On April 23, health workers blocked the entrance to the meeting room where the Liberals' massive cuts to health care were about to be announced.

Almost every day Gordon Campbell's "new era" brings another attack against working people. But rather than retreating in defeat, British Columbians are finding allies, forming coalitions and fighting back.

After months of speculation, the Liberals' axe has finally fallen on health care in British Columbia. The day after Campbell held one of his "open cabinet" meetings, the heads bunched of all the newly constituted health authorities gathered in the heart of corporate Vancouver and made their pronouncements about closures and job losses. Back in the regions, some employers were threatening employees, telling them not to speak out in public.

It's a time like this that solidarity is very important. At the Wall Centre on April 23, a group of health care workers tried to break the corporate barrier and enter the room where for almost five hours the health authority bosses held forth.

In the following month, as hospitals closed in towns like Kimberley and Summerland, communities protested by holding rallies, marches and candlelight vigils. In Vancouver, HEU members from around the province staged an overnight sit-down at Women's and Children's Hospital in solidarity with the sisters and brothers who would be losing their jobs. And against the selling off of their jobs to private-for-profit contractors. Then they joined the National Save Medicare Day rally where a seniors' theatre group took on the role of the salvationists of Medicare.

And in Revelstoke, a whole town came to the defense of seniors who were given 30 days to find "somewhere else" to live. They won a reprieve that they intend to make permanent.

As the Labour Code, Employment Standards and workers' safety standards are gutted by this dictatorial government, British Columbians are going to find more power in solidarity, not less.

On May 26, after an overnight sit-in at Children's and Women's Hospital, these HEU members from across B.C. joined the National Save Medicare Day rally in downtown Vancouver.
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Anti-choicer loses contract at abortion-performing hospital

Hospital admits mistake, says patient and worker safety paramount

EU and pro-choice activists were claiming victory after the cancellation of a housekeeping contract at Children’s and Women’s Hospital with a company owned by a notorious anti-abortion kingpin.

A & A Service Company, co-owned by Cecilia von Dohn, well-known anti-choice crusader, won the contract to clean the new ambulatory care centre at Women's and Children's. She is notorious for her regular protests outside abortion clinics, even going so far as to buy a house next door to the Everywoman's Clinic in Vancouver.

"This is a chilling example of how in its rush to dismantle and sell off our health care system, this government is putting at risk the health and safety of patients and health care workers who provide abortion services," said HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt. "Clearly, the Campbell Liberals and their health authorities don't know what they're doing," says Allnutt. "Two weeks ago, we witnessed evidence of collusion and a conspiracy by private contractors to blackmail union members in the privatization process. "Now, in their efforts to contain the damage from this scandal, health bosses have blindly staggered into yet another disaster." Health Services Minister Colin Hansen said he's concerned. "There could have been more diligence." But Allnutt says the public would be shocked to learn that the government’s own health care employer organization is advising its members not too closely scrutinize potential private contractors' employees in order to avoid health union challenges to contracting out. "This is the obvious result of that instruction." Allnutt says.

HEU concede they did not know that von Dohn was co-owner of A & A.

"The hospital has reviewed the contract and terminated it with 90 days notice. In the meantime, extra security to monitor the cleaning staff has been added.

In addition to a moratorium, HEU called for an independent investigation into the impacts of privatization and contracting out in health care. An April 9 – 16 McIntyre & Mantei/HEU poll released late last month indicated that 72 per cent of British Columbians would support such a call.

Stop cuts, say thousands

More than 40,000 joined a march and rally in Vancouver on May 25 to protest against the Liberal policies.

"Since he became premier, seniors, women, children, teachers, health care providers, students and workers have all felt the blow of his axe," says HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt. "This steamroller just has to be stopped. It can't go on like this."

There were other rallies across B.C., but many travelled to Vancouver.

Jim Sinclair, president of the B.C. Federation of Labour, which organized the rally, said people have to have a place to voice their dissent.

"I can't believe the government has done this to my province," said Sinclair.

"This government has lost its moral compass. It has cut its way to the bottom in terms of quality of life for our province."
Fighting back works

On April 22, at their farcical "open cabinet" meetings, Campbell's Liberal government laid the groundwork for the next day's announcements by the health authority head honcho. That was when British Columbians learned that instead of 5,000 new long-term care beds — one of the "new era" promises — many senior citizens would be cold-heartedly turfed out of their residences.

The government assured British Columbians that no one would be forced out of their residence before there was somewhere else to go. Consultation with family and the community was also promised. But it quickly became evident that once again the government's word could not be trusted.

Within hours after the health authorities' press conference in Vancouver, 169 residents of Mobley Manor in Revelstoke and their families found out that within 30 days their home would be closed. Think of that, with no consultation, no prior indication even, these elderly residents learned that they had to leave home.

This was done with a lack of respect that bordered on the obscene. Anyone who works with the elderly in health care knows such a traumatic move can be deadly for the frail elderly. HEU members at Mobley Manor decided to fight back. Rather than just accepting this devastating edict from on high, the community, the families and the Mobley Manor staff organized to stop the government's plans in its tracks.

Four hundred people rallied on the Saturday following the health authorities' pronouncements. Civil disobedience was the only option some saw to protect the elderly residents. The call to physically bar the management from moving residents came after a failed effort to move a resident against her wishes. The media was alerted through the entire process. The government's cruelty and stupidity was exposed.

The government was forced to back down. The first closure of a long-term care facility in B.C. was stopped. The layoff notices to HEU members were revoked. And the Interior Health Authority agreed to do what it should have done in the first place — consult over the coming months about the best way to provide care.

The victory at Mobley Manor sends us a clear message: fighting back works.

Blacklisted or what?

When the staff of Mobley Park Manor were given their layoff notices they were told there would not be a place for them at Queen Victoria Hospital except for the interdenial time or at other locations in Revelstoke. We are a different bargaining group so we all realize we cannot bump QVH staff out of their jobs — nor do we want to. We are a very qualified group of health care professionals and we feel we have as much right to apply as anyone else to work at QVH if they need new staff.

We realize that by standing up to the Interior Health Authority for the rights of our residents, we have put our future jobs in jeopardy, but everyone must follow their own moral code.

Then we hear on TV that the government is cutting deals with companies that want to blacklist anyone who is an HEU member. Union busting is one thing, but to punish someone because they have ever belonged to a union is monstrous.

To assist with our staff layoff, the Interior Health Authority committed to supply career counselling for the staff. While we were trying to find out who, when and where of this, staff members received a memo with the following quote from Mr. Mike Jackson, Human Resources, Salmon Arm. "The session is for employees who have lost regular employment and have no option for re-employment." We cannot believe the ignorance of this statement. It shows the continuing total lack of respect for quality employees who work at Mobley. On one hand they give career counselling for us as part of layoff, but on the other hand they have (in their great wisdom) deemed us unemployable.

Staff have basically run the day-to-day operations of Mobley Manor since the health authorities took over four years ago. "Kick you when you're down" must be the new motto. I'm disgusted.

