Health care workers like Marie Pantelis are out there in their communities fighting against devastating government cuts that hurt the ones they care for.

**Marie Pantelis is a fighter** when it comes to standing up for what is fair. And she thinks that closing a long-established seniors' care facility that is home to almost 200 elderly people in West Vancouver is wrong. She’s joined with family members, co-workers and her union in standing up to a government she feels is bullying some of the province’s most vulnerable citizens.

“It’s the union that stands up for our rights as workers,” she says. “And HEU goes after what is fair, not only for our members, but for the people we take care of. That means defending our public health care system.”

Pantelis has been working as a care aide at Capilano Care Centre (formerly Beacon Hill Lodge) for 24 years. When a government document leaked by the B.C. Nurses’ Union last February stated that Capilano Care Centre was slated for closure early next year, Pantelis and her local began organizing to stop it.

“We decided to make the public aware of what was happening,” she says.

The local organized a rally on May 2, catching early morning commuters heading into Vancouver from the North Shore via the Lions Gate Bridge. “Honk for seniors” and “Humanity cannot put $ on health care” said a couple of the signs. The result was high recognition and a lot of support — at least judging from the honking cars. “But we couldn’t just leave it at that,” says Pantelis. “The members of a group of the residents’ families drew up a petition and we helped them distribute it and collect signatures.”

In the end, between them all, they collected 10,000 signatures. “We presented the petition to North Vancouver/Lonsdale MLA Katherine Whitred and West Vancouver/Capilano MLA Ralph Sultan.”

Pantelis says that Whitred was not helpful and didn’t listen, but that Sultan was surprisingly sympathetic and presented their petition to the legislature on April 30, 2002.

The health care providers at the care centre are taking every opportunity to talk to people about the West Vancouver facility. “We hear they have postponed the closure until 2004, but that is still not good enough. It shouldn’t close at all,” she says.

For the People’s Picnic put on by the Lions Gate local on B.C. Day in August, Pantelis donned a costume to become a giant senior to dramatize the plight of elderly British Columbians that live in residential facilities in the province. “To let people know that the people who care for them are fighting to protect their rights — but that seniors are out there fighting too!”

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 9**
Fighting back is never in vain

Times are tough in Gordon Campbell’s British Columbia, but his all-out attacks on workers, women, seniors, the young, the poor and the disabled have resulted in communities getting together and finding out that fighting back is not just a vain exercise.

One of the broadest attacks of the Liberal government has been against health care workers. Never before in HEU’s 58-year history has this union faced such a vicious assault as we have since the passing of Bill 20 last January.

And never before has resistance been as widespread as it is now. The Liberal government is attempting to undermine the whole public health care system, and that hurts everyone, not just health care workers.

When the Interior Health Authority told the residents of Moatley Manor in Revelstoke that they had 30 days to find a new place to live, HEU members went to work. They contacted families and before you knew it wasn’t a soul in town who didn’t know what was going on.

They formed a circle around the facility to stop move-outs and embarrassed the health authority into backing down.

HEU members at Capilano Care Centre in West Vancouver also said, “No way!” when locked documents showed their facility was slated for closure. Forming an alliance with family members, helping them with a petition against the closure, they actually got their Liberal MLA to break ranks with his party and call for a reversal of this decision.

The plan was put on hold.

Children’s and Women’s local members were on constant lookout for “men in suits” who were roaming the hospital corridors, because they knew their facility was to be a Liberal template for contracting-out. HEU exposed the stupidity of contracting to a company without due diligence.

Again the boss was embarrassed and backed down.

In community after community, we have damaged the Liberal plan, we have delayed or stopped their efforts to cut services and privatize health care.

Whenever you look around British Columbia today, there are HEU members joining with others in the fightback, rallies, petitions and occupations, that’s where you’ll find HEU.

Retiree thanks HEU

As a member since July 1977 and now an official pensioner, I would like to thank the union for all the help it has given me over many years.

Years ago, trying to get the hospital to acknowledge dates that I had worked there permanently and part-time, the union stepped in and worked very hard on my behalf.

Going onto long-term disability for 12 years was even more difficult for me and my family. Especially as they delayed my pension. Again, the union came to my aid, and after nine months of waiting, they finally paid up and I had an income again.

After 42 years of disability the union was working extremely hard to improve conditions for us and we received our very first pay raise. Something I thought would never happen.

At 63, I took early retirement and I had some buy-back time, but I didn’t hold out much hope for the hospita
to agree. That was over two years ago and I had completely forgotten about it.

Four weeks before I was 65, an urgent letter arrived and I was shocked to find that I was able to buy back 15 months of service. So, after all this time, I realized that this was due to the work of Robin McCurach [Local 20] and her colleagues.

They had obviously been negotiating this with the hospital until the last minute. For me it was great news, because they had already announced that at 65, my pension would be reduced by $361 a month, which I expected but still hurt. So I am thankful and very grateful once again to HEU. Now I have another chance to increase my pension a bit.

Keep up the good fight against the Campbell government and please know that you will always have support from me.

PATRICIA COOK
LPH/Nurse Aide, retired
Burnaby Hospital

Even more thanks

The Victoria Anti-Poverty Coalition (VAP) would like to thank your members and HEU itself for demonstrating that there is action and meaning behind the word solidarity.

The consistent presence and support of HEU at all community actions taken recently to resist the neo-Liberal agenda has had a big impact on creating links between the diverse groups who are all under attack by the government of this province.

The greatest threat to the Liberals is for their many targets to join together and demand each other even if the direct link between our interests is not immediately apparent.

The draconian cuts to welfare were designed to create a huge pool of desperate workers who would not hesitate to cross a picket line (some expect as many as 50,000 to be on welfare in BC). Using the unemployed to beat unions is no doubt part of the Liberal agenda.

Making ties between the unemployed and unionized workers is an essential strategy to take at this time.

APW’s Kimberly Rogers Women’s Brigade shoe wishes to acknowledge and thank those who came out to support us during the occupation of Jeff Brys’s office and who ended up facing unexpected, and uncalled for, police brutality.

In addition, we would like to thank all the HEU members who made donations to our legal defense fund. Our court date is July 4th at the Victoria courthouse.

The unfortunate reality is that many of today’s unemployed workers are tomorrow’s low wage workers, unemployed or victims of the welfare system. It is only through continued solidarity and escalating resistance that we can defend ourselves and fight to win.

ANTI-POVERTY COALITION
various signatures

Get real, please

This letter was written on May 27, 2002 and addressed to Richard Lew, MLA for Burnaby North. It has been edited for length.

I would like to voice my serious concern over the potential closure of acute care beds at Burnaby Hospital. You may or may not be aware that this hospital plays an integral role in ensuring the delivery of timely and efficient health response services to Burnaby residents.

