist magazine reported on the plight of the Haitian plantation
In the past year, the paper mill has closed down for short periods because of weak markets in Asia, and one of the three paper machines has been shut off for several months. "There's a great deal of uncertainty out there," said Elmer, a member of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers' Union of Canada. After listing some local businesses that have closed down in recent years, he noted that 15 jobs are vanishing because the B.C. government is closing the local assessment office. "Business in town is going to be suffering. I can't believe they aren't talking about it."

Maria is a longtime activist in her HEU local, and she has been chief shop steward for four years. Now she's facing the reality that Bill 29 takes away bumping and seniority rights, along with training programs. "On a personal level, I'm angry that these rights have been taken away."

A local rally on January 25 that she helped organize drew more than 1,000 people. "So many things have happened since then," she added, including letter writing campaigns, handing out pink slips targeting local MLA Gillian Truckum, participa-
tion in the big rally in Victoria. "The support of the members has been fantastic," she said. "We're going to continue to be busy."

The Commission will explore how problems are undermining the stability of public health care and carefully analyze structural problems with a view to facilitating cooperation. The final report, expected in November, will hopefully be based on objective research and acknowledge Canadians' commitment to our most cherished social program, that ensures medical need rather than personal wealth dictates who will receive care.

The Campbell Liberals, drunk with power and blindly racing to surpass even Ralph Klein and Mike Harris, want to preempt the Health Commission and impose massive changes that will sell off our fragile system to their corporate friends, displace tens of thousands of health care providers and destroy hope for youth, seniors, the disabled and First Nations for a brighter future.

What is truly shocking about Campbell's reopening of legal contracts and rolling back decades old workers' rights, is the admission that $700M in services are slated to be privatized, waiting lists will grow, 10,000 surgeries will be axed and emergency response times will increase, endangering the public.

We have to oppose and expose the B.C. government agenda that has nothing to do with balanced budgets.

The peope who harvest the bitter oranges that flavour Grand Marnier. The Paris-based Matheur- Lapostolle company has owned the plantation since 1880, and according to the workers there, things haven't changed very much in more than 120 years. Then, in 1999, 350 workers on the plantation formed a union. Learning from the success of other unions in organizing garment workers in Italy, the agricultural workers called for international solidarity in their own struggle. Union leaders were persecuted, but the outside support—made fruit and the workers won a 30 per cent wage increase and the provision of protective clothing.

This has had a snowball effect on the workers who harvest the same bitter fruit for Contoiseux—a similar liqueur to Grand Marnier. But they are having a tougher time of it. Their leaders have been jailed and otherwise harassed. The union has joined with other Italian labour organisations and local peasant farmers to pressure the Contoiseux managers to negotiate.

With no settlement in sight, the union is exploring the possibility of eliminating middlemen and selling directly to the European market themselves. The struggle is still ongoing.

The budget documents contain plans for a massive shift of frail elderly and disabled people with high care needs into their own homes. "It's another broken promise by the Liberals that will put seniors and the disabled at risk, and put more pressure on emergency rooms and hospita-

The Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada is currently involved in the public consultation phase, with hearings across Canada.

Despite the fact that in his Interim report, the commissioner indicated that "the Medicare house needs remodeling but not demolishing," the actions of the Campbell B.C. Liberal government make it clear that they would rather destroy our public health care system. Their ideology promotes that the marketplace matters more than a caring society where we all take responsibility for each other.

The evidence clearly indicates that Medicare is sustainable and that privatization will only result in increased expenses and decreased services, i.e., delivering, longer wait lists, less accessibility. Romanow has adopted four main themes: Canadian values/Canada Health Act; sustainability and funding; quality and access; and leadership, collaboration and responsibility.

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Participation in the Romanow Commission (you can complete the questionnaire at www.healthcarecommission.ca) provides an important opportunity to counter the B.C. Liberals' misguided ideology.

Laid off Youbou workers were highly visible at the February 23 protest in Victoria.

There are people at my work who are talking about looking if they both lose their jobs.”

Further north on the island, Maria and Elmer Bohn are also wondering what the future holds for them and their friends and neighbours in Port Alberni.

Maria has worked at the Echo Village and Fir Park Village long-term care facilities for 21 years, starting as a Care Aide. In recent years, she has worked as a programming clerk. Her husband Elmer has worked for nearly 29 years at the large paper mill in Port Alberni now owned by Noranda Canada. Elmer has spent most of his time at the mill as an electrician, and together he and Maria are raising their children, Ian, 14, and Kurt, 6.

Elmer's father Walter was active in his union and his community, and one of his proudest achievements was helping to set up Fir Park Village as a place where seniors could get the care they need and still live an active life.

The two facilities, which are run under a common management, have many senior staff who, like Maria, started out as Care Aides and moved on to other jobs. They all know the residents well and can help out with their personal needs when required.

"My fear is that these residents are not going to get the best care because we won't have that flexibility," she explained that if services are contracted out and new staff get only minimum wage, they will stay for only short times and won't have the skills today's staff have.

"There's a great deal of uncertainty out there," said Elmer, a member of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers' Union of Canada. After listing some local businesses that have closed down in recent years, he noted that 15 jobs are vanishing because the B.C. government is closing the local assessment office. "Business in town is going to be suffering. I can't believe they aren't talking about it."