MAWLA MANSON
Mobley Park Manor Local

I don't deserve this, Mr. Campbell

This week, according to the Liberal agenda, a despicable, overpaid hospital cleaner who takes no health risks and is therefore unworthy of earning a decent wage, was poached by a needle, drawing blood. Upon careful removal and following strict procedure of changing a sharps container, I was pricked by a hidden but protruding needle, which was discarded in a careless way.

Gordon Campbell and Colin Hansen are comparing our duties and health risks to those of hotel workers. They are deliberately desensitising housekeeping roles as only "support services in need of cutbacks." They don't have their facts straight. Now, while I and thousands of others face imminent wage rollback, privatisation and layoffs by BIL, 23/2 "Chosen contract breakings", I worry about blood tests results (HIV, hepatitis, etc.). I wonder what my future holds and will I be looked after efficiently?

Was doing my underrated job really worth this?

BARRIE NELSON
Pacem Arch Local

In solidarity

• This letter was addressed to HEU president Rod Austin. As you are probably aware, on Monday, May 4, picket lines were set up at various hospitals in the Lower Mainland by concerned citizens who are alarmed by the Campbell government's attacks on our health care system. These picket lines were honoured by many health care union members.

I found myself in the distinctly unpleasant situation having to cross the picket line at Vancouver General Hospital as I work in the UI, which is generally recognized as a genuinely essential service.

But, even though I had no choice but to report to work, this was the first time I have found myself at work during a picketing situation, and I did not like it one bit. It's particularly difficult continuing to receive pay from the employer when others who do not cross the line are being deprived of income and possibly exposing themselves to reprisals from hospital administration.

As a result, I have decided to donate the pay I received during the three hours the picket line was up. I am enclosing a cheque for $57.26 payable to HEU. Please use it as a contribution to your strike fund, or in financing your campaign to preserve Medicare. I will consider it money well spent.

Only wish I had been able to stay out on the line with those other people from the community who were present that day.

WILL OFFLEY
RCWI HEU Steward
Learn from Alberta, says expert

The Campbell Liberals have borrowed a page out of Ralph Klein's playbook with their plans to throw care for seniors into upheaval by substituting assisted living in place of long-term care beds.

And based on the results in Alberta, B.C. seniors and their families should be deeply concerned about what's in store, says Edmonton-based consumer advocate Wendy Armstrong.

Hired by HEU to provide an analysis of the Klein approach, Armstrong warns that the move to substitute assisted living in Alberta has "resulted in significant offloading of the burden of care and costs to individual recipients and their families."

She also says that the massive reduction of almost 8,000 long-term care beds in Alberta meant that "desperate families — not just the rich — were forced to pay $2,000 to $5,000 a month for private care because there was no alternative."

Liberals mistreating seniors

hat the Liberals' commitment to build 5,000 new not-for-profit long-term care beds had become just another broken election promise became painfully obvious when B.C. health authorities presented their three-year plans in late April. Not long after the election they dropped the reference to "not-for-profit" and by fall 2001 were talking about 1,500 long-term care beds and 3,500 "assisted living" units.

Now the health authorities' "new design" includes not only new long-term care beds — with the sole exception of a facility in Vanderhoof — the plan is to actually reduce the number of long-term care beds by 3,111 over the next three years.

And the 3,800 new assisted living units will not be backed up with much of a change in the level of home nursing and home support services available — presumably the "assistance" component of assisted living.

HEU researcher Marcy Cohen says, "There are serious implications not only for frail seniors and their families but for anyone trying to access health care services in this province. A shortfall in long-term care beds will intensify the pressure on other parts of the health care system."

In 1999 the Ministry of Health forewove a need for almost 4,500 additional long-term care beds by 2001/2002 to meet the needs of a growing and aging population. Little construction has led to a shortage of almost 5,000 long-term care beds, and predictions of a marked increase in the senior population have proven true.

Now the government has introduced new rules to qualify for ever-more-limited beds. Only those with "complex" care needs will be eligible for residential care. Others can go into assisted living, stay home, or go into private residential care homes, they say.

Health care workers know that assisted living is a positive model for seniors — but only for those with limited care needs. It is not an effective substitute for residential long-term care. And assisted living is unaffordable for many.

The push will be in the direction of private care — both in residential long-term care and assisted living — when the province's needs to care and house seniors are not met by the public system.

“Liberals” “assisted living” “unaffordable”

for many

Safety agency safe — for now

At its board meeting on April 9, the government's Occupational Health and Safety Board announced there were no current plans to cut the agency's funding or subject it to the government's downsizing review process.

The agency's March newsletter states that since its inception it has implemented or advised on 108 different projects across the province addressing a broad scope of occupational health and safety concerns.

"The creation of this important agency was a proud moment in HEU's history," says HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allmatt. "I am happy to see that it is not charted for cuts, at least not yet. I hope this government realizes what a valuable tool it is for workers and management alike."

Since September 2001, 148 members of the HEU/OHSAS Joint Committee have received OSHA training.

1952 Robeson concert commemorated

Fifty years ago the great American singer, actor and political activist Paul Robeson was invited to sing at the 1952 Mine Mill Conference in Vancouver. When his government would not allow him to leave his country, Robeson stood on the back of a flatbed truck and sang songs of defiance and solidarity to 40,000 people at Peace Arch Park, which straddles the U.S.-Canada border.

On Saturday, May 18 about 2,000 Canadians and Americans remembered that concert at the very same park — remembered with music and the spoken word.
Tapes reveal plans to freeze out HEU health care workers
Unions react quickly, file complaint with LRB

The Hospital Employees’ Union has joined other B.C. health unions in filing an unfair labour practices complaint against the provincial government, health authorities and the corporations implicated in recorded conversations that exposed plans for deep wage cuts, mass firings of health care workers and a conspiracy to exclude HEU members from contracted out health jobs.

The B.C. Federation of Labour shocked British Columbians on May 3 with revelations contained in recorded telephone conversations between B.C. Government and Services Employees’ Union staff and officials representing corporations bidding for contacts for hospital support services. A regional boss of multinational corporation Sodexo Inc. and a rep of an unnamed corporation attempted to cut deals with BCGEU, deals that included blacklisting HEU members. BCGEU handed the tapes over to the B.C. Fed, who then made them public.

“It appears the Campbell Liberals have led health authorities and multinational corporations to believe they have a green light to blacklist thousands of front-line health care workers and turn our hospitals into low-wage ghettos,” says HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnut.

In light of such damning evidence, the unions immediately appealed to Premier Gordon Campbell to cancel all ongoing and recently completed tenders for privatized support services in public health care facilities.

Then the unions asked the Labour Relations Board to put the brakes on health privatization schemes pending a hearing into their complaint during which they intend to subpoena witnesses from corporations like Sodexo and top executives from B.C.’s health authorities.

“There appears to us to be a foul conspiracy between multinational corporations, health authorities and our government to fire and freeze out long-term, experienced health care workers, most of whom are women,” said BCGEU president George Heyman. “Their overriding goal is corporate profit. Our goal is quality patient care and fair treatment for workers. There will be no labour peace in B.C. while workers are threatened with removal of their basic rights.”