The vast majority of health care employees — from housekeepers to doctors — readily agree that despite the issue of cost restrictions the government is approaching the health care situation in a brutal, uncaring and uniformed manner.

Your government’s record as stalling that the health care system has been out of control for the last 10 years, saying labour is a major impediment to the cost efficien
cy of our health care system.

It is a serious shame that your government and particularly your Health Services Minister, Colin Hansen, doesn’t realize the true reason for health care’s soaring costs is in fact rising pharmaceutical costs, technological innova
tions and costlier and ever-increasing patient treatments.

Your government’s oversimplification of the complexities of the system and callous determination to increasingly treat it as a business will inevitably set the stage for unprecedented numbers of patients to fail between the cracks.

D.J. HARRIS, BA
Housekeeper
St. Paul’s Hospital
Fraser Valley jobs, four million pounds of laundry to go to Alberta

Ten-year contract goes to K-Bro, an Alberta-based company controlled by a U.S. investment firm

A plan to ship more than 4 million pounds of hospital laundry and dozens of Fraser Valley jobs to Alberta is economically damaging, risky and raises serious doubts about whether health authorities are practicing due diligence in the awarding of lucrative health care contracts, says HEU.

K-Bro Linen Systems — an Alberta-based company controlled by a private U.S. investment firm — was given an unprecedented 10-year contract to clean laundry for both Fraser Valley hospitals. That means Chilliwack and Mission will lose 43 skilled laundry jobs and $1.3 million in direct economic activity.

"It's completely unacceptable that this government and their health authority appointees would ship decent jobs to Alberta and health care dollars south of the border," says HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt. "Especially since the project — and unproven — operating costs savings are modest at best. But there’s serious implications in this decision for patient health and safety as well."

Over the next year — while the FHA waits for K-Bro to build a laundry facility somewhere in the Lower Mainland — millions of pounds of hospital laundry including more than 400,000 pounds of critical operating room linens will be trucked to and from Calgary through some of the most difficult mountain passes on the continent.

"Hospitals constantly resupply their inventory of sterile OR linens," says Allnutt. "Even minor weather related delays in delivering these supplies could have major repercussions for patient safety."

The union is calling for full disclosure of the terms of the contract and is raising doubts about whether due diligence was followed in the tendering process.

"This announcement raises many questions about the health authority’s privatization plans," says Allnutt.

Those questions include:

- Why are taxpayers on the hook for a 10-year contract when the tender document specified a five-year contract and how much will it cost taxpayers to bail out if K-Bro fails to perform?
- What commitments does K-Bro have outside of the tendering process to provide the company with enough volume to justify their planned $4 million dollar investment in a new laundry facility?
- Did the FHA investigate the controversy surrounding cost overruns during the first year of K-Bro’s laundry contract with the Calgary Regional Health Authority in 1998?
- Why didn’t B.C.’s public health authorities submit a proposal to do the work by the efficient, cost-effective and publicly-owned Tilbury Regional Hospital laundry in Delta?

"Campbell’s health privatization train is picking up steam," says Allnutt.

"It’s headed right out of the province loaded with millions of health care dollars."

HEU to hold 23rd Biennial Convention

This issue of the Guardian will be the last in print on the first day of HEU’s 23rd Biennial Convention. The political and social climate has been as intense as we’ve ever experienced. Our Convention started on October 7th and will end on October 10th.

About four decades of this convention — many of those time estimates will be debated resolutions and constitutional amendments, but what is going on outside the big tent in Richmond will surely be in the national spotlight.

It’s very appropriate that the first day of Convention — October 8th — coincides with the Day of Defence and with the first day of the fall session of the legislature in Victoria.

The latter one will be in Victoria at Confederation Park. As the Convention goes to press, plans for a tent city to protest plans for a Trudeau policy of a new, single-payer health care system in Canada are in the works. The two events are not directly related.

It will make for an interesting backdrop to the Convention this year. HEU members will come out of Convention to continue the fight back against cuts to our health care system. And the leadership will have a new mandate to lead that fight with the members.

Elections imminent

The November 16 municipal elections will give British Columbians an opportunity to oppose the Campbell government’s attacks on our public services.

So far six HEU members are running for office in their communities: Barb Burke (Penticton), Jennifer Neely (Saanich), Gordon Logan (Colwood) for council, Inara Grant (Delta), and Chris Denis (City of North Vancouver) for school trustee.

In Penticton Kevin Andrews is running for council and school board.

A special membership meeting is being prepared to provide you with the names of labour-endorsed candidates in your community.
Security is not secure

The Vancouver Coastal Health Authority is planning to privatize security services at Lower Mainland hospitals, saying it’s to improve service, but St. Paul’s Hospital security supervisor Roger Kishi says, “It’s about cutting costs.”

HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allmatt agrees. “It’s an alarming move that threatens the safety of patients and health care workers.”

To illustrate the absurdity of this measure, on July 29 the security staff at St. Paul’s Hospital were recognized for the special work they do at the facility. When Dr. Michael Myers, president of the Canadian Psychiatric Association, presented them with a plaque from his association commending them for “the kind and sensitive attitude shown by the Protective Services Team toward mentally ill and socially disadvantaged individuals who have come to the emergency room and the Comox Unit.”

These are some of the jobs that the Campbell government is looking to contract out to the lowest bidder.

Organizing private contractors

Giants multinational corporations are learning that in B.C. winning private health care contracts is no guarantee their workers won’t seek out union representation.

So far, 23 employees at Renfrew Care Centre in East Vancouver who provide dietary, housekeeping and laundry services and work for Compass, the world’s largest health care provider, voted to join HEU. The facility thought that by firing workers and inviting in a private multinational, they would no longer have to deal with a union.

In the summer of each week of each other, employees of the French multinational Sodexo who work at two private five-profit retirement complex complaints voted overwhelmingly under Labour Relations Board supervised votes to join HEU.

The 18 employees at Mayfair on the Green in Port Coquitlam joined HEU to win stronger representation and better opportunities to improve wages and working conditions, as did the 15 new union members work at Ridgeview Manor in Burnaby.

These are small but important victories for all health workers in their efforts to improve pay, benefits and working conditions for employees of multinational companies such as Sodexo and Compass who are pushing for private health care,” says HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allmatt.

Also in late July, 23 employees of North Vancouver’s Summerhill retirement living complex voted overwhelmingly to join HEU. The key issue for the housekeepers and food service workers was to win greater respect from on-site administration.

“We look forward to working constructively with the Summerhill employer to negotiate a fair first contract for our new members,” says Allmatt. The Port Coquitlam ‘workers are halfway through a five-year agreement negotiated by their former organization, the Service Workers Union, a small outfit that is outside the mainstream labour movement.