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The nuts and bolts
How it will affect health workers

BILL 29, the Health and Social Services Delivery Improvement Act, or as HEU calls it, the Hospital Closure Enabling Act, arms the Campbell Liberals with the tools they need to close hospitals, privatize health services and strip health care workers of their contract rights.

The scope of the attack on health care collective agreements is unprecedented and paves the way for hospital and service closures, contracting out and the expansion of fee-for-service health corporations into B.C.

The legislation affects all unionized health care and community social services workers – more than 100,000 workers – by gutting key provisions of their health collective agreements relating to contracting out, lay-off, transfer, employment security and union representation.

**Contracting out**

First bargained 20 years ago, the contracting out language in existing collective agreements is rendered null and void except in very narrow circumstances: where a nurse or designated professional in a designated acute care hospital performs clinical services on a patient who has been admitted to an inpatient bed. Under these rules, the Vancouver General Hospital emergency ward could be 100 per cent contracted out.

Bill 29 also means that private contractors are not bound by the terms and conditions of existing collective agreements because these contractors cannot be deemed “successor” or “common” employers. Here’s an example: If housekeeping is contracted out at a hospital, you will be laid off and can exercise what’s left of your bumping rights. The private housekeeping contractor might hire you back – at a much lower wage – but you have no seniority, no collective agreement and no union.

The Campbell Liberals say this is about putting patients first. But this is really about closing facilities, dismantling services, and removing those barriers that stand in the way of corporations making huge profits from public health care dollars.

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**THE LIBERAL STORY SO FAR**

2001 – THE FIRST 90 DAYS

**JUNE** First tax cut favours the wealthy, paves way for service cuts

**JULY** Core review of all ministries announced

**AUGUST** Pay equity legislation repealed, collective agreements for BGCU, HSA legislated; Bill 18 guts teachers’ bargaining rights, makes education an essential service; protection for workers removed with mandatory secret ballots for union certification

2001 – THE SECOND 90 DAYS

**OCTOBER** Sweeping changes to Pharmacare; two-tier minimum wage rates of $8 and $6 opens door to abuse; health, education budgets frozen; HEU, BCTF predict service cuts; HEU exposes secret government plans to build private hospital in Abbotsford

**DECEMBER** Liberals ice health boards, councils, 600 volunteer decision-makers fired, including health worker reps; Campbell creates six mega
of Bill 29

Bumping
HEU's bumping language — first bargained in the days of WAC Bennett in the 1960's — is gone. In its place are new provisions that will force many health care workers out on the street. Under the legislation, if you have more than five years seniority, you can only bump those with less than five years seniority.

Here's an example: A health care worker with 20 years seniority moves from her job as a sterile supply technician to a newly created technical position. The new position is deleted as a result of cuts. All the jobs in her former department and her new department are held by workers with more than five years seniority, and those are the only departments where she can work. She's out of a job despite her 25 years seniority.

If you have less than five years seniority, you have to take the job of the most junior person — before you get bumped yourself. Under the legislation, the provincial cabinet can rewrite bumping provisions anytime they want. The legislation restricts layoff notice to a maximum of 60 days (rather than six months).

Rebuilding the "wall" between community and facilities workers and services
Under Bill 29, the "wall" — only recently torn down — is back. This means that health care workers who deliver health care in what's defined as the "community" sector will continue to be underpaid and undervalued. In concrete terms, this means:

- community and facilities workers won't be bargaining a common agreement in the next round of bargaining and
- employers will try to arbitrarily transfer work into the "community," pay community level wages and provide community level conditions.

When taken together with the legislation's new provisions for transfer, it's clear that this part of the legislation is designed to expand this practice.

Transfer
Under Bill 29, an employer can transfer a whole department or service and, at the whim of the employer, the employees can be transferred along with it as long as the receiving employer is an HEABC member.

And under the regulations that accompany the bill, employers can transfer an employee with no right to decline and no posting or other rights except covering accommodation costs and other regi- mental expenses. The regulations allow employers to do this to an employee for 30 days in a four-month period. If a permanent transfer is carried out that moves the job or service more than 50 kilometers, an employee has bumping rights. But these rights are severely limited as described above.

Union rights
Bill 29 is about removing any contract provisions that stand in the way of this government's efforts to cut some services and hospitals and privatize others. It's also about removing any serious obstacles posed by health care unions. The legislation provides the minister of labour with the power to direct a labour board review of union representation. In short, the legislation says that the Labour Relations Board can be instructed by the government minister to "consider whether continuation of a certification issued to a trade union is appropriate." In the bill, the LRK must decertify the union if doing so improves employer "efficiency" or improves their ability to "restructure or reorganize" (or privatize).

Employment security and the Healthcare Labour Adjustment Agency
The groundbreaking labour adjustment policies that have been in force since 1993 and part of health care agreements since 1996 have been erased by the stroke of a legislative pen. In concrete terms, health care workers no longer have access to placement in another facility or agency if there's nothing available in their own workplace. There's no retraining. And there's no one-year period during which workers keep working while awaiting placement.

The Healthcare Labour Adjustment Agency will be dismantled within a year after it completes its outstanding obligations to workers and employers.