“It’s also clear from the tapes that the tendering process by which health authorities are carrying out Victoria’s privatization agenda may have been seriously compromised,” Allnut added and called on the Auditor General to investigate. The most disturbing evidence comes from a taped May 1 conversation involving Spencer Green, the regional boss for French multinational Sodexo. Green claims that:

• top Sodexo officials had lunch May 1 with a health care CEO;
• top Children’s and Women’s Hospital executive with responsibility for the tendering process for janitorial services is a “personal friend” of Green’s; and
• Sodexo and hospital officials would use “pilot projects” to gain an inside track to expand into hospital-wide contracts without first going through another tender.

At a special booth, people told their stories of this man who was revered in so many countries. He was a man of gigantic size and principle, and he paid dearly for his beliefs. But he inspired millions and today he is still remembered with great affection. Labour and gospel choirs, actors, singers and trade unionists were among those raising their voices to celebrate Robeson’s commitment to social justice.

Meeting casts doubt on Campbell’s political savvy

Gordon Campbell was on the defensive after an HEU investigation shed light on implications of a meeting between the premier and a certain Richard L. Scott in New York City in early February.

Scott is the disgraced former CEO for the giant American hospital corporation Columbia/HCA and has been at the heart of a sweeping U.S. government investigation since 1997 focusing on fraudulent company practices for billing various government programs. While only partially complete, it has already resulted in the largest fraud settlement in U.S. history, US $840 million plus US $39 million in interest.

The revelations cast significant doubt on Campbell’s political acumen. But they also raise serious questions about what’s in store for B.C.’s public health care system. Campbell sent an apologetic follow-up letter saying Scott’s track record provides “an invaluable resource for government leaders, like myself, who are the need to reform and rebuild health care.” Then he invited Scott to visit B.C. to meet with his government.

Campbell withdrew the offer to Scott when questions were raised in his inner circle after HEU submitted a Freedom of Information request later in February. Meanwhile, Scott may still face the prospect of criminal charges.

Government backs down from impossible demand

Negotiations between the Victoria Association for Community Living and its HEU caregivers were temporarily suspended when a crisis developed around the Liberal government’s insistence that VACL had to trim $600,000 from their budget or else be shut down.

Six hundred thousand dollars was the amount the government claimed to be VACL’s portion of the Ministry of Children and Family Development’s deficit. The agency said we have no continued on page 6
Abbotsford private hospital could be more costly – Parks

HEU is saying build it public, build it now

privately owned and financed hospital for Abbotsford could be a much more costly alternative than a traditionally publicly owned and financed facility, forensic accountant Ron Parks concluded in his review of a controversial $250,000 government health care privatization study.

Commissioned by HEU, Parks' review also warned that the privatization study prepared for Victoria by consulting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers relies on "suspect data," is inconclusive and "should not be used as the basis for a definitive government decision" on how to proceed with the project to replace Abbotsford's aging MSA hospital.

"If Victoria wants to pursue a private-public partnership (P3) policy for health care or public infrastructure projects," says Parks, "it definitely has a lot more homework to do."

HEU is urging the Campbell Liberal government to heed the findings and move quickly to meet the health care needs of Fraser Valley residents. "Our message to the Premier is very clear," says union spokesperson Chris Allnutt. "The hospital should be built public and it should be built now."

In his review of the financial comparisons between a P3 private hospital and a traditionally publicly financed and owned facility, Parks confirmed the small costs savings projected by PWG (about $2.6 million dollars on a $500 million plus project – less than one per cent over 30 years). But, said Parks, that may be the very best possible outcome. He noted in an arms-length offer to provide independent and unbiased analysis.

May 15 – a call to care

Communities across B.C. joined the call to save Canada's universal health care system on May 15, National Medicare Day.

The theme of the day – A Call to Care – reflected a growing awareness that the spread of for-profit health care threatens patients and will destroy Medicare.

In Vancouver, 500 people gathered for a public meeting at the Seniors' Centre before joining others at Cathedral Park next door to listen to speakers at a Medicare rally and enjoy some seniors' street theatre.

In Victoria, they wrapped up the legislature with a red "Save Medicare" ribbon. In Nelson, people walked to the Columbia Theatre, after a noon-hour rally, then held a Town Hall meeting to support Kootenay Lake Regional Hospital in Castlegar, participants in yet another Town Hall meeting discussed health care and the closure of the town's hospital.

U.K. expert says P3s poor value

A British medical expert says private-public partnerships (P3s) are "poor value for money" that compromises the quality of care.

Speaking before a big crowd at a May 29 public meeting organized by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Dr. Matthew Durning said that privatization of public services is the number one issue in the U.K. that may seal the electoral fate of Labour PM Tony Blair.

The success of private corporations in winning government approval of P3 hospitals relies not on sound research, but on "spin, propaganda and distortion of the facts," said Durning.

He recounted research that shows P3 hospitals have resulted in shocking bed reductions of up to 35 per cent accompanied by equally high cuts in nursing staff.

Another element in the U.K. P3 model is privatization of support services to consortiums that own the private hospitals. He was also critical of government reliance on consultants like PricewaterhouseCoopers. Theirs is not an independent role he said.

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deficit, we've always balanced our own budget. No matter, meet this demand, or you're out of the picture, they were told.

But now the government has changed its tune. So for the 125 HEU members, it's back to the negotiating table.

VACCL was formed 47 years ago by a group of families to help support people with special needs and keep them out of institutions.

Its 500 disabled clients live in 10 houses or are part of six day programs. They benefit from programs like parents' support, supported employment, supported independent living and supported apartment living. HEU's certification at VACCL dates from the 1970s.

This has meant stability for the clients, workers and the employer.

HEU members occupy northern newspaper office

On May 16, several health care workers attending an HEU workshop in Prince George wanted to submit a letter to the editor of the Prince George Citizen.

The previous day the Active Voice Coalition had participated in a National Save Medicare Day rally by wrapping the Prince George Regional Hospital in a symbolic red ribbon. In a report about the event, the newspaper printed a disparaging comment made by MLA Pat Bell.

The HEU members wrote a letter to the editor about the MLA's remarks and went to the Citizen office to personally deliver it. When they were told the editor was unavailable, they staged a sit-in for one hour. Many stories later, a reporter took the letter to be printed at a later date.

Candlelight vigil for Summerland Hospital

To protest the Liberal government's closure of the 101-year-old Summerland Hospital, area residents and health care workers staged a candlelight vigil and then bunkered down for a "sleep-over" in front of the hospital.