These new members joined HEU as a result of the union’s comprehensive organizing strategy to counter the Liberals’ efforts to roll back workplace protections through privatization and legalized contract breaking.

Meanwhile, HEU is working with the 40 members fired from Renfrew to show how the Liberal government’s legislation that paves the way for the privatization of services and the picking of skilled and experienced workers is bad for patients and residents.

Role model for private for-profits?

HEU has called for an investigation into the firing of 20 direct care staff at Valley Haven Guest Home in Chilliwack.

The union wants to find out if the facility’s operator, John Janzen, is violating the provincial law that governs operation of continuing care facilities by contracting out care staff.

Earlier Janzen – an ex-Social Credit health minister – fired housekeeping, laundry and dietary staff and contracted the work out to a firm owned by his brother who hired many of the same workers back at lower wages, minimal benefits and longer hours.

“Mr. Janzen has a license to employ and supervise staff to look after seniors in his care,” says HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allmatt, adding that legally Janzen must have a hands-on role in providing supervision and care to seniors at Valley Haven.

<<newsbites>>

Keep our kids close to home

A summer-time hunger strike to fight the closure of a small elementary school in B.C.’s interior has resulted in an agreement proposed by the District of Wells, B.C. and accepted by the Quesnel School Board. At issue was the school board’s effort to close the school and bus the children – some as young as five-years-olds – 150 kilometers a day over mountain roads.

When the school board turned a deaf ear to the townspeople, Wells artist Claire Kojuriiczki started a hunger strike that was joined by the town’s septuagenarian mayor, poet Susan Musgrave and many others. The school board waited until just before the start of the school year to agree to enter into negotiations, but closed the school anyway. Mano Davis Hendrickson pointed out that the District of Wells had been willing since June to negotiate a cost sharing agreement with the school district. “For them to come to us at the last minute, and expect an instant response, while at the same time keeping the school closed, is not a sign of good faith.”

Under the agreement, Wells is planning a temporary classroom in the town’s community hall and the school board is providing a teacher.

Two one-liners

Where do polar bears vote? - The North Pole.

What’s better than a talking dog? - A spelling bee.

Most parents in Wells refused to send their children away and started an alternative school.

First day of classes for the elementary aged children in Wells was September 17.

Workplace chemicals information online

Health care workers can now find out about the risks and hazards of chemicals and other products they work
Class action suit aims to protect B.C.’s public power

The lawsuit could be the largest in Canadian history

A grassroots organization fighting the privatization, deregulation and breakup of BC Hydro called B.C. Citizens for Public Accountability, filed what could be the largest class action suit in Canadian history in seeking compensation for the loss of BC Hydro and the provincial government’s control over BC Hydro from selling or transferring its crown corporation’s assets.

Despite election promises to “protect BC Hydro and all its core assets including dams, reservoirs and power lines under public ownership” to “restore an independent B.C. Utilities Commission to re-regulate BC Hydro’s electricity rates,” Gordon Campbell is moving ahead to breakup, sell off and deregulate B.C.’s publicly-owned power system.

“If the B.C. Supreme Court certifies this lawsuit as a class action, then every BC Hydro customer – residential, institutional or commercial – may be included. That’s more than 1.5 million customers,” said Leo McDaid, a legal counsel for BCZCP. “British Columbians created BC Hydro to gain control over future electricity development, access to funds for this development, security of supply, control over price and support for economic development.”

“This suit charges that the government is breaking a trust with the people of B.C. – many of whom have invested in this corporation for more than a generation – by breaking it up and privatizing key functions.”

Marielette Griffen-Cohen, spokesperson for BCZCP, says the fact that BC Hydro has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Bermuda-based multinational Accenture to privatize one-third of Hydro’s operations and employees makes the lawsuit critical.

“We believe the lawsuit is one of the best ways we can use to express the overwhelming demand of British Columbians that the privatization and dismantling of BC Hydro stop immediately.” She said. “Taking government to court is perhaps the most serious step citizens can take when elected representatives refuse to listen to the people.”

BCZCP has launched a province-wide campaign asking all British Columbians to attend and act on the future of BC Hydro to sign a Letter of Intent supporting its request to the Supreme Court to certify the lawsuit as a class action.

British Columbians can sign the Letter of Intent on the back cover of this Guardian and log on to www.citizensforpublicpower.ca to find out more about the campaign.

FROM B.C. FEDERATION OF LABOUR

What is Accenture?

Accenture is a multinational consulting company headquartered in Bermuda, a popular tax haven for corporations. It operates regional offices around the world and has recently expanded into public utilities across North America.

Accenture used to be known as Andersen Consulting, the consulting arm of Arthur Andersen – the same accounting firm implicated in the Enron scandal.

In 2000, Andersen Consulting (then a Chicago-based partnership) changed its name to Accenture, went public as a corporation and relocated their head office in Bermuda.

Accenture’s use of Bermuda companies will not generally have the rights to take action against directors or officers of the company.

Not a shred of evidence

The Campbell government held H.E.U. in August it will only release two pages of the act’s documentation it’s generated to support the wholesale privatization of health services. In response to a comprehensive freedom of information request filed by the union last February, the Ministry of Health Services disclosed that it has only 55 pages of documents to justify its plans to privatize health services and facilities.

“The ministry cannot produce a single shred of evidence to support its aggressive health privatization plans,” said H.E.U. secretary-business manager Chris Alinut.

After a confidential government budget document released by the union earlier this year revealed plans to privatize $700 million worth of health services and fire 20,000 health care workers, the union filed an appeal to the information and privacy commissioner to gain access to the material.

Provincial legislation specifically states government ministers cannot withhold any factual information.

“We can only conclude that the health services ministry is sitting on a lot of spin but very little substantive research to support the government’s health care privatization agenda,” says Alinut.

Numerous studies in peer-reviewed journals have pointed to the negative consequences of health privatization, including a recent study published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal. And this past May, respected forensic auditor Ron Parks concluded that a privately-owned and financed hospital in the Fraser Valley may be more costly than a publicly owned and financed facility.

with on the Occupational Health and Safety Agency for Healthcare (OHSAA) website. The Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) requires availability to health care workers across the province can now access the information at www.oshanav.ca.

OHSAA has created a provincial database of MSDS units, but that MSDS can be shared, updated and delivered electronically via the OHSAA website. A link on the website takes the user to the Web-based MSDS System home page and there a worker can search by product name or health authority.

Wendy Armstrong, the study’s author, demonstrates how the fragmentation of services and reliance on private insurance has increased administrative costs enormously.

“Albertans must choose between caring for a loved one at home or cashing in assets and saving to purchase private services,” she says.