Erasing the gains made by community social services workers
Bill 29 steals from community social services work- ers the significant gains made after an 11-week job action in 1999. This means no protection; no HFT extended benefits coverage; no equity adjustments; and restricted rights for new certifications.

This is a devastating setback for CSS workers and their clients who finally received a measure of respect as a result of their 1999 job action.

Government immunity
In an attempt to shield itself from legal action from health care workers, their unions and from individu- als, Bill 29 includes a provision preventing legal action for damages or compensation.

What can we do to fight back?

- Participate in local rallies and demonstrations.
- Participate in the B.C. Federation of Labour's Campaign B.C. events in your community.
- Start or join a local fightback coalition.
- Write letters to your local paper, call your radio phone-in shows. Get the message out about how Bill 29 affects your community.

Keep in touch with your HEU local executive.

- Check HEU's Defend our Contracts Hotline at 1,800,909,499, and sign up for HEU e-bulletins by visiting our website at <www.HEU.org>.

WHAT THE PEOPLE THINK

The Campbell government's drastic actions on health care are not finding favour in the court of public opinion. Which makes you wonder who the government is actually listening to. Here are the results of the McN try and Mustel poll taken Feb. 6 to 10, 2002.

Do you trust Premier Campbell to protect health care?

| 35% | YES |
| 59% | NO |
| 7% | don't know |

Some say Premier Campbell has broken his promise to health care workers and voters. Others say he was right to take this step. Which view is closest to your own?

PREMIER CAMPBELL HAS BROKEN HIS PROMISE TO HEALTH CARE WORKERS

| 59% | |
| 35% | |
| 7% | |

The provincial government says it has altered collective agreements for health care workers to provide flexibility and to put patients first. Health care workers and their unions say that by unilaterally altering contracts, the government is paying the way for hospital closures, service cuts and privatization. Which view is closest to your own?

ALTERING COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS WILL LEAD TO HOSPITAL CLOSURES, SERVICE CUTS AND PRIVATIZATION

| 61% | |
| 25% | |
| 13% | |

Do you think the government should revoke this law?

| 55% | YES |
| 34% | NO |
| 11% | don't know |

2002

JANUARY Another tax cut for the wealthy; restaurant and bar workers lose WC$ protection from second-hand cigarette smoke; teachers' collective agreement legislated; health care workers' collective agreements ripped up

FEBRUARY Throne speech signals confrontation, privatization in health care; "as and them" budget damage province for decades; no extra money to cover teachers' salary increase, school boards told; tuition freeze lifted for post-secondary students; MSP premiums increased; commitment to feed elderly to build 5,000 long-term beds scrapped

MARCH Introduced law to change doctors' legally-binding arbitrator contract; secret budget document exposes government plans to axe 28,600 health care jobs while admitting support services will be privatized, hospitals and hospital beds will be closed and patient safety compromised; Campbell government hit by Charter of Rights suit launched by HEU, BCGEU, BCGME and HSA.

SPRING GUARDIAN 2002 7
Taking on Gordchocchio

How we are defending Medicare and health care workers

The Liberal government's attack on HEU members, the public health system and legally negotiated contracts is unprecedented in British Columbia's history. Never before has a provincial government broken a collective agreement mid-term — by using "legislative vandalism" to unilaterally redefine the terms and conditions under which people work.

The contract clauses that have been targeted go right to the heart of our public health care system — the clauses that protect public health care services and the health care workers who provide them. Doing away with those key clauses puts the way for hospital closures, the elimination of many community and social health services and privatization of huge chunks of our public health care.

HEU's Provincial Executive presented their Action Plan to more than 80 local leaders gathered for an emergency meeting on Feb. 9, 2002. Discussions focused on planning a sustainable, long-term fightback against Campbell's agenda.

"Building our coalitions is critical," said HEU secretary-business manager, Chris Allmunt. "But just as important in the minds of our local leaders is continuing to educate our members and to engage them in a discussion on the range of actions they'll participate in to fight a government that has no respect for legally negotiated contracts.

HEU members across B.C. have been rallying, meeting and protesting together with seniors, students, people with disabilities, churches, anti-poverty groups, community organizations and other trade unions.

On February 23, tens of thousands of British Columbians found their way to Victoria — by car, on foot, bike, chartering hundreds of buses, even chartering a ferry — to tell the Campbell government to stop cutting this province at the expense of so many for the benefit of so few. It was a powerful and enabling experience for those who were there, but the work is only beginning, said Allmunt.

Quality of life will deteriorate

The first thing that Gordon Campbell did upon taking over the reins of government was to cut taxes. The beneficiaries were for the most part British Columbians with yearly incomes of $60,000 or more.

A second tax cut banded corporations a gift even they weren't expecting.

And in January 2002, although the first tax cut did not miraculously send the economy through the roof as finance minister Gary Collins had promised, the Liberals went ahead with another tax cut.

Such a gross loss of government income has to be paid for somehow — and the Liberals have done that and the most vulnerable people in B.C. will make up the shortfall.

Lower income British Columbians received minimal tax cuts, but they are being clawed back through higher medical premiums, paying for medical services previously covered, higher tuition costs for their children, etc.