They stayed until the next afternoon when the facility was officially closed.
Bill '29's not legal

HEU and other health care unions launch a wave of legal suits against Liberal government

As part of the fight to protect health care services for British Columbians and jobs for health workers, health care unions launched a series of court challenges to Gordon Campbell's government's Bill '29. The unions say the contract-breaking bill violates the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and is unconstitutional. They want B.C.'s Supreme Court to nullify the legislation, reinstating the negotiated contract provisions that Bill '29 unilaterally eliminated. It would also strike down the Campbell Liberal's radical health restructuring plans that include facility closures, deep service cuts and the largest privatization scheme in Canadian history. Bill '29 has two distinct sections applying to health care and community social services, so the unions launched two separate challenges. Health care bargaining associations representing health care workers launched the first challenge on March 19. Two months later, on May 26, four unions representing community social services workers started the second Charter challenge against Bill '29. On another front, the Labour Relations Board has agreed to an expedited process into the unfair complaint. HEU lawyers will subpoena top corporate executives from the likes of Sodexo along with top health authority bosses for the hearing, which is expected to start in early June. The unfair labour practices complaint came on the heels of the release of legally taped conversations with corporate representatives that suggest the government's health privatization plans include blackmailing thousands of HEU members from future jobs. The jobs that are up for grabs are HEU jobs that have been eliminated and offered to private companies to bid on. And in many cases health care workers are being deprived of earning a living without the proper notice. This prompted an HEU complaint with the LRB that B.C. health authorities violated the Labour Code when they failed to give the required notice of their intention to embark on wholesale layoffs and elimination of services. Section 54 of the code holds that employers must give at least 60 days notice before finalizing any change that affects the "terms, conditions or security of employment" of large numbers of employees. "The employer must give notice the moment it is reasonably certain that it will proceed with wholesale changes affecting significant numbers of employees," says HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt. "A number of leaked documents made public by HEU clearly show the government and health employers were 'reasonably certain' that they would proceed with massive cuts much earlier in the year. But they failed to meet their legal obligation to provide required notice at that time." Bill '29 slashed bumping and seniority rights built up over many years of faithful service for many HEU members who are losing their jobs. That's the reason HEU is seeking to have the health authorities in each region declare the employer. If successful, seniority will be regional, not just specific to the facility where one works. This also means that certifications within regions would be consolidated.

Health care workers are being deprived of earning a living

Pharmacare saves money, research shows

A group of Harvard researchers found that for at least one commonly used medication, Pharmacare's reference-based pricing system saves a lot of money. And is harmless to patients. Reference-based pricing of prescription drugs began under the NDP government in 1997, and the research was conducted using data from its first year of operation on a drug called antihypertensive-enzyme inhibitors which is used to treat high blood pressure. In the study, published in March 2002 in the Canadian Medical Association Journal, lead author Dr. Sebastian Schneeweiss and his colleagues analyzed what happened when the government capped payments for these ACE inhibitors. In the program the government agrees to pay $27 per patient per month for the ACE inhibitors. Patients can then choose to use a pricier alternative, but pay the difference themselves. The research showed that reference-based pricing saved six million dollars for that drug alone in the first year of the program. "It definitely was a success," said Schneeweiss in the report for the journal.
Privateer watch

Here are only some of the private, for-profit companies that may be answering the Liberal call to privatize B.C. health care:

Sodexo
One of the largest three corporations in North America offering "outsourced" support services — including food, housekeeping and laundry services — to public institutions. And as the B.C. Federation of Labour exposed in May, Sodexo to freeze HEU members out of any contracts it wins in B.C.

Armark
This Philadelphia-based company ranks as the world's third largest food service company. It also does business in facility maintenance and uniform rentals.

Compass
Another of the Big Three food services corporations.

Baxter
An international corporation providing renal dialysis services already seen roaming the halls of Royal Columbian's renal dialysis unit.

 Fresenius Medical Care
This German renal supplies/services company took over National Medical Care. The Ontario government had to back out of a public/private partnership with NMCA when it became known that it was under criminal investigation by the FBI for fraudulent billing to Medicare and for selling defective products.

Peladon Security
Vision Security and Investigations Inc.
Formerly Wespec Security
Keeler Laundry Ltd.
Echo Technology
This company already provides laundry services at Surrey Memorial Hospital.

Uplift (Laundry)
Canadian Linen

A little over a year ago, many British Columbians voted for the Liberal candidate in their riding after listening to their promises and those made by their leader, Gordon Campbell.

Some may even have read the Liberal New Era document.

HEU members read about Campbell's commitment to protect their jobs and the health care system in the pages of this very publication.

No mandate for sweeping change

In the intervening year, the Campbell government has embarked on a program that could see widespread privatization of many areas of the public service. Health care especially is on the auction block.

Privateers have been given the green light to invite B.C.'s public health care system. Much of the talks that have been going on have been behind closed doors and have only come to light through HEU and other unions' Freedom of Information searches, or by cut-and-put leaks.

"While the Liberals won an overwhelming majority of the seats in the legislature," says HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allinnett, "they only won 45 per cent of the popular vote.

"Those who did not vote for Campbell — and those who are sorry they did — do not have a voice in the legislature right now. And the social infrastructure of the province is being fundamentally changed without the say-so of the people."

Health care is one area that has been particularly hard-hit. Hospitals are closing, seniors are being chased from their beds, and health workers are losing their jobs. In some communities that means a large segment of wage-earners are having their livelihoods terminated. In larger urban settings, the loss of these workers will have a major impact on the delivery of health care in their communities.

All British Columbians are affected by these cuts, not just health care workers. People are beginning to hurt, and it will only get worse unless the government begins to listen.

On the ground

"Seniors, students, families, health care workers, forestry workers, public sector workers, the disabled, the poor; young workers in the service industry — for all of these people the avenues of dissent are narrowing," says Allinnett.

Many have tried talking to their MLAs — to no avail. They are met with locked doors or nervous assistants that let them in two or three at a time.

That's why we are seeing more demonstrations, rallies, candlelight vigils, town hall meetings.

"Gordon Campbell's Liberals are wreaking havoc and sending people out into the Streets because that

WE OBJECT!

HEU's no-holds-barred fight-back campaign

We're in the forefront of the struggle against the Campbell government. On the ground, across the province in communities like Revelstoke, Duncan, Chilliwack, Sechelt, and Port Alberni. HEU members are working with coalition partners to organize rallies, demonstrations, political protests and occupations.

Strike vote

We're undertaking the largest membership vote process of any B.C. union to approve a comprehensive fight back strategy. Two-thirds finished, already close to 15,000 members have voted.

Support for taking all necessary action to fight Campbell's reckless agenda is running at 90 per cent.

Legal counterattack

To defend members and the health care system, HEU has launched an aggressive legal fight back against the Campbell government in the courts and before the Labour Relations Board.

Exposés and PR

Our ongoing investigations and exposés into the corruption involved in contracting out and
Taking action: defiance in Duncan

Community activities in Duncan and Chemainus signaled their anger with the policies of the Campbell government on May 30, setting up picket lines at more than 18 workplaces — including hospitals and long-term care facilities — in the two Vancouver Island towns as part of a community-wide "day of defiance" protest in the riding of labour minister Graham Bruce.

"The provincial government is bent on a course that will guarantee poverty and run for all working people," said Duncan community coalition spokesperson Eden Haythorne-Wells. "We cannot lie down and let the Liberals turn back the clock and demolish the advances working people have sacrificed so much to win.

In a move that was a resounding success and could be a catalyst for action in other communities hurt by Campbell's reckless agenda, picket lines went up around Cowichan and District Hospital first thing in the morning. It was strongly supported by both HEU and BCNU members. That kicked off a wave of protest activity as lines were set up at 15 more workplaces including high schools, ICBC, B.C. Hydro offices and government buildings, along with other health care facilities.

Mid-day as the lines came down, picketers rallied outside the office of MLA Bruce, who was leading Victoria's efforts to ram through three pieces of legislation attacking working people. HEU Secretary-business manager Chris Alquist alerted the protest organizers.