Armstrong is a health policy analyst and advocate for consumer organizations, including the Alberta Chapter of the Consumers’ Association of Canada. She recently completed a speaking tour of British Columbia.

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Health care carnage in British Columbia

Announcements of cuts to health care translate into the loss of precious health care resources in communities across the province.

When the province’s health authorities held their marathon press conference in late April to outline their plans for B.C. health care, it amounted to an admission on the part of the Campbell government that they would be slashing and cutting our public health care system.

Besides announcing they had been given a green light to levy user fees and they’d be cutting $195 million in support services right across the province without a shred of evidence this would save money without compromising care, Campbell’s hand-picked health authorities also said they’d be closing hospitals in 11 communities and 3,000 long-term care beds across B.C. They also added the changes would mean more than 10,000 front-line health care workers would be receiving pink slips.

Eliminating 3,000 long-term care beds translates into the closure of facilities in many communities, like Kelowna’s beloved Mary Bennett home that shut down in April, displacing all of the long-time residents there. That was after years of protests.

But if Campbell thought British Columbians were just going to roll over and accept whatever he had up his sleeve, communities across the province have proven him very wrong.

Announced closures of Molesley Manor in Revelstoke and Parkholm Lodge in Chilliwack sparked community protests that delayed the closures, but the government plans to ram those closures down the throats of the community, the people who live there and their families.

A whole slew of new closures are on the drawing board. Some are outright closures while others are slated to convert to “assisted living” — that means private, for-profit.

According to a recently-released report by Wendy Armstrong for the seniors’ advocacy group of Canada, in Alberta seniors, their families and taxpayers are bearing the increased costs as a result of the introduction of a U.S. model of care that includes assisted living.

In fact, the report shows how when the Alberta government cut funding to long-term care facilities and decreased the number of acute beds, real estate investors and private lodge operators cashed in with an expensive private-pay model imported from the U.S.

The Campbell government seems to be following that formula, but cannot ignore community outcomes forever.

“Fighting back works and HEU members know that,” says HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt.

“They will continue to work with others in their cities, towns and villages to stop the carnage of facility closures. And where hospitals and residential care facilities have already been closed, it is just as important to monitor the impact on communities.”

CLOSED Enderby and District Memorial Hospital • Kimberley and District Hospital • May Bennett Home • St. Bartholomew’s Hospital • Summerland General Hospital • Penticton Health Centre and Fern Rason Home NEED TO STOP CLOSURES AT Cedarview Lodge • Cooper Place • Dupwood Lodge • G.F. Strong Rehabilitation Centre • Holy Family Hospital • Olive Devaux Residence • Rosewood Manor Adult Day Care • St. Vincent’s Hospital, Arbutus and Heather Street sites • Cascade wing of Burnaby Hospital • Parkholm Lodge • St. Mary’s Hospital, New Westminster • Val Rey Lodge • Boundary Lodge • Cariboo Lodge acute care • Castlegar and District Hospital acute care • Halcyon Community Home • Kelly Care Centre • Mater Misericordiae Home Care Group • Molesley Park Manor • Mount St. Francis Hospital • Penticton Retirement Complex • Pioneer Villa • Summerland Lodge • Tom Uphill Memorial Home • Victorian Hospital of Kaledo • Stuart Lake General Hospital • Cowichan District Hospital Laundry • George Road Hospital • Greenwoods

Another promise broken

A plan by the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority to close a 70-bed long-term care home on the Downtown Eastside is a broken commitment to that community to expand the facility and signals a new round of closures.

More than 50 front-line health workers received pink slips in preparations for closing Cooper Place and converting the building to “supportive housing.”

The former health board had slated the 20-year-old facility for expansion after the neighbouring Cordova House care facility was converted to housing in 1998.

“Closing Cooper Place will be a real tragedy for the Downtown Eastside,” said HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt. “Coles Hansen and his team must stop this move, consult with the community and take a closer look at the care needs of Downtown Eastside seniors.”

Workers rallied with their supporters on the day they received the pink slips.

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Baby-boom predictions out of whack

Waterloo actuary Robert Brown calculates that when baby boomers start retiring and cashing in their RRSPs, a large part of the predictions about the burden they’ll place on the health care system will not materialize.

“My essential conclusion,” said the professor of mathematics at the University of Waterloo in a paper he presented to the Canadian Institute of Actuaries’ (CIA) convention summer in Halifax, “is that a windfall of tax revenue from the retirement system will come at exactly the right time, in exactly the right amount, to pay for the increased health care costs of the baby boomers.”

Brown recommends raising the upper limit of RRSPs in order to enhance this phenomenon and says his projections rely on the continuation of health care costs in general.

The CIA submitted their suggestions for controlling health care costs to the Romanow Commission.

Among their ideas: a national drug plan and profounding health care costs for baby boomers, similar to the Canada Pension Plan.

Trail-blazing California law

Earlier this year, in response to a crisis in California health care, the state legislature passed the Safe Staffing Law.

The new regulation sets minimum nurse-to-patient ratios in the state’s acute care hospitals. The legislation was the result of a campaign waged for 10 years by the California Nurses Association, a union that represents 43,000 nurses.

The law is considered a victory for patient safety in this state with the second highest patient to nurse ratio in the U.S.

Several nursing shortages caused by hospital downsizing endangered lives and was determined to have resulted in critical errors in diagnosis and medication.

The new law sets a ratio of 1:4 in emergency wards and 1:5 in medical and surgical units.

Friendly fire?

The summer 2000 issue of Planning for Profits, a business publication distributed by The Global Financial Group Network, cast a critical eye on Gordon Campbell’s policies and style of governing.

- Fiscal policy: “Problem is that
Board reinstates some union rights

The Labour Relations Board has ruled that displaced health-care workers who were laid off under Campbell's Bill 29 are entitled to reinstatement under the new bill's provisions. The decision affects about 1,200 workers who were laid off under the previous legislation. The board's decision is significant because it provides a clear path for workers who were displaced during the pandemic and the ongoing economic uncertainty.

Decision in brief
Displaced workers can now use their seniority on an expanded pool of jobs. Facilities Subsector workers who are direct employees of the five regional health authorities are covered by the decision (the Community Subsector and the Provincial Health Services Authority are not covered at this time). That means the majority of HEU members are covered. Employer objections have prevented all HEU members from being covered.