Seniors, the poor and disabled are having the rug pulled out from under them — the social safety net that, although not perfect, afforded them a certain amount of security and dignity.

Thousands of government and health care employees are going to lose their livelihoods under the Liberals' "new era," but seniors, the disabled, women and the disadvantaged of this province will see their quality of life deteriorate considerably because of these tactics.

UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE: MSP premiums up 50 per cent; Pharmacare slashed; increased user fees; diabetics paying for essential; deflated medications;
Right wingers blast Campbell’s economics

Union members — especially in HEU — usually do not get a fair shake from the media, who rarely stray from the course set by the corporate world.

However, Gordon Campbell’s social and economic agenda is so reckless and one-sided that it is attracting some hard-hitting criticism from some trusted sources.

Two periodicals known for their conservative leanings recently ran editorials criticizing Campbell, his approach, and his era.

After the Liberal feeding frenzy left the collective bargaining rights and probably livelihoods of thousands of public service workers, teachers and health care workers in the dumpster, a January 30 Globe and Mail editorial stated that when Campbell ripped up existing agreements, he signaled that he can’t be trusted. The implication is this is a major drawback if the province is trying to attract investment.

"Before last May’s election, he sought to allay the concerns of those who feared he would ride roughshod over the rights of those he disagreed with. He wasn’t one to break contracts, he said. ‘I don’t believe in ripping up agreements.’ (That’s a direct quote from the interview with Gordon Campbell that appeared in the Oct./Nov. 2000 Guardian.)

The Economist, an British publication, recognizes the extent behind those moves. "Last weekend, Mr. Campbell set out to cut the power of public-sector unions, a sure recipe for conflict in Canada’s most unionized province." The Economist looks ahead at Campbell’s reasoning when he says he must make drastic cuts to control a massive deficit. "Yet the Liberals did not inherit a deficit. The New Democrats, having hastily cleaned up their act, left behind a surplus of C$1.5 billion. The Liberals gave away that savings in tax cuts, and just at a time when revenues started to fall. "Uninside, Mr. Campbell said the government would balance the books by cutting spending by C$1.9 billion over three years and eliminating 11,000 jobs."

But the Economist says in the real world "the province may have little power to control its economic fortunes. Japan’s continuing malaise, the United States’ recessions and the impact of American duties against softwood imports has all hammered British Columbia.”

It’s clear that Campbell’s agenda is ideological, he wants to privatize the province and unionized workers are in the way. Before the 1996 election, he admitted he would tear up contracts and he lost the election. In last year’s election he simply lied, won the election and is proceeding to do what he always meant to do.

But, as the Globe and Mail wrote, "... even by his own steamroller standards, Premier Campbell violated a basic covenant on the weekend by forcibly rewriting legal, negotiated contracts that were still in force. If he is not prepared to respect so basic a legal agreement, what other contracts is he prepared to rip up? That’s not reform. It is legislative vandalism.”

for many British Columbians

no eye tests, physiotherapy, massage, or chiropractic services.

WORKING CONDITIONS: No more WCB smoking-in-the-workplace regulations; business leaders on WCB sure to scale back workers’ health and safety regulations.

YOUTH: No more post-secondary tuition forests, $6 per hour minimum wage for first-time workers; teachers’ contracts no longer limit class sizes.

LABOUR: Legislated contracts for nurses, bus drivers, paramedics, teachers; thousands of direct public service jobs gone; pay equity laws, fair wage provisions axed; labour codes changed, making it harder to join unions and impossible to keep certification with turfing of union leadership provisions.

POOR: Chopped programs for at-risk children and families, special services for the blind, and legal aid; health ministry staff cutbacks; welfare rates slashed; closed residential tenancy offices; freeze on social housing projects; rolled back childcare benefits; eliminated funding for women’s centres.

SENIORS: Closed seniors’ advisory council and government office for seniors; clawed back meals-on-wheels and other support services for the elderly; axed the B.C. Seniors’ Income Supplement.

PUBLIC ASSETS: Preparing ground for privatization of B.C. Hydro, B.C. Ferries, ICBC; have already privatized parts of B.C. Rail.

FIRST NATIONS: Created a climate of confrontation with B.C.’s Aboriginal People by pursuing the land claims referendum.

ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORTATION: Slashed budgets in environment, forestry, and transportation ministries.

WHAT HEU MEMBERS ARE SAYING

"To privatize our work [trades and maintenance] would not only increase the financial cost to the taxpayers of B.C. but also result in a dramatic decrease in the safety and quality of the vital service our members provide. Add to this the discrediting of the Industry’s Training and Apprenticeship Commission in the face of a looming skills shortage, and there exists a recipe for disaster in our health care system.”

Dave Pollorin

SURREY

"Not only do we disagree with Bill 29 and all other attempts to erode the public sector, but also we, the workers and taxpayers of this province did not give you the mandate to carry out such massive cuts. Other experiments to privatize health care and other social services in Britain and New Zealand in particular proved to be destructive to patient care, accessibility and a high standard of practice.”

Workers of Dogwood Lodge

VANCOUVER

"That your government would make the inauspicious claim that my collective agreement or accords found within were ‘sweetheart, backroom deals made with the NDP is insulting. We walked the picket lines for 11 weeks. Mr. [MLA] Coell, hardly a ‘sweetheart’ dealmaking situation.”