"While our union was not involved in the planning, we support the very courageous and well-organized actions by the community coalition.

"What we've seen today shows just how angry communities are about cuts to health care, education, and public services," he added.

"Clearly, today's events could unleash a strong and vocal protest force to counter a government that lies, tears up contracts, and runs roughshod over the basic needs of British Columbians."

Liberals "blink"
Moberley Manor to stay put — for now

After the Campbell Liberals announced the closure of Moberly Park Manor — giving the residents 30 days to pack their bags — family members, staff and the community waged a high profile campaign against the closures.

Now the residents of this Revelstoke facility can unpack their suitcases — at least for a few more months.

The Interior Health Authority informed the HEU in mid-May that the time frame for closing Moberly Manor has been extended to between six and 12 months. The IHCA also rescinded layoff notices for the front-line staff at the facility.

"The community of Revelstoke spoke out and the Campbell Liberals blinked," says HEU secretary-business manager Chris Alquist. "And they won't be the last community to win a reprieve for their long-term care facility.

"This government has failed to convince British Columbians that it has a credible plan to care for seniors," adds Alquist. "And communities like Revelstoke are refusing to stand by while this government shuffles seniors around like deck chairs on the Titanic."

Revelstoke shamed the government into rethinking a 30-day notice to Moberly Manor's elderly residents.

Gordon Campbell's New Era means hospitals are closing, seniors will be kicked out of their beds, health care workers are losing their jobs and our health care system is on the auction block.

Three stories

Cuts hurt real people

Alfred and Grace Potvin were happy at Parkholm Lodge in Chilliwack. After 86 years of marriage, they were living in private rooms across the hall from each other. But the Campbell government decided to close Parkholm and moved the couple to Heritage Village. There they only see each other with great difficulty as they were placed in different wings of the facility.

The couple's daughter says that the elderly do not relocate easily, and her parents are extremely concerned about the change.

In February, 75-year-old Bruce Partridge fell on the ice and broke his wrist. When the cast was removed six weeks later, he was sent for physiotherapy. He attended four times and conscientiously did the prescribed exercises. Then he couldn't afford it anymore.

The bill was for $160.00. "Prior to the Campbell cuts, this would have been paid for by MSP or my extended health insurance, both of which I pay for," he says.

Now he's developed carpal tunnel syndrome and will probably have to undergo surgery so he can continue his work as a writer. Partridge blames the government's cuts to health care.

As a result of an on-the-job injury, 48-year-old Roz Moorthy-Klaassen had her leg amputated. Attempts at finding her with prosthetic legs have proven extremely painful. She is receiving only $580 per month from WorkSafe Compensation, and must spend $100 of that on medicine. Now she faces the loss of her home, her dogs, and her ability to care for her terminally ill father.
WE OBJECT!
HELI'S NO-holds-barred fight-back campaign

We're in the front line of the struggle against the Campbell government, on the ground in communities around British Columbia. Whether it's Courtenay-Alberni, Prince George, Nanaimo or anywhere else, we're fighting back against the Liberal government and its policies that are hurting every member of our province.

We believe in the power of the people, and that's why we're calling on you to join us in this fight. Together we can make a difference. Let's stand up for what's right and make our voices heard.

Support us by donating to our campaign, or by volunteering your time and skills. Together we can fight back against the Liberal government and its policies.

Support us at ObjectBC.ca

Liberals “blinking” Moberly Manor to stay - put for now

After the Campbell Liberals announced the closure of Moberly Manor - giving the residents 30 days to pack their bags - health care workers and the community waged a high-profile campaign against the closures. Now the residents of the Renfrew Centre can unpack their things - at least for a few months.

The Liberals have promised to close the long-term care home’s 61-bed facility, which is home to 47 residents. The closure is expected to save the province $7.3 million a year.

But the Liberal government has now decided to stay the closure, at least for now. The announcement comes after a campaign by residents, family members and health care workers.

In a statement, the government said it was “considering” the future of the facility. It did not say whether the closure was definitely on hold.

Residents have been told they will be moved to another long-term care facility in the province, but the government has not yet announced which one.

“This is a welcome turn of events,” said Michelle Lum from the Renfrew Centre’s family council. “We’re grateful to everyone who helped make this happen.”

The decision comes after months of protests by residents, family members and health care workers who have been fighting to keep the facility open.

The Liberals had announced plans to close the facility in May, citing the need to save money and improve the quality of care.

But residents, family members and health care workers have been demanding the facility be kept open. They have held rallies, demonstrated outside the premier’s office, and written letters to the government.

The decision to keep the facility open is a victory for residents, family members and health care workers who have been fighting for months to keep the facility open.

The Liberal government has faced criticism for its handling of the closure announcement, with many people expressing concern about the lack of consultation and the short notice given to residents.

The government has said it will continue to look at other options for long-term care, including the possibility of closing other facilities.

However, the decision to keep the facility open is a positive step forward, and residents, family members and health care workers can breathe a sigh of relief.

This is a win for all those who have been fighting to keep the facility open, and it’s a reminder that when we stand together, we can make a difference.

Thank you to everyone who helped make this happen. Let’s keep fighting for a better future for all those who need care.
labour

No sale, says judge

Judge Arthur Gons of the Ontario Superior Court ruled on April 30 that the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers and CUPE were right when they said the Ontario government does not have the authority to sell its interest in Hydro One.

Shares were to go on sale in June in the biggest initial public offering in Canadian history. The sale was expected to raise $5 billion.

Neither CEP nor CUPE directly represents the workers at Hydro One, but Gons ruled unions have interests that go beyond "mere economic gains for workers."

Chocolate back on menu

On April 16, workers at Purdy's Chocolates ratified their collective agreement, giving them higher wages and better benefits.

Last year's decertification of the union was not a victory for the company in the end. Working class British Colombians stood by the Purdy's workers and went without the company's chocolates until a collective agreement was reached with their employees.

The new agreement runs until April 30, 2005.

Do it right – stop the contracting out

As the Guardian goes to print, the news has just come out that B.C. Children's and Women's Hospital has cancelled the controversial cleaning contract with A&K Service Co., a private company co-owned by outspoken anti-abortionist Cecilia von Dohn. No one could have dreamed of a fictional debate more spectacularly inert than the real-life story of the search for a private company to clean the new ambulatory care building at C&W. The contract was already mired in controversy after the B.C. Federation of Labour, the B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union and HEU exposed a plan by French multi-national Sodexo to blacklist laid HEU members from working in health care.

Transcripts and tapes recorded the Sodexo official indicating that the tendering process had been severely compromised. It was widely speculated that Sodexo was the lead candidate for the C&W contract but since the corporation was publicly tainted, a local company was chosen – A&K Service Co.

However, A&K Service Co. is co-owned by von Dohn. Von Dohn has a public history of harassing abortion providers, even buying a house next door to the Everywoman's Health Centre to have a staging ground for her activities.

Her company was cleaning right next door to Women's Hospital where services to women – including abortions – are provided. There was huge public outcry, including demands from women's groups for the contract's cancellation. They also joined HEU's call for a moratorium on the Campbell Liberals privatization plans.