Toll-free action
Across B.C. there's an outcry against the Campbell government for its cruel treatment of seniors whom it comes to health care. Now, the B.C. Health Coalition and the Seniors Network-B.C. are launching a special toll-free number for British Columbians to report specific instances when Victoria's policies have prevented seniors from receiving the home care services they need. It's not a help line, but it is a way of expressing the stories of seniors and their families. Here are other ways to get involved in the fight to protect seniors' health care services:
- Call 1-877-600-1180 (toll free) and leave a message:
  - email justsayno@bchcahealthcoalition.ca
  - call the Seniors Housing and Health Coalition at 604-320-6621 or email info@seniorshousing.ca;
  - to organize a family council at a community level, contact the Association of Advocates for Care Reform at 604-879-7274 or <www.ercrc.bc.ca>.

HEU members will keep on fighting Campbell's attacks

The eight months will be a defining period in the 58-year history of HEU. We are under a vicious attack by the Campbell Liberal government that before the end of their fiscal year on March 31, 2003, has to justify its misguided budget planning that has resulted in a $2 billion deficit. Rather than admitting that $2 billion in tax breaks given the downturn in the provincial economy as a result of the softwood lumber tariff and the post-911 drop in tourism was at best premature, Campbell is balancing the budget by eliminating vital public services. The government's contention that increased sales tax offsets lost breaks has proven to be bogus. Their mantra that privatization is the solution to all problems results in bizarre initiatives. We continue to export raw logs and jobs to the U.S. The sell-off of BC Hydro will result in domestic rate increases of at least 50 per cent and destroy one of B.C.'s best competitive advantages. Public-private partnerships such as assisted living homes for our elderly, liquor stores and toll highways, mean that we will incur a long-term debt to private corporations, add needless expenses for taxpayers and suffer a loss of control and accountability for service provision.

As court houses, government offices, forest and park services shut down, thousands of public sector workers are displaced, their families and communities disrupted and local economies savaged. The Fraser Health Authority is shipping dirty hospital laundry to Kilo in Calgary. The public, cost-efficient and unselfish facility at Tilbury was not even allowed to bid on the contract. Several years ago, Kilo abandoned its operation on Vancouver Island to the public with aggressive marketing.

The Coastal Health Authority is contracting out security services, oblivious to the expertise required as part of hospital nursing teams who deal with aggressive patients and residents. This conjures up images of an Alzheimer's patient being wrestled to the ground by the riot squad, before being carted away and housed in an inadequately-funded assisted-living facility. Rather than consulting and working with all citizens in B.C. to rebuild a vibrant economy, the Liberals are intent on union busting, creating desperation for the poor, homeless and the disabled, subjecting our seniors to unnecessary hardship and fueling economic disruption and social unrest.

The 60 delegates at this autumn's HEU Biennial Convention have an essential role in debating, revising and confirming our action plan to mobilize and fight back. Reenergized and reconvened, we must be prepared to defend Medicare and a civil society.

The Liberals are intent on union busting

HEU ME members join retired PE

1st vice-president David Milloy at a September 19 rally in New Westminster.

1,200 rally in New West

New Westminster banner will be in force on September 19 for a rally and meeting to fight the closure of St. Mary's Hospital.

On July 20 the Fraser Health Authority said it would withdraw all funding from the 115-year-old hospital. The workers, hospital administration and the community vowed to stop the closure. The Majesty Theatre audience booted New West MLA Joyce Murray, but the hardest criticism came for FHA CEO Bob Smith and chairman Barry Forbes who were conspicuous by their absence. HEU president Fred Mintz, PE member Casey O'Hern and Tilbury local Ronnie Niccolos thanked the importance of keeping the New Westminster Hospital open and public.
While Gordon Campbell is busy ramming through his right-wing agenda, British Columbians are busy building grassroots coalitions to fight them. They've found common cause because they are fighting mad.

Common cause

Here are the stories of four HEU members who have joined with others in their communities to fight the government's attacks on workers and on the most vulnerable British Columbians. There are many more like them.

Signs of cuts are clear in Creston

Terje Munkerd's signs are a big hit in the Kootenay town of Creston. He's selling the placards protesting government cuts to health care through a local auction house, and they're selling like hotcakes. One resident of Pioneer Villa bought one and had Munkerd, a maintenance worker at the intermediate care facility, attack it to the outside of the building.

"Those folks know the government says it's going to close the place where they live and ship them out to live somewhere else, and they don't want to go," he says.

Munkerd is part of the Save Our Communities Coalition in Creston, and he says the cuts to health care are going to be devastating to this town of 5,000 people - 14,000 if you count those in the outlying area.

To close an intermediate care facility that houses 40 seniors and 10 Alzheimer's patients, chop the hospital's operating room and make cuts to home care, is just outrageous," he says.

"Sending people over a frequently-closed mountain pass for emergency surgery - is that getting health care when you need it, where you need it?" he asks.

"And closing Pioneer Villa, a place where the elderly can go into care but still be close to family and friends, is inhumane. To top it off, cutting home care, which might allow the elderly to stay in their homes. It's just insane," he adds.

He also fumes at the form seniors were being asked to sign before they went into respite care. The form stated that if they didn't take the first available bed, no matter where, they would have to go home or go into hospital to the tune of $300 per day. "The part about the money wasn't written down, but that's what they were told," he says.

This precipitating on the vulnerable was stopped after cries of outrage forced the health authority to back down. Now they have a family member sign the papers. Munkerd sees this as only a marginal improvement in a cruel practice.
Cowichan tells Liberals, “It just doesn’t wash”

People in the Vancouver Island town of Duncan are outraged that the dirty linen from Cowichan District Hospital is going to be sent to Victoria to be laundered.

Outsiders might ask, “Why on earth would those people get so upset about a government announcement to close the local hospital laundry?”

Just ask Jesse Winfrey, who has been working as a cook there for nine years and is part of the Cowichan Citizens Coalition fighting government cuts in the area. “Well, first of all, any loss of jobs in a small community has a noticeable effect on the local economy.”

But the anger of the townspersons in Duncan has deeper roots. This is a fight they’ve fought before and thought they had won.

Three years ago, the public regional health board invested $1.2 million of the community’s money into upgrading what had admittedly been an out-of-date laundry at the hospital. This followed a very public campaign against another proposal to shut the laundry. HEU staff proved to the board that a closure would, in fact, be a waste of taxpayers’ money and that the resulting job loss would hurt the community.

Now, the new health authorities say they’re going to close the laundry, but people in Duncan say there’s no good business case for the move.

“The health authorities say they are going to close the laundry but people in Duncan say there’s no good business case for the move.”

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Cowichan District Hospital workers joined others in their community to protect the closure of the facility’s laundry.

Slow-burning activism in Mission

Cindy Kelly and her husband Martin are so well-known for their activism in the Fraser Valley town of Mission that when the government started making noises about large-scale cutbacks to health care services, people came to them and said, “Do something!”

Kelly downplays her role as an activist, saying that sometimes it’s difficult to motivate people to come out in large numbers, as outraged as they may feel.