Josephine Querauld

SIDIEN

"I feel that the imposed contract that lets a person only bump someone with five years [seniority] or less will cause increased conflict in the workplace. I can tell you that this will not be in the best interest of delivering good health care.”

James C. King

VERNON

"The government likes to compare my wages to workers in Alberta ... I find it strange that when the nurses asked to paid the same as nurses in Alberta, the government didn’t see the comparison as fair and now if the same line of reasoning is used to pay someone less, they’re all for it!”

Carla McCleod

SUMMERLAND

"We had contracting out protection in our contract way before the NDP was ever elected. Our bumping rights have been in our collective agreement since 1968 and we won this provision under WAC Bennett’s government long before I even entered the industry.”

Blair Thomas

VANCOUVER

SPRING GUARDIAN 2002
Bill 27 is anti-education, say teachers

British Columbia teachers are outraged that the provincial government rewarded an intrasignent employer who refused to budge from its one-and-only offer during months of negotiations. On the same weekend Campbell's Liberals rammed through Bill 29 -- stripping health care workers of their collective agreement -- they also passed Bill 27, which imposes that employer's offer on the teachers.

Days before the legislation passed, the British Columbia Teachers' Federation, which represents the province's 43,000 teachers, filed a complaint of unfair labour practices with the Labour Relations Board against both the B.C. Public School Employers' Association and the provincial government.

The union had been bargaining in good faith for months with an employer who was only playing a waiting game, with the provincial government fully engaged in the charades.

The Liberals made their intentions obvious from the start, making education an "essential service" -- curtailing teachers' ability to back up their bargaining demands with the threat of a strike. BCTF called an overtime ban and the withdrawal of voluntary services, instead.

With movement at all from BCSPEA, it was simply a matter of Labour Minister Graham Bruce slipping a cut-off date for a negotiated collective agreement on the parties -- or else the government would legislate an end to the teachers' dispute.

Still in good faith, the BCTF put forward another offer, which the employer instantly rejected, believing this was evidence of collusion between the government and the employer, the union filed the complaint with the LRB.

The rest is history. On January 28 Premier Campbell summoned the MLAs to Victoria for a special sitting of the legislature to legislate Bill 27 into existence.

With the imposed two-and-a-half per cent increase in each of the three years of the new contract, teachers will fall further behind inflation. BCTF president David Chudzinsky said that the legislation doesn't only attack teachers. "With the stroke of a pen, this government has eliminated the very provisions that ensure quality education for children," he said. He is referring to provisions included in the teachers' collective agreement like limits to class size and guarantees of services to children with special needs.

On January 28 students, parents, health care workers, forestry workers, public sector workers and other members of the community joined teachers in protest to express not only their solidarity, but their concern for the education of young people.

On January 31 they held a representative assembly to strategize how to begin their campaign to defend public education, hold the Liberals accountable for their legislative vandalism and reverse the impacts of the legislation.

B.C. budget's a poison pill

"Poor people are going to be denied help"

The government says it is giving us tough medicine for the economy, but its budget plan is more like a poison pill that means unnecessary pain for thousands of individuals.

There is no evidence that the Liberals' tax cuts will result in improved GDP growth over the next three years. And yet the government has stated once again that they have no alternative but to maintain the tax cut bonanza for corporations and upper-income earners.

This budget outlines a major shift in the tax burden from corporations to individuals, and from progressive income taxes to regressive taxes like premiums for the Medical Services Plan and sales taxes. The government is paying for the doctors' fees by increasing by the provincial sales tax by one half of a per cent to 7.5 per cent and MSP premiums by 50 per cent. These methods of raising revenue hit lower- and modest-income people the hardest.

The government has also shifted costs onto individual
Campbell is following in Ontario Premier Mike Harris’ footsteps, and JAANA GRANT finds that very scary, especially because his agenda is even more extreme.

DON’T MESS WITH JAANA

When JAANA GRANT was 13, her parents, Mike and Marlene Grant, were caught in the previous generation’s educational funding fight. "We went to public school," she says. "We didn’t want to be left behind.

The Grants had moved from the Lake St. Mary’s area to a new community called St. Mary’s. Her parents, like many other parents in the area, had contributed to the fight against the province’s education cuts.

"At that time," she says, "I was not a student. I was not a teacher. I was not a parent. I was not a leader. I was not a politician."

"But," she says, "I was a human being."
Energy stays public in Colombia

In a major victory for Canadian unions the Supreme Court of Canada handed down a decision that strikes down the common belief that secondary picketing is illegal. In its January 24 decision, the court upheld the arguments of the Canadian Labour Congress to the effect that union members must be able to exercise their rights to freedom of expression like any other citizen or group. The court ruled that secondary picketing— that is picketing in support of a union which occurs at a location other than the employer's premises—is generally lawful.

Ken Georgetti, president of the CLC, said this victory is historic for working people and their union. "The Supreme Court of Canada reminds us once again that working people must have the rights to exercise the freedoms they are guaranteed under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The case arose in 1997 in Saskatchewan when members of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union, Local 558, were locked out by their employers, Pepsi-Cola. To back up their demands, members of Local 558 picketed retail outlets carrying Pepsi products. The CLC helped RWSU. Local 558 take their case all the way to the highest court in Canada.

HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt applauds the court’s decision. "This is an important precedent for all working Canadians, and keeps an important tool in our hands at a time when we are under such virulent attacks." In its ruling the Supreme Court said that to upholds the rights of union members to freedom of expression is necessary to the functioning of a democratic society.

How sweet it is for chocolate workers

On January 31, Purdy’s Chocolates workers voted to recently with the Communications Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada. Local 2000 was first certified in February 1997. In August 1998, after a failed decertification vote, a first collective agreement was signed. With no agreement on a second contract, a strike began in April 2002.

On Oct. 15, 2005, the Labour Relations Board cancelled the certification after problems were discovered with four of the cards signed in the initial certification campaign. With 20 employee-handpicked temporary staff, the recertification vote was closed, but the union won. Local 2000 president Mike Backing says the courage and determination if his members is an inspiration to everyone in the labour movement.

Defend your rights; it’s your responsibility

We know what it is to fight almost insurmountable odds.

I have visited British Columbia before and have met with HEU activists both here and in Nicaragua. Through its association with CoDevelopment Canada, your union has been extremely instrumental in the success of Nicaragua's Maria Elena Guadua Movement for Employed and Unemployed Women (MEG), of which I have been the leader for many years.

Now I see that your situation has fundamentally changed. The government is attacking health care and health care workers and seems determined to strip away all the gains you have made in the last few years.

What you have to remember is that many of you have worked incredibly hard over the last few years to win the benefits you now enjoy, but you did not start from zero. You had a base to work on.

Ungod thousands millions fought and made enormous sacrifices to win the rights you now value so much.

Both as workers and as citizens, it’s your responsibility to defend those hard-won rights. Don’t let anybody take them away from you and your children. Above all, don’t lose hope.

In Nicaragua we know what it is to fight almost insurmountable odds and still don’t lose hope. Free trade practitioners have invaded our country and made life hell for many of our people—especially women.

But with help from our partners—like HEU and CoDevelopment Canada—we have been able, little by little, to help many of our people. And for that we thank you.

Solidarity is very important for you right now because what you are experiencing, Albuquerque, is very much a part of the globalization agenda. We have to globalize solidarity and the defense of all our rights as human beings. That is our only hope.

SANDRA RAMOS — DIRECTOR OF NICARAGUA’S MEG

"We know what it is to fight almost insurmountable odds"
Pilot project for newsletter editors
As part of a pilot project to support HEU local newsletter editors, six editors will attend the 2003 Canadian Association of Labour Media conference, to be held in Vancouver from June 6 to 8. Conference attendance comes with a year's membership in CALM. This provides for a wide range of additional services including graphics and cartoons, access to the web site at www.calm.ca with news stories that you can pick up for your newsletter and regular tips to build the skills of local newsletter editors.

If your local produced a newsletter during the last year, you are eligible to apply to be part of this pilot project. Send in a copy of your newsletter along with a letter outlining why you would like to attend the conference to Dale Fuller in HEU's communications department.

The deadline for your entries is April 19, 2003. And good luck!

Staff worried about Gorge Road residents
Staff and a few residents from Gorge Road Hospital held a protest rally on February 13 against the Campbell government's massive cuts to health care and the announcement of the closure of Gorge Road Hospital in Victoria. Passing traffic was extremely supportive. Because the protest started at 2:00 p.m. and ended at 4:00 p.m., nursing staff, housekeeping and food services were all able to join in the rally.

The week before the protest, the new Vancouver Island Health Authority confirmed that it would phase out the 367-bed hospital. Local health care workers are asking where residents will go - and given recent legislation that strips experienced health workers of their employment security - who will take care of them.

Gremilins at St. Mary's
Management at St. Mary's Hospital in New Westminster was threatening union members with discipline if they were their Gordon Choi buttons at work.

When Provincial Executive member Casey O'Hearn found out, he asked where the buttons were - he wanted to put one on. But the whole bag had disappeared from the nursing station where they had been stacked.

Later in the day, at the Wednesday tea party volunteers put on for the patients, O'Hearn was passing by the family room when one of the patients who was visiting with his family called him.

"He told me to empty my shirt pocket, so I did," recounts O'Hearn. "Leo reached into the side pocket of his patient gown and pulled out a handful of Gordon Choi buttons and shoved them into my shirt pocket."

The patient then pointed proudly to the button on his own chest and asked O'Hearn where his was. "Are you not allowed to wear these?" he asked. O'Hearn said that was under discussion.

"Well, they can't stop us," he said.

BALANCING IT ALL

Dale Fuller

Campbell is following in Ontario Premier Mike Harris' footsteps, and Jaana Grant finds that very scary; especially because his agenda is even more extreme.

DON'T MESS WITH JAANA

When Jaana Grant was living in Ontario a few years ago and Premier Mike Harris' government cut the province's educational funding, she got very angry. ""The school board had to increase class sizes and make cuts to special education, and that meant that my son Mitchell was in a class of 40 with 12 special needs kids like him."

Grant, who now lives in the Lower Mainland and has a care aide at the Finnish Canadian Rest Home and Flinthill Manor for the last three years, has two sons, both with special needs. Mitchell, now 14, has Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Marldf, nine years, has high-functioning autism. Grant learned how to fight for both of her children through her experiences dealing with Mitchell's disability.