On May 31, the hospital officials told the right thing and protected patients and care providers by cancelling the contract. Now they should utilize the hospital's existing HEU cleaners in the ambulatory care building; just the way they should have in the first place.

MARGI BLAMEY

Baristas on 'unstrike' at Starbucks

Instead of going on strike in frustration at their boss' foot-dragging bargaining strategy, about 140 mostly young workers at 11 Starbucks coffee shops in British Columbia, members of Canadian Auto Workers Local 3000, are 'unstriking.'

The union says that Starbucks is bent on busting the union in this round of bargaining.

National representative Jeff Keighley accuses the company of taking a fundamentally union-antagonistic position despite their marketing image of a "corporation with conscience."

On the contrary, Keighley says "they have totally rejected each and every one of our bargaining proposals aimed at achieving justice and dignity in the workplace and are demanding the effective elimination of all members' contractual right to a more secure future with hours of work maximized and scheduled with respect to seniority."

They have been dragging their feet in bargaining and continue to say a flat NO to each and every proposal we have put forward.

They are proposing the virtual elimination of any seniority affecting job security and scheduling of hours. Effectively, Starbucks wants to create a situation where the only difference between union and non-union stores is the payment of union dues."

So on April 22, these young coffee servers and one barista served 72-hour strike notice for the C&W Starbucks 'Unstrike for Justice and Dignity.'

This type of innovative action involves the union membership continuing to work while disregarding Starbucks' dress code and leafleting customers and the general public to solicit their support.

C&W is asking the public to continue to patronize only union Starbucks until a new and acceptable ratification is ratified by the membership.

The outstanding issues concern education leave, social justice, health and safety, human rights and harassment training, seniority, hours of work and shift assignments, interstore transfers, annual vacations, health and welfare benefits, paid sick leave, laundry allowances, dress code and a fair wage increase.

"Starbucks' position is not acceptable to our members and we don't think it will be acceptable to fainmented Canadians, many of whom are regular Starbucks customers," says Keighley.

HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allment says young people in this situation are very vulnerable, especially with the Labour Code and Employment Standards that have just been gutted. "Go have a cup of coffee at a unionized Starbucks, and let the baristas know you are behind them 100 per cent," he says.

Unionized Starbucks locations are at: 2551 E. Hastings; 1702 Robson; 811 Hornby; Royal Centre Mall, 1752 Commercial Drive; 1015 Demens; 3451 Kingway; 1095 Flower; 1641 Davie; 1395 Main at the Skytrain; 222-3645 Gossett Road, Westbank Shopping Centre, 3492 Cambie. This list is subject of an LRB appeal over C&W allegations of a Starbucks-inspired decertification.
Worker protections slashed
But HEU’s injured members shielded from cuts

The Campbell Liberals launched a new offensive to roll back fundamental basic rights and protections for working people at the end of May when they passed three pieces of legislation that target the labour code, injured workers and the basic laws that govern non-unionized workplaces.

“Again we have an authoritarian government using its huge majority to run through these draconian changes without any opportunity for public input or consultation,” says HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt. “These revisions are offensive – it’s an appalling abuse of democracy.”

The three labour bills target key protections like workers’ compensation, the labour code and employment standards laws setting basic terms of employment for unorganized workers. The Liberals here:
- cut WCB benefits to injured workers such that benefit payments are reduced from 75 per cent of gross pay tax-free to 50 per cent of net pay;
- dramatically scaled back pensions for injured workers upon retirement;
- ended safeguards against child labour;
- reduced incomes for non-unionized workers by eliminating existing over-time provisions and the eight-hour day standard that unions fought to win decades ago, and cut minimum shift payments from four hours to two; and
- radically revamped the labour code to give employers even more power to diminish “profit” and “productivity” at the core of the code, rather than fairness and justice for workers.

But fortunately, says Allnutt, a tough stand by HEU members against concessions in bargaining last year means that most injured health care workers on WCB will be protected against the benefit cuts. That’s because HEU fought hard against employer rollback demands and maintained injury on duty leave provisions which mean injured regular full and part time employees covered by the facility sector agreement will receive 100 per cent of their net pay.

However, the top up provisions don’t protect casuals, community health or community social services workers. They will have their benefit payments reduced.

The B.C. Federation of Labour says the changes amount to a 10 per cent cut in income for injured workers. Changes to WCB pensions will reduce retirement incomes by 20 per cent for injured workers who retire with a permanent disability.

President Jim Sinclair says that overall, the changes in WCB laws are a $300 million gift from the Liberals to their corporate friends.

Good night, Tommy!

Tommy Douglas, the father of Medicare, was fond of telling the story of a Saskatchewan farmer rushed to the hospital with appendicitis shortly after the introduction of public hospital insurance.

With a full emergency ward, he was taken to the maternity ward and curtained off from the expectant mothers. He heard the experienced mothers advising the first-timers to “be sure and ask for ‘twilight sleep’,” referring to the effects of a sedative then used to reduce labour pains.

The doctor who told him he’d be operated on the next day asked if he wanted anything.

“Yeah, Doc,” the farmer said, “I want some of that twilight sleep.”

“But that’s only for labour,” the doctor told him.

To which the exhausted patient replied, “There’s that damn Tommy Douglas for you! Everything for labour and nothing for us farmers!”

CCPA Monitor/ALM

voices>>

Why I will not work for this government

After 16 years with the B.C. Ministry of Labour, I recently resigned my position as a manager with the ministry’s Employment Standards Branch. The breach, through the Employment Standards Act, ensures minimum standards for all employees working under provincial jurisdiction.

The Act, by educating employers and convincing them to comply, created a level playing field for all.

We all expected substantial changes with the election of the B.C. Liberals. What was not clear was that they would fundamentally change the nature of our social contract. Seeing what was happening within my own ministry, out of the public eye, led to my decision to resign.

The government is changing the substance as well as the approach to enforcement of the Act. By the end of this year, more than half of the existing ESB offices will close.

Campbell’s Liberals have now introduced a first round of changes with more expected in the fall.

The changes are devastating to B.C.’s workforce, robbing workers of protections they have enjoyed for decades.

Minimum standards for hours of work, overtime and statutory holiday pay, protection from an employer’s insolvency, even knowing when one will go bankrupt are all drastically reduced or swept away with the changes.

The government is also moving away from an enforcement model of Employment Standards. Now employers will be expected to take on employers on their own. Many will simply walk away from such an intimidating experience.

And the ESB can refuse to investigate complaints if employers haven’t made this attempt at self-enforcement.

Industry associations will monitor the actions of their members. Uncaring employers will intimidate complaints, delay as long as possible and finally offer to settle for a portion of wages owing. For honest employers, the pressure will be enormous to join this frenzy or perish.

DAVE ABES - FORMERLY WITH EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

S U M M E R • G U A R D I A N  2 0 0 2
Chilliwack seniors are fighting mad
The Campbell Liberals’ cuts to seniors’ care had an immediate impact on the 85 seniors at Parkholm Lodge in Chilliwack. They learned their home was going to close by March 2003.

Two days after the government sprung seniors’ care facilities’ closures on the public, Parkholm managers and health authority representatives hurriedly called a meeting and tried to reassure residents and their families that everything would be just fine. They failed.