“At first, especially with the issue around the private hospital in Abbotsford, people came out in large numbers. They really got that,” she says. She feels the government backed down on that issue — but only temporarily.

The community of Mission has been threatened many times with the closure of the Mission Memorial Hospital, according to Kelly. “I really feel if they would have gone ahead with an outright closure, there would have been rioting in the streets,” she says. “But instead they are ‘nibbling the hospital to death.’”

They’ve closed the maternity ward, the ICU and the CCU. The OR is sitting idle right now, though they say it’s only temporary.

“It’s easy to get discouraged, but upon some reflection, she says that maybe hers is a “slow, steady, quiet activism.”

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**Big win for U.K. health workers**

Scottish health care workers who won for French multinational Sodexo at Glasgow Royal Infirmary were celebrating after achieving their objectives of 85 pence to boost the 85 pence to boost the

Sodexo employs 250 cooks, cleaners, porters and switchboard operators directly.

Cleaning services had been under the microscope at the hospital following health scares earlier in the year. Workers and their union criticized massive cuts in the cleaning staff under the Sodexo contract.

Sodexo is present in many places around the world where public services are put on the auction block.

Sodexo has contracts to run services in many countries. In Britain, it runs programs in colleges, elementary schools and hospitals.

The Scottish workers' message to any group battling with Sodexo: "If we can beat them, anyone can."

And that even when privatization of public services like health care has already occurred, it’s not too late to fight for decent wages and working conditions and to return these services back to the public sector.

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**Tax cuts are Robin Hood in reverse**

When the Liberians took power in B.C., the first order of business was a massive tax cut. Although the government promised that the cuts would pay for themselves, in reality they left a gaping hole in revenues. Pointed into a corner by their promise to balance the budget by 2004/2005, the government has now instituted numerous spending cuts to compensate for the lost tax revenue.

These cuts have set a new record for the worst tax cuts ever introduced by a government. In a proposed cost-cutting exercise, 80 per cent of the cuts are expected to come in programs that have already been cut.

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has released a study showing that the proposed cost-cutting exercise will result in a 90 per cent cut in the cost of British Columbians’ tax cuts to the stated new costs.

The new costs are expected to include higher drug, post-secondary education and child care expenses as well as a jump in MSP premiums and de-funded health services.

The analysis reveals that while affluent individuals remain ahead financially, the gains of those with modest incomes are precarious.

Overall, the tax cuts make our taxation system more regressive by giving upper-income earners a larger benefit. The cost reduces this trend by giving disproportionate benefits on the shoulders of the poor and the sick.

Taken as a whole, the effect of the new tax and spending regime is thus to make B.C. much more unequal.

With higher personal costs, as well as a general decline in environmental standards and the quality of government services in a more unequal society, even those who still hold onto modest tax cuts need to ask: were they worth the price?

**SYLVIA FULLER - PUBLIC INTEREST RESEARCHER, CANADIAN CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES**
Health workers in Manitoba have agreement

5,000 Manitoba health support workers ratified a hard-fought new collective agreement by 63 per cent on September 20. With a strong strike mandate to back them up, negotiators from the Canadian Union of Public Employees and representatives of the bargaining units that on August 14 had rejected the Manitoba provincial government's last wage offer, met with mediator Wally For-Deeckt and reached a tentative agreement on September 17 on the eve of a strike that would have seen 13 Winnipeg health care centres behind picket lines.

The health care workers from Winnipeg hospitals and long-term care facilities had agreed to one last effort at mediation after 60 per cent of their members voted against the recommendation of their bargaining committee to accept the government's wage offer of 1.75 per cent over a four-year period along with a $72 million stipulation fund to help equalize salaries in the health care system across the province.

A new bargaining committee was set up after the rejection vote.

"We're doing everything we can to avert a strike, but the members in the 13 bargaining units are prepared to strike if necessary," said Louise Sigurdson, CUPE Health Care coordinator.

"Clearly these members said they didn't like the employer's wage offer and it was up to the two sides to restate their positions and make some constructive moves," she said.

Members of the Regional Distribution facility and Middlechurch Home rejected the offer that was ratified by four hospitals, five long-term care facilities, Cancer Care Manitoba, Riverview Health Centre and Rehabilitation Centre for Children.

Sewing discontent in L.A.

The exploitation of garment workers in the developing world has gained widespread notoriety in recent years as organizations like the Maquila Solidarity Network exposed the unethical practices of well-known clothing manufacturers overseas, but many would be surprised to find that these practices are alive and well in North America.

Los Angeles is the garment capital of the U.S., employing 140,000 mostly female immigrant garment workers. According to L.A.'s Garment Worker Center (GWC), the majority of these workers labour under sweatshop conditions, without minimum wage or overtime pay, and in dangerous and unsanitary conditions.

In 2000, according to the U.S. Department of Labor, only one in three garment producers in the area complied with federal and state labour laws on minimum wage and overtime.

There have also been gross violations of workers' safety and civil rights, like the 1995 discovery of 72 Thai garment workers held as virtual slaves in an L.A. sweatshop.

The situation cried out for a champion for these workers, and in January 2001, GWC — under the auspices of several labour and civil rights groups — opened its doors in the heart of the L.A. fashion district.

Coordinator Kim Lee says, "We see our role as primarily one of education. There is a high degree of misinformation and fear out there. A lot of workers in the L.A. garment industry do not have legal immigration status, and they think they have no rights. We're here to tell them that's not true — they do have rights."

It is GWC's daunting task to try and improve the treatment of these workers who toil away in lofts, storefronts and clandestine factories and sew clothing they themselves may not be able to buy. Mostly made up of immigrants from Mexico and Central America, there are also sizeable contingents from the Chinese, Thai, Vietnamese and Korean communities.

About 500 workers have benefited from the center's educational workshops, leadership development and assistance with workplace issues so far. They're trained to teach other about workplace rights and the importance of keeping accurate records of hours of work, piece rates, the labels they are working on, etc. They also learn about how to evaluate workplace safety and health problems.

The centre helps with claims for unpaid wages, recouping about $50,000 over the last two years. When that doesn't work, retailers that sell goods made in L.A. sweatshops are the next target. Lee says GWC's work of educating workers about where they fit in the garment-producing chain and how much they contribute to it has given many the courage to stand up for what is rightfully theirs. See www.sweatshopwatch.org/gwc/ for more information.

DALE FULLER

Sweating in Vancouver

knitwear company. After working 12 hours a day, often six or seven days a week, for less than minimum wage and no overtime, the company sold all its machinery and closed its doors without paying back wages.

Gunaratna says the workers still have not received their money, while the owner lives in a million-dollar house in Burnaby.