When Mitchell was born, the doctor told her there would be challenges ahead, and there were. ""He never cried, just began walking at five-and-a-half months,"" says Grant. ""By nine months, he was a 'holly terror.'"

The family doctor diagnosed him and then Grant at least had a name for what was happening. But when Mitchell started school at age four, Grant's real battle began.

""The teacher didn't know how to handle him,"" she said. At Christmas-time she found out that the teacher had been locking him away in a room.

Grant started looking around for help. ""The first step in this process is to blame the parents. They asked me if I drank, if I took drugs. I was a bad parent, they said. No one wanted to help me."

Because Grant was treated as an early childhood educator, she began using some of the techniques she had learned, with moderate success. ""But then we moved from Windsor to Thunder Bay and all hell broke loose. He was out of control,"" said Grant. She would get up to 25 calls a day from the school.

When Mitchell was five, she went to the Lakehead Regional Family Centre and said, ""Look, I need help."" They put her on a wait list. She told them that if they didn't give her immediate assistance, she was afraid of what would happen. ""I was truly desperate,"" said Grant.

So they did help, but not much. ""They put me in a course on how to be a better parent. They showed videos where the father was saying, 'Put your toys away, son' and the son said 'Yes, father.' We looked at each other in the room and said, 'Yeah, right.'"

When Mitchell was seven years old, Grant decided to try something different. She started the Thunder Bay Add/ADHD Parent Support Group.

""We were 15 families. We talked and we cried a lot,"" she said. And they explored different ways to deal with their children.

Then Ontario Premier Mike Harris started cutting special education programs and increasing class sizes. That was when Grant hit the roof. ""I went with the parents' group to an open forum the school board was holding. We told the school board if they didn't give our 12 special needs children their own classroom, we were going to change them with child abuse,"" said Grant. ""We were very serious and they took us seriously. It took awhile, but we got what we wanted."

Grant moved to B.C. in 1998 with her family and now sees the same battles looming.

""What I want to tell the people of B.C. right now, because Campbell is going down the same road that Harris did, is that parents are going to have to defend their children because they are being attacked,"" she said. ""My child has broadened me, given me the opportunity to stand up for other parents, to teach other parents to say 'it's not okay' if said the patient, and he painted around the room."
All the patients were wearing Gordorchio button-downs.

**Have you a story to tell?**

Our Times, Canada's independent labour magazine, is collecting stories for its short story series called Working for a Living. They want to hear about what your job is like, what you do, what you see and how you feel about it. Or write about what your job was like before you quit, got laid off, fired or retired.

The only rule is that it be no longer than 2,000 words. Send your submission by e-mail to editor@ourtimes.ca, putting Our Times/Working for a Living in the subject line. Or you can send it by mail to Our Times/Working for a Living, P.O. Box 582, New Glasgow, Nova Scotia B2H 5E2.

If your story is accepted for publication, you’ll even get a $500 honorarium!

**Something for the well-dressed HEU member**

New to the HEU boutique – some striking-looking denim shirts, sweaters and t-shirts.

All three styles are 100% cotton and made in Canada at union shops.

Shirts are short-sleeved and the sweaters are long-sleeved. Both are black with a red and white screened design on front and back.

Front says “hands off our health care,” back says “hands off our contract.”

Long-sleeved-denim shirts come in light blue, dark blue and black, with a white embroidered HEU/CUPE logo on the left chest. Prices are at cost for HEU members and include GST, with only $5.00 charged for shipping.

*Hands off* t-shirts: $17.00

*Hands off* sweaters: $44.00

Denim shirts: $49.00

Soon to be available – fleece jackets (long-sleeved and short sleeved) will be black with HEU/CUPE logo.

Contact the HEU boutique at 604-456-7130 to order.

**Hard-won contract signed in January**

Fifty HEU members at South Granville Park Lodge, a private, for-profit long-term care home in Vancouver, ratified their first collective agreement on February 15, 2002.

This was originally a poly-party certification with UCLW, but just in September the parties came to an agreement to create two separate bargaining units.

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**AFTER THE SHIFT**

**DALE FULLER**

Being able to help people improve their lives and working situation is not something that **EILENE GAN** intends to give up very easily.

**PERSONAL BEST**

Eileene Gan deeply regrets that one of the many casualties of Gordon Campbell's slash-and-burn style of governing will be the Basic Education and Skill Training (BEST) program sponsored by the Healthcare Labour Adjustment Agency. But she is not about to give up on a program that has helped so many people, including herself.

This program was set up to give health care workers the skills they need to continue with their education, skills and training and to reenter the workforce if they had lost their jobs due to health care restructuring. Many of them had been out of school for many years and BEST served as an important stepping-stone for them.

Gan is the coordinator and a tutor for BEST with HEU members at Children's and Women's Hospital in Vancouver – on a leave of absence to study for certification as a unit clerk. She can attest to its value both for employee and employer.

The program takes people who lack some of the basic literacy skills, for one reason or another. Often people have not had the opportunity to further their education because of work or family commitments. Sometimes immigrants may have a high level of education, but don't have reading and writing skills in English.