United in their opposition to the closure, the Parkholm folk have adopted the B.C. Seniors’ Networks’ “just say no” strategy, staged marches, lobbied their elected politicians and collected more than 1,000 signatures on a Save Parkholm petition which they turned over to MLA John Les to table in the legislature.

Supported by the HEU Chilliwack local, the Chilliwack Coalition of Concerned Citizens and the Cultus Lake chapter of the Old Age Pensioners’ Organization, the growing opposition to Parkholm’s closure isn’t going to go away any time soon.

Again seniors, health workers stand together
Health care workers from around Vancouver met at Queen Elizabeth Park for an early morning rally on May 6.

HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt joined representatives of seniors’ groups and health care workers at the rally as the group marched onenton the nearby St. Vincent’s Hospital in support of the fight of the residents and their caregivers to keep their seniors’ care facility open.

Included in health officials’ April 23 pronouncements was the news that they plan to shut down St. Vincent’s, home to 75 seniors in residential care.

Pink slips at Richmond’s Rosewood Manor
The link was barely dry on the regulations supporting Bill 29 when the management at Rosewood Manor laid off 20 HEU members working in laundry, housekeeping, dietary, building service and as activity aides at this seniors’ care facility in Richmond.

On March 15, HEU members from the facility and as other locals around the Lower Mainland, stood together and all the “pink-slip” workers handed in their notifications to the employer, saying that they would be resolving their bumping rights. HEU financial secretary Mary LaPlante was at the union’s table in support of the striking workers.

Many of the neighbourhood seniors use this 37-year-old centre like a living room. Often they don’t have that kind of space where they live,” she says.

Right now she’s working on a project called “Breaking the Silence,” which helps seniors look at domestic violence and its relationship to racism and poverty. Her other half-day job is working with the Seniors’ Summit.

“The Summit has done some very good work - a lot of research around housing, health, women, globalization, and this information is proving very useful to other organizations, like the Seniors’ Network BC and Women Elders in Action,” says Woodworth.

Very important to Woodworth is her work as chair of the Bridge Housing Society for Women, which one year ago completed a seven-storey residence for women of the Downtown Eastside.

Future plans include a run at a city council seat in November - giving the people she considers to be her constituents the political voice that they so badly need right now. Meanwhile, she joins others in her community at the Strathcona Community Gardens, part of the city’s Green Streets program.

Her work in the community was recognized this year with a nomination for the YWCA Women of Distinction award in the social action category.

...
demonstration and said, “Rosewood Manor manage-
ment has laid off all the ancil-
ary staff without giving any
thought to how the facility
would run without them. And
not only have they not con-
sidered how devastating this
is to the health workers and
their families, they’ve com-
pletely ignored the needs, com-
fort and care of the resi-
dents.”

Consideration of seniors in
the provincial residences can
facilities indeed seems to be
the last thing on the liberals’
minds – or agenda.

Protesters spent
night at C&W
An noon on May 14, 15
women health care workers
began an occupation of the
ambulatory care building at
B.C. Children’s and Women’s
Hospital to protest the
Campbell Libera’s extreme
health care agenda that puts
company profits ahead of
patient care and tams hospi-
tals into low-wage ghettos.

They were demanding an
Immediate moratorium on all
contracting out of health care
services pending indepen-
dent investigations into the
impacts of privatization and
evidence of corruption in the
tendering of these contracts.

A contract for the private
housekeeping at the new
building was mired in contro-
versy. It began when an offi-
cial with French multinational
Sodexo outlined in a taped
conversation that HEU mem-
bers would be blacklisted
and that wage rates for
Sodexo staff would be cut to
as low as the minimum wage
when this company won that
contract.

The controversy veered off
into even more turbulent
waters when the hospital
awarded the contract to A&B.

Services instead, owned by a
well-known anti-abortion cru-
sader (see page 3).

Libs pushing seniors
and disabled out
of G.F. Strong
Workers from G.F. Strong
Rehabilitation Centre took to
Oak Street at 3rd Avenue
on May 5 to stand up for the
people they care for – the
disabled and the elderly.

continued on page 14

 factfile

The U.S. Foundation for Taxpayer
and Consumer Rights recently
issued a comprehensive review
of the California energy crisis
that caused rolling blackouts

Using government and industry
data, the report shows that the
state’s electricity system did not fail according to
the laws of supply and demand, as has
been widely portrayed. Instead, the
California energy crisis was a
fraud orchestrated by a power industry freed
from price regulation – a hoax that will
cost every California $2,200.

The Victoria General is sponsoring
a terrific website, full of information.

They call it Voice of B.C. and say it
gives all British Columbians a place
where they can express their opinions
at open forums and polls. Website is
www.voiceofbc.ca home.

Shopping will be good at HBC – at its
2002 shareholders’ meeting on May 1, a
resolution calling on Hudson’s Bay
Company to put in place a process to
end alleged sweatshop abuses in its
supply chain was supported by more than
36 per cent of the voting shares. This
represents the largest vote in support of a
social resolution before a Canadian
company and a significant gain over
last year’s vote on a similar proposal
that received
approximately 15
per cent of the vote.

AFTER THE SHIFT  |  DALE FULLER

Victoria native DUNCAN SMITH may be one of the top bridge
players in B.C. history, but he just likes the people he meets,
from street people to judges

BRIDGE MASTER

IF YOU EVER HEAR THAT Duncan Smith is
cleaning up, it may not be referring to his job
as a housekeeper at Victoria General Hospital.

It might very well be about his winning yet
another bridge championship.

Between 1976, his first time he ever entered
a tournament, and this spring, when his team
won the provincial title, there have been many
championships.

Now Smith is one of the best bridge players
in British Columbia. According to brother Matt,
who directs bridge tournaments all over North America,
“Duncan has been Vancouver Island’s leading bridge
player for over 30 years and has consistently been
one of the top players in the province.”

The bridge bug bit Smith when he was still a kid.
He grew up in a household where bridge was an
important part of his parents’ life. Then came that
catastrophic day in 1963 when his parents took him along
to a tournament they were competing in.

Bridge, like golf, uses skills to serve the players
during games. Usually young. . . Someone
noticed that I was just hanging around with nothing
to do, so decided to make me useful,” says Smith.
“I spent a whole week doing that, listening to the talks,
just observing. I was hooked.”

So that tournament at the Empress Hotel in
Victoria was where he got his start.

“It had absorbed a lot at home before that,” he says.
“But I never was interested in being a part of it. It
was just something my parents and their friends
did.”

Bridge is a complicated game and it took him
many years to acquire the skills that have made him
a champion. But once he did he just couldn’t stop.
Aside from the years 1994 and 2001 when he didn’t
play, Smith has been winning championships. He’s
gone onto the national championships 16 times –
and won in 1992, representing Canada in the
internationals in 1993.

Bridge is a team sport, you can’t play it alone, says
Smith.

“The best part of bridge is the opportunity to
meet people. Bridge players come from all walks
of life. It’s really amazing – from street people
to supreme court justices. But at that table where
we’re judged on is our ability to play bridge.”

Smith and his teammates will be competing for
the national championship in June in Edmonton.