UNITE has a website (www.unite4wages.org) that lists unorganized garment producers in Canada, some of whom sew in the union label only when they know the consumer will demand it. "Usually that means when the goods go to the States, they don't sew the labels in. For Canada they do," says Gunaratna. However, he adds, with the anti-sweatshop campaigns gaining ground, even American manufacturers are starting to want the union label. "People are pretty confident that if there is a union label in a garment, it wasn't produced in a sweatshop."

Education cuts result in classroom chaos

Government cuts are affecting all of us. As a health care worker I am experiencing firsthand what it means to lose a sense of security and confidence that has been so hard-earned over the last couple of decades. The government says we aren't deserving, we are not "entitled" to a salary we can support our families with, benefits that ensure a certain degree of well-being and good health. They call our jobs "non-traditional." They have no respect or understanding for what we do — which is provide an important and caring function in our society.

They treat teachers the same way and are running roughshod over our children. The community of Wells was able to push the government back on its decision to bus small children 190 kilometres a day over snowy mountain passes. They organized and fought back. How many other communities are there like Wells that don't have the resources or the wherewithal to fight back and win?

In my community of Mission, there have been so many cutbacks that children are sitting on the floors in their daughter's high school. Last year there were 25 to 30 kids in her classes. Now there are 40. My two other children in grade one and grade six have seen huge increases in the number of students in their classes, too.

I am lucky that my children are all good students, but I worry about others falling through the cracks. There are so many children who for some reason or another are disadvantaged and have a hard time with their studies. I am very concerned that they are going to be on their own now. With so many teachers gone this year, few are there to help.

Everyone says, "Children are our future." It's a cliché I know — but it's true.

The other cliché is "They're only paying it lip service." And that's what this government is doing to our children. It's a crime.

CINDY KELLY • OR ALBIA AT MSA HOSPITAL

FALL GUARDIAN 2002
A desire for a stable workplace that would better serve her community was EVELYN LUBE’s dream when she began organizing a union at the Westbank First Nations’ band office.

ORGANIZER TOOK BIG RISKS

WHEN EVELYN LUBE asked her coworkers to sign a union card, she was asking them to risk and challenge a powerful employer who ran more than just their jobs. The elected leaders of the Westbank First Nations’ band had absolute control over many other aspects of their lives.

In the 10 years that Lube worked for the band, she witnessed six changes in the political leadership of this 615-member band on the shores of Lake Okanagan.

“The whole body of work of the previous political leaders would be threatened, as well as some jobs and services,” says Lube. “With a staff of 65 employees, it made for an uncertain work environment.”

And Lube, along with others, felt it was hurting the community. “When you have well-trained, experienced staff that know the issues and how to deal with them, the community benefits,” she says. “When that gets hosed, every two years, the community suffers.”

Over the last couple of decades, the week of the band office has grown in complexity. So, when older, experienced workers were turfed out, leaving new-comers with no one to mentor or train them, people from outside were brought in to fill the gap.

“It was such a waste, because opportunities to train and keep band members to serve our own people were often lost,” says Lube.

Things came to a head four years ago with yet another election. Rumours were flying of secret lists of workers to be fired or transferred. It was too much for the workers to bear any longer. Lube and a few trusted coworkers met with representatives of the B.C. Government and Service Employees’ Union — who already had a presence in the band, representing nursing home workers.

Bringing a union into a workplace — especially the initial stages — is a daunting task for anyone.

Workers who organize a union are bucking the power structure, but that situation is magnified in the context of a First Nations band. There unions are seen as a white invention and another attempt by a colonial power to shape the destiny of native people.

But Lube sees it in a different light. She doesn’t see the First Nations traditions of peace and consensus violated by the way unions negotiate working conditions, pay and benefits. In fact, she thinks that in the changing structures of First Nations governance in Canada, unions can play a fundamental role.

“I think times are changing for First Nations,” she says. “We are an emerging government. We provide government services. Other governments have labour unions. I see no reason why we shouldn’t.”

But to sign up enough people to join BCGEU, Lube had to resort to sneaking around to peoples’ homes in the dark of night. It was risky for her and for anyone who signed a union card, she knew. The power of the bosses over her life and those of her coworkers was always in the forefront. But she was able to get 32 signatures she needed, and talks soon began. Now, four years later, negotiations for a first contract have yet to be concluded.

That’s partly because this has all been happening in the context of a complete restructuring of the band’s governance model. It’s been going on for 15 years, and Lube has also been involved in those negotiations for the last two years. She is on the ratification committee, and the agreement has narrowly failed ratification votes twice. Now with another change in elected officials, a decision has been made to make changes to the proposed governmental structure document and probably another ratification vote.

The union’s bargaining committee decided to hold off until there is a new Westbank First Nations political structure in place. “We are really almost there with the first collective agreement,” says Lube, who now works as an organizer out of BCGEU’s headquarters in Burnaby, but who goes home to the Okanagan every weekend to be with her husband and two children.

It’s been — and is — a hard struggle, for both the band and the union. But Lube is confident that in the end things will work out. “The labour movement and First Nations have a lot in common,” she says. “Both struggle for justice and to empower those who have no power, to give a voice to those who have no voice.”
After 10 years of volunteering in the Ironman Competition medic tent, CHRIS MUSCULLOW couldn't resist taking the plunge himself, signed up and hasn't look back since.

PROUD AT 1,602

Entition is internationally known for its Ironman Competition, a demanding course of swimming, biking and running that this year’s winner — finished in approximately eight-and-a-half hours. Penticton Regional Hospital NIU1 member Chris Muscowlow came in 1,602nd out of 2,033 competitors at a time of 14 hours, 23 minutes and 43 seconds. And at 41 years of age, he’s mighty proud of his accomplishment.

"This is my fourth Ironman Competition," he says. "The first time it took me 17 hours and 11 minutes, coming in just past midnight and therefore not winning a T-shirt. I was really upset after all that effort." But he signed up right away for next year’s competition.

Muscowlow volunteered for 10 years in the event's medic tent. After all those years of getting caught up in the excitement and the atmosphere, he started telling himself he would like to try. "I kept putting it off, year after year, until finally I signed up, put my money where my mouth was and started training," he says.

He had never done anything like this, and at 218 pounds was far from being in good shape. (Now he is at a more healthy 175 pounds.) For the next year he trained, doing it all on his own, improving his own program. "That’s the way I did it, but I wouldn’t advise anyone else to do it that way," Muscowlow says.

Even seasoned athletes take a serious approach to training for what is considered to be this most grueling of athletic competitions, he says. Two years, at least.

In what has now become his routine training schedule, he starts to prepare in January for the late summer event. He puts in about 15 hours a week on a stationary bike and treadmill, cutting all junk food. In the spring he begins biking 80 kilometres every day before his 12:30 shift starts at the hospital. He runs for an hour-and-a-half after work. By mid-June he adds a swim every other day.