"The BEST curriculum is determined by the participants themselves, they set their own goals," says Gan. "They read stories and lessons about the jobs they and others do, so the vocabulary is something they are exposed to on a daily basis."

Gan first became involved with BEST in 1999 as a student. "I was working towards an accommodation after an injury, and it was suggested to me that I try this program to help me upgrade my skills. So I did," she says. Not long afterward, the coordinator retired and she took over, and added tutoring to her duties.

Now, she says, people stop her in the hallway with thanks for encouraging them to participate in BEST, and many of them have gone on to become activists in the local.

She laments the fact this valuable program is losing its source of funding, with HLAA closing its doors within the next year. "Programs like BEST are essential if we want to continue to educate our members and to empower them to make informed decisions. The course that is just about to wrap up (in April) will be the last HLAA-funded BEST course at Children's and Women's," says Gan. "But our local is kicking around some ideas to start something similar up on our own."

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**S P R I N G • G U A R D I A N 2 0 0 2**
American health care system costars as villain in John Q

A mother and father huddle together in a hospital boardroom. A vast expanse of metallic table separates them from a cardiac surgeon and a hospital administrator who are telling them that they should take their son home and make him as comfortable as possible, because he is going to die. The room will die, they say, in just the way the Liberals imagine.

The drama unfolds as the situation becomes desperate. John Q's promises to somehow pay in the future fail to comfort his friends or family. No money, no operation — sorry.

This is an American movie about an American problem — but Canadians should take note.

John Quincy Archibald and his wife are working-class residents of a town somewhere near Chicago. She is a clerk in a grocery store; he works in a steam-generator manufacturing plant. Recently his hours were cut back to 20 hours a week. They are struggling, but he expects to start working full-time again soon.

What he doesn't know is that his company has changed its health insurance carrier to a health management organization (HMO) and that as a part-time employee he only has the aforementioned $20,000 coverage. In the U.S. this doesn't buy you very much hospital care.

After his nine-year-old son suffers heart failure at a baseball game, the situation rapidly deteriorates. The couple rushes their son to the nearest hospital. The rude awakening comes in the hospital boardroom. The dramas unfold as the situation becomes desperate.

John Q has come under criticism for being preachy about the state of health care in the U.S. And it certainly does get that message out. But it seems Americans want to listen to that message, because they are going to see the movie in droves.

It has also been knocked for its cookie-cutter characters. But it is a story about an "everyman" — after all, what does John Q mean but John Q Public? And the other characters also represent different facets of American society.

Perhaps in the future people will look at this film and see a morality play about early 21st century American society and their strange custom of denying health and well-being to such a large segment of their own citizenry.
Happy in new home
Maggie Wayne retired from her position at MSA General Hospital in March 2001, after being on LTD for nearly eight years. She started at the facility in 1974 in the dietary department. 
She was an active HEU member, working to keep other members informed about contract changes and important political concerns-always ready to fight an injustice.
She held positions in her local, serving as ward-conductor, vice chair and chairperson. And she has many fond memories of helping out her sisters and brothers as a shop steward.
She also served on the Provincial Executive from 1984-1996 and with the New Westminster and District Labour Council.
Politically involved, she lent her organizing skills to the local NDP and worked on several campaigns.
She was also a fun person to work with says Terry Lukach, MSA chairperson. "We look back on many food memories and sometimes a bigger laugh than others," she writes.
Besides working as a dietary aide, she also was a housekeeping aide, operating room aide and a laundry worker.
Although she has been off LTD for such a long time, her co-workers say she misses her and wish her a very happy retirement. She's filling up her time with decorating her new home in Mission, gardening and of course, grandchildren. She'd love to hear from her union sisters and brothers.

Thanks to his union
Frank Verlo or, of the White Rock local, writes in saying that he is retiring after being a proud HEU member for 28 years. He had HEU for all the work, negotiating and efforts made on my behalf during any years of employment at Peace Arch Hospital.
"I wish the union all the success, courage and strength in representing our members, especially in these difficult times," he concluded. Verlo retired on Feb. 14, 2002.

She'll not look for things to do
Norma Watt retired from her position of care aide at Richmond Lions Manor on Dec. 31, 2001.
She first started working there in September 1987. She's been active in her union, as shop steward, trustee and chairperson. She extended her activism to serving as an alternate on the CHMS committee and attending many Labour Adjustment Committee meetings.
As a matter of fact, she was active during almost the entire 141 years she was at RLM. The current executive says they are going to miss her input very much.
Her future plans include spending more time with her husband and family, traveling in her RV to visit her 20 grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren, bowling and golf. And she will pop into RLM as a casual visitor in awhile.

New secretary for organizing
In January, HEU's organizing department gained a new secretary.
Maureen Chand has worked at HEU since December 1999 as a casual in servicing, education and finance.
Immediately before moving to HEU, she was an admitting clerk at St. Vincent's Hospital/ Heather Street site.
She graduated from Vancouver Community College's unit clerk program in 1994.
Right now she says she wants to expand her knowledge and apply what she already knows to make a valuable contribution to HEU. She's interested in web design and has taken some courses along that line.
She will start working as a volunteer at WAVW (Women Against Violence Against Women) on their crisis line when she finishes her training with them.

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