Smith says they’re considered the underdogs, but
he hopes they’ll win and go on to the international
competition in Montreal in August.
His films counteract media

Glen Sanford's social conscience surfaced at an early age. At 10 years old, when the threat of nuclear arms testing in Amarka, Alaska, caused outrage among British Columbians, Sanford and a school chum wrote up a protest petition, rode their bikes around their rural community and gathered signatures to send off to American president Richard Nixon.

That was just the beginning.

Before leaving for the mainland and beyond in 1979, Courtenay-born Sanford racked up four years of journalistic experience at the Comet and District Free Press while going to high school. Before returning to Vancouver Island 20 years later, Sanford honed his craft to emerge a seasoned journalist, researcher, political organizer, social activist and filmmaker.

Fast forward to April 2002. Sanford has just won the National Film Board of Canada's award for Best Emerging Canadian Filmmaker of a Non-Fiction Work at the Images Festival in Toronto. For USELESS, his unconventional documentary about Subhuman punk rocker turned direct action saboteur turned ex-con Gerry Hannah. In the film, Hannah and his mom reflect on punk, politics, prison and the nature of freedom.

The NFB nod is not Sanford's first film award, but it's a significant recognition complete with funding. A quick read of his filmography promises it won't be the last.

Much of Sanford's artistic work has explored complex social issues using his non-traditional, documentary style.

Clear Dying Vision (1985) examined how being an artist impacted the way one individual lived — and died — with AIDS. Breathe Life, a project-in-progress about quadriplegics who require ventilators to breathe, documents the setbacks, successes and ongoing struggles of the participants to live independent, productive lives. Both demonstrate his self-professed "deep dedication to the production of art and the documentation of compelling stories.

Sanford believes it's more difficult today to critically analyze information and that the media is partly responsible because mainstream news affects how we see the world. He hopes his productions provide a different perspective. "I want my films to provoke analysis in what we see going on around us," says Sanford. "I think we need to resist formulaic presentation of information as it exists around us, to challenge the way we think and the way we receive information."

But filmmaking isn't Sanford's only forte. A highly regarded political organizer, he has worked for several noteworthy New Democrats including former member of parliament Margaret Mitchell, party leader Audrey McLaughlin and current Vancouver East MP Libby Davies. He describes Davies' 1993 takeoff of the Vancouver estate constituency as "pretty monumental" but holds the ongoing experience of working with people with disabilities as "unbelievably inspirational."

Sanford has been in contract with the B.C. Coalition of People with Disabilities since 1999, concentrating on the fight for adequate house support services. He credits activities from the disability community, especially those from the Home Support Action Group in Victoria, for his increased awareness and education on a variety of concerns. "Lots of [socio-political] activism aren't really aware of health and independence issues if they don't have people with disabilities in their lives," Sanford says. "For a lot of the issues it really doesn't take putting your head into them."

Sanford believes that the many forms of cultural expression can take important yet marginalized issues and bring them forward in ways that will cause people to link the arts more readily to progressive social change. He thinks that's worthy of our support and participation. "In the same way that a lot of social and political activists don't have a connection to the disability community, they don't have a connection to the arts community," he says. Sanford wants to help make that connection.

USELESS is one of a selection of best films from the Vancouver Underground Film Festival to be shown in the city this summer at Best of the Fest.
Sad news from St. Paul’s

St. Paul’s activist Ed Chow passed away recently at the young age of 35. Active in his local since 1986 when he became a steward, he was a staff nurse in the hospital’s renal department. Chow was active in HEU’s Gay and Lesbian Standing Committee. A fellow worker, John Kwan said Chow was generous to a fault. “And he loved to shop. He would scour the newspaper every week for deals.” His union sisters and brothers are saddened at his death and will miss his giving spirit.

Relaxing’s on the agenda

Rina Sandri retired from her job in the housekeeping/hygiene department at Camberland Health Centre after nearly 23 years on the job. The staff misses her always-ready smile. Right now she’s enjoying her grandchild, her family and playing cards with her friends.

Two Shorncliffe retirements

Gossa Reid is a charter member (since October 1983) of the Shorncliffe local, and now she’s retiring from her job as a cook. She’s served her local as a chairperson, treasurer, trustee and shop steward. She looks forward to working in her garden, reading, playing tennis and golf.

Care aide Ina Grub is also retiring from Shorncliffe, where she has worked since May 1990. She also has travelling in her plans and will do volunteer work in her community.

New communicator

Margi Hamley is the new permanent communications campaign coordinator. She has been with the union since 1998 as a copywriter, a communications officer and, since September 2000, the temporary communications campaign coordinator.

Before HEU, Hamley worked at the Canadian Labour Congress on the 1997 People’s Summit on APEC and for Health Canada. She was the first national equity officer of the National Health and Welfare component of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, focusing on women’s and workers’ human rights and the impact of trade agreements on Canadians’ social systems like public health care.

Hamley shares her home with her daughter, son-in-law and two grandchildren.

Long-time director retires

John Hurran was director of HEU’s Prince George office from 1982 until he retired on April 30, 2002. Before his 10 years with HEU, Hurran served many years as the assistant director of bargaining and arbitration at BCUCO.

He says that he saw many changes during his tenure in Prince George.

“We did a lot of organizing. Perhaps the biggest achievement was organizing the First Nations health care workers at Skidegate, Nisga’a and Gitksan,” he says.

He says he has lots to do now that he’s retired. He’s finally learning to use a computer and enjoys spending time with his granddaughter.

His plans to bring his wealth of experience in arbitrations as a free-lance counsellor/union arbitrator.

New head of HEU North

Kathy Jeannette takes over from John Hurran as director of HEU’s Prince George office. A dietary worker at Royal Inland Hospital, Jeannette served the Kamloops local as steward and chairperson before starting work as a rep in HEU’s Kelowna office in 1980. The following year she moved to Prince George to begin work as a rep/operator.

She’s relentless in her pursuit of fighting for working people, but she’s also known for her daughter’s and a ready smile.

EQUITY PHONE LINE
1.800.663.5813, ext. 7192
Lower Mainland 604.456.7192

PRESS 1
Ethnic Diversity
One union, many colours
Working across our differences
Call and leave us your name

PRESS 2
First Nations
First Nations members would like to hear from you! Please call if you would like to help educate our union brothers and sisters on issues that affect First Nations people.

ALL CALLS ARE CONFIDENTIAL

PRESS 3
Lesbians and Gays
For support of being identified, feeling isolated, want no one right to die
Call for information on same sex benefits, fighting homophobia and discrimination.

PRESS 4
People with disAbilities
If you are on WCB, LTD or if invisibility or vulnerability disabled in the workplace, let us know how the union can be better meet your needs.

EQUIPMENT OF TOLL-Free!
You can call any HEU office toll-free to deal with a problem or get information. It’s fast, easy and free.

PROVINCIAL OFFICES
Vancouver Office
1-800-663-5813
Abbotford Office
1-800-404-9020

REGIONAL OFFICES
Northern Office
1-800-663-6539

Abbotford Office
1-800-219-9499

Vancouver Island Offices
Victoria Office
1-800-747-8001

Nanaimo Office
1-800-347-0290

Courtenay office
1-800-624-9940

Kootenay Office
1-800-437-9877

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