Nine weeks before his first race, he had to have a hernia operation, but went ahead with the race anyway. His friends and family told him he was crazy, but he says, 70 per cent of this race is mental training. "You have to tell yourself to be tough, never mind the blisters and the pain — just finish." It’s a fantastic feeling when you cross that finish line," says Muscowlow. "He sees the benefits as better health and a different perspective on life’s problems. "Problems don’t seem so monumental after you’ve been through this experience."
what we're up to

continued from page 72
In the Caravan of Care, their destination! The Fraser Health Authority offices in Surrey where they planned to tell CEO Bob Smith that the government's health-care cutbacks and privatization must stop now. A carrovan delegation of four health workers did speak with an FHA representative during the rally. CEO Smith was unavailable.

"Seniors are fighting mad about the changes in residential care with the shift away from faciity care to assisted living units," said Joyce Jones of the Seniors Network BC. "The 'Just say No' campaign, launched by the Seniors Network and the B.C. Health Coalition in June for residents who didn't want to be arbitrarily moved, is still going strong in seniors' care throughout the province, with measurable successes. HU president Fred Mazur spoke of the impacts of privatization on patient and resident care, citing the experience of the United Kingdom where the National Health Service is bringing health services back in house after a series of disastrous experiences with private sector contracts.

Apologize, then do homework

HEU demanded an apology from Colin Hansen after the health services minister called the work of licensed practical nurses and care aides menial on a Vancouver radio show on September 6.

"The minister's comments betrayed an ignorance of the role played by these health-care providers," said HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allutt.

"It is disgraceful that he doesn't seem to know that care aides provide the bulk of bedside care for seniors in B.C.'s long-term care facilities and that LTAs have a clearly defined scope of practice to provide direct nursing duties in a variety of settings. He should apologize and then do some homework.

"He showed he doesn't have a clue about solutions to the nursing shortage when he suggested these members of the nursing team are on hand to pick up non-nursing duties," added Allutt.

"But the Campbell government's policy to privatize support work will result in staff cuts, low wages, less experienced workers and in the final result more non-nursing duties left to nursing staff to perform," Allutt said.

Pride Pages needs info

The editors of HEU's Pride Pages are asking for contributions to write articles. They also would like to know if any of their members have passed away or they can include that information in upcoming issues. Contact them at PridePages, c/o HEU, 5500 North Fraser Way, Burnaby, B.C., V5J 4M3 or go to their website <www.priderpages.org>.

Union sisters and brothers, including those from HEU, were front and centre at Vancouver's August & Gay Pride Parade.

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Theatre on the cutting edge

Many stories are emerging about people who are experiencing the consequences of the Campbell government's cutbacks to health care. We've all seen the story of the elderly couple in Chilliwack who were told they couldn't live together anymore - after 60 years of marriage. And the mother and daughter in Lytton who both died soon after the 106-year-old mother was told she couldn't stay in her home any longer.

A theatre group called The Virtual Stage has taken on some stories about the effect of cutbacks on group homes; put some of them in a play and called it The Birth of Freedom.

It's a play about the denizens of a group home for mentally and behaviorally challenged adults. The playwright worked for over a decade in a group home and still works with the PSVT Program at Family Services of Greater Vancouver and as a substitute special education assistant for the Vancouver School Board.

Andy Thompson says his play is fiction, but it was inspired by his many experiences as a caregiver.

This brutally honest play, he portrays the lives of five adults who live together in a group home. Two are home caregivers and the other three are the ones they care for.

Josie is loving, smart and overly affectionate sometimes. Robbie is autistic who hurts only himself. Frank is overly sensitive and rushes out into the street causing great commotion when he is stressed. Isabelle and Bernard are the home caregivers.

Together the five form a family - a family that is thrown into turmoil after their house is slated for closure due to government cutbacks.

"The walls came tumbling down," says Janice St. John, an HEU member from Victoria General Hospital who saw the play on its last night at Performance Works in Vancouver in early June. "They're all separated from each other."

The play is graphic and violent at times. And it doesn't hide the fact that life doesn't always go by the book in a group home. Josie becomes pregnant at a party the night before they all head for the end of government takes her baby away.

"Her screams still ring in my ears," says St. John. "The play makes you understand that everyone has the right to the basics like food and shelter, but love is also a basic right."

The Virtual Stage company says they are attempting to fuse cinematic and theatrical art forms and investigate how emerging technologies can support and incorporate such technologies. Their website at <www.thervirtualse-stage.org> explores many options in this arena - and there's more to come, they promise.

Thompson says there are no immediate plans to stage The Birth of Freedom. But the company is "pre-shopping" it right now, and it may come back in even better form.

If it does come back, St. John says the members of the Liberal cabinet should go see it to get a good idea of how their cutbacks play out on the ground. "They have no idea."
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Kootenay Office
Nelson 1-800-437-9877

Youthline
1-888-463-6543

In Memorium
Leo Bibo, a long-time HEU activist passed away this summer after a long battle with cancer. He'd been active in the VGH local since the 1970s, holding many offices. He was on the PE from 1997 to 2001, and he served on the 1986 and 2001 bargaining committees. When he retired from his job as maintenance supervisor in August 2000, he said, "Belonging to the union made coming to work worthwhile." James Hemmery, a care aide/activation aide at Central Care Home in Victoria, was vacationing with his wife Mary in B.C.'s interior when he was tragically killed in an automobile accident. His wife survived. Hemmery was an HEU activist and secretary-treasurer of his local for two of the three years of its certification.

"In humble dedication to all those who took to live."
I support public power!
I'm joining the class action lawsuit to save BC Hydro from being privatized, deregulated and broken up!

IN THE MATTER OF A PROPOSED CLASS ACTION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA SUPREME COURT AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT OF BRITISH COLUMBIA AND BC HYDRO

Letter of Intent
I, ____________________________, of ____________________________, in the City of ____________________________, in the Province of British Columbia, wish to support the BC Citizens for Public Power ("the Society") in their class action against the Government of British Columbia and BC Hydro.

I am aware of the Society's reasons for the action and support the action completely. It is my intention and wish to be included in the class, should the British Columbia Supreme Court certify the action initiated by the Society as a class action.

I understand that Leo McGrady Q.C., of the law firm of McGrady, Leigh & Whyte, is counsel for the Society and the representative for plaintiffs in this matter.

DATED this ____________________________, 2002, at ____________________________, British Columbia.

__________________________
TELEPHONE
__________________________
E-MAIL ADDRESS
__________________________
SIGNATURE

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The Guardian
5000 North Fraser Way
Burnaby, B.C.
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